

## On The Solution Axis, The Cyprus Problem And The Turkish Cypriot Press

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### ABSTRACT

Because of the negotiations' processes ongoing for more than half a century with the hope of finding a solution to it - the Cyprus issue has gained extensive coverage at national and international press and media, with journalists and columnists conducting studies and surveys, and publishing opinion-poll results depicting varying views from within the public in general. Columnists who assess the social and political realities about the Cyprus issue based on their own perspectives, play an important role in influencing public opinion. This study looks into "how the Turkish Cypriot press has handled the developments in the negotiations' process in 2014", based on the "10 most read" columnists and journalists according to a survey conducted by KADEM - a public surveys' research centre. At a time when the negotiations' process has once again stalled, this work illustrates the stance taken by the Turkish Cypriot press towards the process, by analysing these columnists' views using what is known as the "Critical Discourse Analysis".

**Key Terms:** Media, the Cyprus Problem, Newspaper columns, Turkish Cypriot Press, the Negotiations Process 2014

### INTRODUCTION

The island of Cyprus has, throughout the history, been of utmost importance for the region's countries because of its strategic location in the Eastern Mediterranean. The United Kingdom has two military bases on the island. The United States has the world's most sophisticated radar and monitoring facilities, together with early-warning and rapid-intervention capabilities on the island.

France and Germany have obtained the right to use the Paphos Military Airport. It is also known that Russia, using its strong ties with the Communist AKEL political party as well as its strong links within the Orthodox alliance, has been trying to improve its military, strategic and economic existence on the island.

Cyprus is also of very strategic importance for Turkey too, as it is only 70 kilometres from this country's southeastern coastline. It is because of this that the Cyprus negotiations process continues to be high on the agenda and watched very closely not only by the people on the island but also by world leaders.

The island's people which separated politically back in the 1950'ies, split geographically in 1974 when the island was divided into two. The Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot communities have been trying to find a negotiated settlement to this problem for almost 60 years now.

The negotiations' process which has been ongoing since 1968 for 49 years now and which included attempts aimed at introducing Confidence Building Measures between the two sides, always ended in failure without success, thus resulting in disillusion and loss of hope in both communities. The failure to reach agreement on the most basic problems like territory (land), property and guarantorships, has led the process into a vicious cycle.

A fresh process, which was initiated as part of the efforts envisaging a comprehensive settlement to the Cyprus problem within the framework of the Annan Plan, collapsed in April 2004 with the rejection of the plan by the Greek Cypriot side. The plan had been put to referenda separately and simultaneously in the two sides on the island. The Turkish Cypriot side had, overwhelmingly, supported the UN-backed Plan which had also received widespread international support.

A comparatively more positive period of hopeful expectations with Mustafa Akıncı's election to power, followed the Eroğlu-Anastasiadis talks in 2014.

The main objective of the talks that followed, and which saw the-then Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Ibrahim Gambari, the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot leaders – Mehmet Ali Talât and Tassos Papadopoulos respectively, converging around the negotiating table on July 8, 2006, was to reach a bi-communal, bizonal federation based on the political equality of the two sides. This new process of talks lasted until the Eroğlu-era. Issues like governance, economy and finance, EU Accession negotiations, property, land, security and guarantees, were main issues that were focussed on. Three-party discussions then took place with the election of two new leaders Mr Eroğlu and Mr Hristofyas, with the invitation of the UN Secretary General. Again this new process failed to produce any positive outcome because of the intransigent stance of the Greek Cypriot side. However, with the Turkish Cypriot side's constructive stance and insistence, the two sides came together to issue a new joint declaration on February 11th, 2014.

After PART 1 which is the INTRODUCTION, PART II will look into the conceptual framework where there will be a scanning of the literature used right before and after the 2014 period when the negotiations came to a halt once again. In PART III there will be an explanation of the method used; and in PART IV findings of the study and their meanings will be looked into. The final part will be an evaluation of the study.

## **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2008-2014 Negotiations Processes – Eroğlu Era**

With the Greek Cypriots' rejection of the Annan Plan which was put to separate and simultaneous referenda in both sides in Cyprus on April 24<sup>th</sup> 2004, the efforts aimed at finding a solution to the problem have effectively stalled.

During this period, the Turkish Cypriot Leader Mehmet Ali Talat and the Greek Cypriot Leader Tassos Papadopoulos met under the auspices of the-then Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations for Political Affairs Ibrahim Gambari on July 8, 2006.

It was agreed during this meeting that technical teams be formed to discuss the basic elements of the Cyprus problem and to promote the efforts aimed at forging a bicomunal, bizonal federation, based on the political equality of the two sides on the island. There was also agreement to work to resolve the day-to-day problems faced by people on both sides. Intense work then began by the two leaders' representatives towards establishing technical groups and special committees that would work to achieve the resumption of the comprehensive

negotiations. But this period, widely known within the history of the Cyprus solution efforts as “8<sup>th</sup> of July Processes”, failed to yield any fruit because of the Papadopoulos leadership’s known intransigent political structure.

The election in February 2008 of Mr Hristofias, who’d based his election campaign on his promise to find a solution to the Cyprus problem, as the new Greek Cypriot Leader, had led to increased and more active efforts aimed at kick-starting the Cyprus negotiations once again.

The primary goal of the two leaders realised on March 21<sup>st</sup> 2008 when they met to sign a number of issues they agreed upon. The 21<sup>st</sup> of March document paved the way for technical committees to be set up, and for more comprehensive topics to be taken up by special committees.

On 16 April 2008, a total of six specialized technical groups and working committees of experts, took up in detail - issues like governance, economy and finance, issues related to EU Accession, property, land, security and guarantees. Also in line with the agreement, work began immediately on the formation of special working committees on topics like Crisis Management, Trade and Economic Initiatives, Health and Environment, Humanitarian matters and Cultural Heritage.

The first important outcome of the 21<sup>st</sup> of March meeting and agreement, was the removal of the barricade and the re-opening of the Lokmacı check-point for pedestrian crossings after decades, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of April 2008.

In line with the decisions adopted on March 21<sup>st</sup>, those agreements reached on a number of issues by the technical committees and approved by the two leaders, were published; while, at the same time, issues that there were no or partial progress on, were also submitted to the two leaders.

On May 22<sup>nd</sup> 2008, the two leaders met for the second time to declare what they saw as a “common vision”. According to this declaration, the envisaged solution will be a bizonal, bicomunal federation based on the political equality of the two sides in Cyprus as defined by the United Nations Security Council. The two sides also agreed and declared that in addition to what will be a partnership Federal Government of Cyprus with single international identity in the future, there will also be one Constituent State each for Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot communities, with equal status.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2008 the leaders approved the previously agreed principle that there will be a single sovereignty for the whole of the island and single citizenship for the people of Cyprus in a future settlement, and decided to have one more meeting to discuss “the details of how these principles will be implemented”.

As agreed, the two leaders came together on July 25<sup>th</sup> 2008 and reviewed the work completed by the special and technical committees, and announced that the Cyprus Negotiations will be resumed on 3<sup>rd</sup> of September 2008.

They also re-affirmed that the aim of the proposed full-fledged negotiations, would be to help find a solution safeguarding the rights of both the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot communities, and that any agreement to be reached would be put to separate and simultaneous referenda by the two communities.

After a four-year lull in the negotiations process, the talks got underway again on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September 2008, with participation of the UN Secretary General's Special Representative Alexander Downer. Thanks to constructive approach by the Turkish Cypriot side, a joint report was successfully completed on the topics of Governance and EU, and, the Economy. Further, under the two leaders' guidance, additional 30 joint reports were finalized under three special headings that grouped together the issues agreed upon, and the issues that needed further work. The two sides failed to reach agreement on land, property and guarantees. Points of disagreement between the two communities were again taken up in detail at the second phase of these talks, a year later, in September 2009. The technical aspects and nature of the points of disagreement were discussed at representatives' level as part of the wider negotiations process. In January 2010, two fresh rounds of comprehensive negotiations took place.

In February the same year the UN Secretary General visited the island. The Secretary General had meetings with the leaders of the two communities on the island, and he'd also met leaders of the guarantor powers. He complained of inadequate steps and contributions to the efforts aimed at achieving a solution to the Cyprus problem, and called for enhanced and intensified efforts to speed up the process.

On the eve of the Presidential Elections in the TRNC in 2010, Mr Talât and Mr Hristofias met for one more time on March 30<sup>th</sup>. The two leaders agreed to be free to brief and enlighten their respective communities on the progress achieved and where the process stood then. Within this context, the Turkish Cypriot Leader Mehmet Ali Talât held a big briefing with large participation on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010, to explain and give details to the public in general, of where the negotiations' process stood at that moment, and, what achievements and failures were recorded until then.

The 18<sup>th</sup> of April 2010 Presidential Election was won by Dr. Derviş Eroğlu, who – in a letter to the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon – reaffirmed the Turkish Cypriot side's readiness and willingness to resume the negotiations process from the point it stalled.

Mr Eroğlu and Mr Hristofias held their first meeting on May 26<sup>th</sup> 2010. The United Nations Secretary General invited the two leaders for three-party talks to help tackle the outstanding difficulties confronted at the process until then. There were five rounds of face to face talks between the two leaders who were joined by UN officials. The first of the series took place on the 18<sup>th</sup> of November 2010 in New York, followed by a second meeting on January 26<sup>th</sup> 2011 in Geneva; and a third again in Geneva the same year on July 7<sup>th</sup>. The two leaders' fourth meeting took place on the 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> of October 2011 in New York, followed by their fifth meeting again in New York on January 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> 2012.

The 18<sup>th</sup> of November 2010 meeting had focussed more on the general issues concerning the Cyprus Problem. It was agreed at that meeting that the sides should speed up their efforts and negotiating capacities; and the UN Secretary General said immediately after this meeting that there was agreement by the two sides to draw up a practical solution plan designed to overcome the sticking points preventing progress at the negotiations process. He said the two leaders had also agreed to meet more frequently from then on.

Following the two leaders' fourth round meeting in Greentree, the UN Secretary General had stated that there was a more substantial progress achieved, and that they'd agreed to spend more concerted efforts to reach their objectives.

The Secretary General told the leaders in a letter to them on January 6<sup>th</sup> 2012, that the whole negotiations' process had reached a final stage, and that the forthcoming five-party conference to be attended by the three guarantors and two communities of the island, was of utmost importance. He however expressed concern that the chances of success at these talks might be lost in the light of the fact that the Greek Cypriot Administration would be assuming the rotational presidency of the European Union in 2012.

The UN Secretary General, in a statement he issued after the talks in New York on January 25<sup>th</sup> 2012, referred to what he called "limited progress", and called on the two leaders in Cyprus to take more staunch steps towards achieving a final settlement to the Cyprus Problem. He suggested that another multi-lateral conference might be convened in possibly April 2012, in the light of the expected assessment on the process by his special representative for Cyprus Alexander Downer.

But there was no progress whatsoever in the negotiations process as the Greek Cypriot administration which took the six-month rotational presidency of the European Union as from the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2012, cited numerous excuses to avoid coming together for any substantial work on the process. It continued to reject all attempts aimed at finalising the negotiations process including mediation, the creation of a time-table for the process, coordination work needed to help include the three guarantor powers at the talks, and the efforts that were needed then to help unblock the process. Eventually, the negotiations process again paused in view of the forthcoming elections in the Greek Cypriot side scheduled for February 2013.

The Greek Cypriot elections took place in February 2013, and Nikos Anastasiadis was now the new Greek Cypriot leader. The new leader deliberately avoided any obligation or promise to work with the Turkish Cypriot side on common issues, or to enter negotiations with it.

In the meantime, in April 2013, the United Nations submitted to the two leaderships a 77-page report which grouped together points of partial agreement and disagreement between the two sides.

Despite all the efforts and all the invitations by the Turkish Cypriot side for the negotiations process to begin, it took about a year to achieve that goal. The Greek Cypriot side continuously created excuses like the economic crisis and the hardships it found itself in, the National Council consultations and deliberations, the need to appoint a new negotiator, and, finally, the need for the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot sides to agree on common objectives on which they'd be holding discussions. Eventually, the fresh round of talks lasted for five months - at the end of which - there was agreement on the 11<sup>th</sup> of February 2014 on the final Joint Declaration, thanks to the positive and constructive goodwill initiatives by the Turkish Cypriot side.

### **THE METHOD**

This work studies a total of five pieces of articles on the issue, authored by selected columnists in 2014. The work took into consideration the newspapers in which the articles appeared and, thus, the columnists' ideological approach, taking note of whether or not they were confrontationist or pro-resolution minded. It uses the Critical Discourse Analysis method. According to the leading representative of this method Teun A. Van Dijk (and others(2003)), this method of analysis has a complicated structure and that this means that analysing a written text alone wouldn't be sufficient. He draws the attention to the need to take into consideration conceptual, social, cultural and historical links and influences that spoken expressions carry.

The critical discourse analysis method in written material - which is the result of the use of the words and sentences in a language - tries to analyse the text from the psychological, ideological, sociological and cultural points of view.

Within this context, returning to the Cyprus problem and the negotiations process, the articles' contents were analysed, based on their headings, how they referred to the negotiations, the developments which were of importance to the two sides in Cyprus in those days, how the two communities were seen by the columnists, and the columnists' use of language, rhetoric and wording as part of their role in forming and guiding public opinion.

### FINDINGS AND COMMENTS

In this section, you'll find a critical study of the articles authored by the above-mentioned columnists in the year 2014

COLUMNISTS	ARTICLE	DATE	NEWSPAPER	LINK
CENK MUTLUYAKALI	Turkish Cypriots too, to be granted the right to exchange their immovable properties'	01.04.2014	Yeni Düzen	<a href="http://www.yeniduzen.com/kibrisli-turklere-de-takas-imkani-3574yy.htm">http://www.yeniduzen.com/kibrisli-turklere-de-takas-imkani-3574yy.htm</a>
	Who claimed that "becoming a province is not a welcome idea"	16.09.2014	Yeni Düzen	<a href="http://www.yeniduzen.com/kim-demis-eyalet-istenmiyor-diye-4691yy.htm">http://www.yeniduzen.com/kim-demis-eyalet-istenmiyor-diye-4691yy.htm</a>
	"Testing the Peace Policy"	09.10.2014	Yeni Düzen	<a href="http://www.yeniduzen.com/baris-siyasetinin-sinavi-4862yy.htm">http://www.yeniduzen.com/baris-siyasetinin-sinavi-4862yy.htm</a>
	2022!	05.10.2014	Yeni Düzen	<a href="http://www.yeniduzen.com/2022-5079yy.htm">http://www.yeniduzen.com/2022-5079yy.htm</a>
REŞAT AKAR	A Six-Party Conference for Cyprus	19.08.2014	Diyalog	<a href="https://www.diyaloggazetesi.com/kibris-icin-%E2%80%98altili-konferans-makale,717.html">https://www.diyaloggazetesi.com/kibris-icin-%E2%80%98altili-konferans-makale,717.html</a>

**Table 1. Columnists and their articles about the negotiations in 2014**

Two columnists and a total of five articles by them were analyzed in Table 1. These articles were studied based on the method known as "Critical Discourse Analysis. Four pieces of articles by Cenk Mutluyakalı from Yeni Düzen daily,; and one article by Reşat Akar from the Diyalog daily, were analyzed.

COLUMNIST	ARTICLE	DATE	NEWSPAPER	LINK
Cenk Mutluyakalı	Turkish Cypriots too, to be granted the right to exchange their immovables'	01.04.2014	Yeni Düzen	<a href="http://www.yeniduzen.com/kibrisli-turklere-de-takas-imkani-3574yy.htm">http://www.yeniduzen.com/kibrisli-turklere-de-takas-imkani-3574yy.htm</a>

**Table 2. The first article by Cenk Mutluyakalı from 2014 to have been analyzed**

In Table 2, the subject is an article by Cenk Mutluyakalı dated 01. 04.2014 and published in Yeni Düzen daily under the topic: "Turkish Cypriots too, to be granted the right to exchange

their immovables”. First of all, the article underlines the very important nature of the “property issue” as one of the biggest sources of problem within the un-ending greater Cyprus Issue which has been ongoing unresolved for such a long time. It goes on to explain how the two sides worked together to establish a commission tailored to resolve the property issue by a mechanism of “property exchange” which would allow for Turkish Cypriot properties left behind in the South; and Greek Cypriot properties left in the North, to be exchanged. The columnist, claimed that the approaching general elections in Turkey had cast a shadow and veiled important issues of concern for the two communities of Cyprus as well as the negotiations process altogether, and that this was the result of the Turkish Cypriot side being excessively influenced by the dynamics of internal politics in Turkey. The article goes on to draw attention to the fact that while the Greek Cypriots do have a working mechanism of exchange, compensation, and the return of the immovable through the TRNC Immovable Property Commission; the Turkish Cypriots do not have a similar commission in the Greek Cypriot side to apply for.

While the columnist expresses the wish that the proposed “property exchange commission” on the formation of which there was agreement, will contribute to a solution to the Cyprus problem – the biggest headache within which is the immovable property issue; he goes on to heavily criticise those who received much more than what should have been an equivalent amount or value of property in the north to what they’ve left behind in the South.

COLUMNIST	ARTICLE	DATE	NEWSPAPER	LINK
CENK MUTUYAKALI	Who claimed that “becoming a province is not a welcome idea”	16.09.2014	Yeni Düzen	<a href="http://www.yeniduzen.com/kim-demis-eyalet-istenmiyor-diye-4691yy.htm">http://www.yeniduzen.com/kim-demis-eyalet-istenmiyor-diye-4691yy.htm</a>

**Table 3. The second article by Cenk Mutluyakalı from 2014 to have been analyzed.**

In Table 3, Cenk Mutluyakalı gave his work in Yenidüzen daily on the 16. 09.2014 the title: “Who claimed that becoming a province is not a welcome idea” . Referring to how the Turkish Cypriot side is being governed, he claims in a negative and critical manner that the Turkish Cypriot side is not governing itself but rather, implementing what is being told them to do. By taking a position like that, he is claiming that the Turkish Cypriot side is not capable of governing itself. In this article, while the weaknesses on the part of the Turkish Cypriot side’s decision-giving abilities are being highlighted; a message is also being given out to the effect that Turkey is unjustly attempting to establish hegemony on a separate community by imposing an administration of its own there.

COLUMNIST	ARTICLE	DATE	NEWSPAPER	LINK
Cenk Mutluyakalı	“Testing the Peace Policy”	09.10.2014	Yeni Düzen	<a href="http://www.yeniduzen.com/baris-siyasetinin-sinavi-4862yy.htm">http://www.yeniduzen.com/baris-siyasetinin-sinavi-4862yy.htm</a>

**Table 4. Third article by Cenk Mutluyakalı in 2014 to have been studied**

According to Table 4, Cenk Mutluyakalı, in his column dated 09. 10.2014 in Yenidüzen daily under the topic “Testing the Peace Policy” , has tried to stress the need for both sides to try to return to calm and a peaceful approach after the atmosphere heated up following Turkey’s strong reaction to the Greek Cypriot side’s declared intention to unilaterally exploit, market, and use the natural gas reserves found off Cyprus in the Eastern Mediterranean. He says the extremely tense atmosphere would not serve any party’s interest. Ignoring the fact that Turkey had sent its warships to the Eastern Mediterranean in order to give out a warning message to the Greek Cypriot side in reaction to its decision to unilaterally extract and use the

island's natural gas reserves while at the same time claiming to be representative of a bicomunal republic; the columnist accused Turkey of escalating the tensions on the island. He calls on both sides for restraint; and claims that both sides should be brave enough to be able to look back on their respective responsibilities and mistakes, and make an objective and correct assessment of the situation. But looking at the whole of the essay, one could easily notice that the writer puts the Greek Cypriot side which continuously seeks privileges on the one hand, and the Turkish Cypriot side which adopts a conciliatory approach, on the other, in the same basket.

COLUMNIST	ARTICLE	DATE	NEWSPAPER	LINK
Cenk Mutluyakalı	2022!	05. 10.2014	Yeni Düzen	<a href="http://www.yeniduzen.com/2022-5079yy.htm">http://www.yeniduzen.com/2022-5079yy.htm</a>

**Table 5. Cenk Mutluyakalı's fourth article we studied in 2014**

As can be seen in Table 5, Cenk Mutluyakalı has published an article on 5. 10.2014 in his column in Yenidüzen daily, under the title: "2022!". Here, the writer points to the year 2022 as the nearest estimated date when first profits will return from natural gas exports; and says the sharing of the profits would realize the same year. He hurls heavy accusations with harsh, sharp and negative language to the-then Turkish Cypriot Leader, and accuses him of being an insincere and anti-solution character; as a result, the columnist loses his impartiality and takes a side.

COLUMNIST	ARTICLE	DATE	NEWSPAPER	LINK
Reşat Akar	A Six-Party Conference for Cyprus	19.08.2014	Diyalog	<a href="https://www.diyaloggazetesi.com/kibris-icin-%E2%80%98altili-konferans-makale,717.html">https://www.diyaloggazetesi.com/kibris-icin-%E2%80%98altili-konferans-makale,717.html</a>

**Table 6. An article by Reşat Akar from the year 2014 we have studied:**

We can see from Table 6 that Reşat Akar's article dating back to 19.08. 2014 in his daily "Diyalog", appeared under the title: "A Six-Party Conference on Cyprus". It looks like the columnist used that heading because he believed all the concerned parties, the Turkish Cypriot, Greek Cypriot sides, together with Turkey and Greece, and the main stream leftist and right wing political parties from the two sides in Cyprus should participate, because this would yield fruit. He believed that those who should be sitting at such a negotiating table, should be Recep Tayyip Erdoğan - the Turkish President, the Greek President Karolos papulyas, the Prime Minister of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus Derviş Eroğlu; representative of the Left in the TRNC Mehmet Ali Talat; the President of the Greek Cypriot Administration Nikos Anastasiadis, and the representative of the Greek Cypriot Left Dimitris Hristofias. This format should be a good representation of both the right and the left in both sides of the island, and thus, be more effective in the search for a reconciliation representing all political forces. The columnist says that it is the Greek Cypriot side which always asks for concessions; and reminds that it has been demanding the withdrawal of the Turkish Forces from Cyprus, the return of Maraş city to the Greek Cypriot side, and further territorial concessions in order to agree to a settlement. The article stresses the fact also that the Turkish Cypriot side, under foreign pressure, ends up being the side which makes concessions at the talks.

### CONCLUSION AND ASSESSMENT

In conclusion, it can be seen that in his articles, Cenk Mutluyakalı ignores or waives the unilateral decisions taken by the Greek Cypriot side; never touches upon the fact that the Greek Cypriot side considers the Turkish Cypriot side as "non-existent"; and even when calling for restraint on both sides on the issue of natural gas exploitation - he never referred to the Greek Cypriot side's effective usurpation of what should be the common natural gas resource for



both sides. But he authored a number of articles attacking Turkey and those Turkish Cypriots politically devoted to motherland Turkey, and, on occasions, ridiculing them, as well as accusing those Turkish Cypriots supporting Turkey's policies, of being responsible for the separation of the two communities in Cyprus.

For his part, Reşat Akar adopts a more realistic approach and calls on the Greek Cypriot side to derive lessons from its own mistakes it's done before 1974, and that unless it does so, similar consequences would be inevitable in the future. He calls on the two sides to bring together leaders representing the bigger part of their communities and to sit at the negotiating table. He stresses that in view of the Greek Cypriot side's rejection of the Annan Plan which was approved by both leaders in Cyprus and worked out under the umbrella of the United Nations; it would now, not be possible to find a negotiated solution to the Cyprus problem. Pointing to the Greek Cypriot side's and the international community's great expectations from the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to help facilitate a solution to the Cyprus issue, he warns that the endless demands by the Greek Cypriot side constitute the biggest hurdle in the way of any progress.

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