

**‘CYPRUS VOTES’:  
The forthcoming 21<sup>st</sup> May 2006 parliamentary elections in the shadow  
of the 2004 Annan Plan Referendum results**

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**INTRODUCTION**

2004 represented an important date for the politics and history of the Republic of Cyprus. There is little doubt that the year 2004 can be described as a ‘historic’ one for the Island: Cyprus joined the European Union on 1 May 2004 as one of the ten new members in this mega-EU enlargement. Although de facto the *acquis communautaire* cannot be implemented in the occupied North, the whole of the island (namely, the ‘Republic of Cyprus’) has joined the Union. In addition to this fundamental development, two other key events for Cyprus took place during the course of 2004. On 24 April 2004, the Greek Cypriots had rejected the Annan Plan with an overwhelming majority, whereas the Turkish Cypriots had approved it with a large majority. As a result, the Plan was declared null and void. In December 2004, the European Council of Heads of States and Governments of all 25 EU members, including the Republic of Cyprus, agreed to launch - in October 2005 - accession negotiations with Turkey. Finally, and sadly, 2004 also represented the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the coup against President Makarios (engineered by the Greek military junta in Athens), and the ensuing Turkish invasion and ongoing occupation of 37% of its territory since then.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr Stavridis would like to acknowledge the financial support of the *Fundación SIP* (Zaragoza) during January 2005-June 2006. Part of his research, entitled *The EU’s contribution to peace and stability in the Eastern Mediterranean (the so-called Athens-Nicosia-Ankara Triangle): a critique*, has been available on the Foundation’s website since the end of November 2005: [www.seipaz.org](http://www.seipaz.org) (Stavridis 2005). For this second part, the author would also like to acknowledge the hospitality of the Research Center of *Intercollege* during his February-May 2006 stay in Nicosia, and in particular thank its Director, Professor Andreas Theophanous. The usual proviso about the author’s final responsibility applies here too.

Clearly, Cyprus' EU membership has redefined the political landscape in the region. The fact that after so much dithering, the Union maintained its formal and official commitment not to link a solution to the Cyprus division with EU accession can be interpreted as a positive development not only for the Cypriots but also for the Europeans who are still trying desperately to forge a really common foreign, security and defence policy. But, at the same time, the fact that the EU did not take part actively in the final negotiation phases of the Annan Plan in Bürgenstock (Switzerland), as initially planned by the UN Secretary General himself, points to a different, much less positive, assessment. It remains unclear if this situation will change, and if, more importantly, it will change in a way that will protect the interests of Cyprus. This short paper does not discuss the reasons why this is the case<sup>2</sup>. Neither does it address the question of EU-Turkish relations, nor does it offer a critique of the Annan Plan(s) or suggest alternative solutions. Instead, the paper presents a background to the forthcoming parliamentary elections of 21 May 2006. The politics of Cyprus are not very well known in the rest of Europe, a situation that has not really changed since 2004<sup>3</sup>.

2006 is another important stage in the recent history of the Island because it is expected that the forthcoming parliamentary elections will show what impact the negative vote in the referendum on the 2004 Annan reunification Plan has had on the Island's political landscape (although there were elections to the European Parliament in June 2004<sup>4</sup>). The wider implications will not only affect future efforts at solving – finally – the Cyprus Problem, but also the forthcoming 2008 presidential election. The Cypriot political system is of a presidential type, but political parties are gaining importance because of their own consolidation since the early 1970s. This situation is further complicated with its increasing fragmentation, i.e. the emergence of numerous smaller parties (in some instances 'miniscule' ones).

## **(1) THE CYPRUS POLITICAL LANDSCAPE**

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<sup>2</sup> see Stavridis (2005).

<sup>3</sup> For obvious reasons, I will concentrate on the democratic politics of the Greek-Cypriot side.

<sup>4</sup> The Cyprus House of Representatives approved the European Constitutional Treaty on 30 June 2005 by 30 votes in favour, 19 against, and 1 abstention.

The recent political system in Cyprus has been marked by its relatively short history as an independent country (since 1960), the 1974 Turkish invasion and its continued occupation of the north of the Island, and the late development of its political parties<sup>5</sup>. The political Cypriot political system is a Presidential system. The 1960 Constitution (still in force) allowed for the Turkish-Cypriots to be represented at the Vice-Presidential level with a right of veto in most areas<sup>6</sup>. The *Vouli ton Andiprosopon* (House of Representatives or Parliament) usually adopts 95% of its legislation by consensus at the Committee level. Many decisions do not require parliamentary approval but many of them contain budgetary provisions that require indirect parliamentary approval. Presidential decrees are therefore important. But political reality means that any President welcomes, indeed requires, some form of parliamentary majority, if only for their election in the first place. The current President<sup>7</sup> Tassos Papadopoulos, was elected in 2003 thanks to the support of his own party (DIKO) but also, and most importantly, thanks to the additional support of AKEL, one of the two largest parties in Cyprus (for details see below). The Socialist Party (EDEK) also backed his candidacy. All three parties form part of the current government, as the President is both the Head of State and the Head of Government. The Green Party supports the government but does not participate in it.

More recently, as a result of further fragmentation since the 2001 parliamentary election results (see table below), there are quite a few small (miniscule) political parties. It is a phenomenon that has strengthened pace since the 2004 referendum. Currently<sup>8</sup> there are 8 political parties in the Cypriot Parliament: AKEL, DISY, DIKO, EDEK<sup>9</sup>, EDI, NEO, ADIK and the Greens. AKEL (*Anorthotiko Komma Ergazomenou Laou/The Progressive Party of the Working People*) is the oldest political party. It is formally speaking a

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<sup>5</sup> For instance on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2006, the current President's political party (DIKO) celebrated its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

<sup>6</sup> Greek-Cypriots elect the President and Turkish-Cypriots the Vice-President, a situation that in reality has not occurred since the 1963-64 inter-communal troubles

<sup>7</sup> To date the Presidents of Cyprus have been: Archbishop Makarios (1960-1977), Spyros Kyprianou (1977-1988), George Vassiliou (1988-1993), Glafcos Clerides (1993-2003), and Tassos Papadopoulos who was elected in February 2003.

<sup>8</sup> The 2001-2006 Parliament was formally dissolved on 13 April 2006 as elections will be taking place, as already noted, on 21 May 2006.

<sup>9</sup> previously known as KISOS and before that as EDEK!

Communist Party but it is very much a Left party with only a core of ideologue marxists in its midst. It has had and still has good relations with Turkish-Cypriot parties<sup>10</sup>. DISY (*Dimokratikos Synagermos/Democratic Rally*) is a (center-)right party, which was in power for most of the period up to 2001. ADIK (*Agonistiko Dimokratiko Kinima/Fighting Democratic Movement*) and DIKO (*Dimokratiko Komma/Democratic Party*) are centrist parties. DIKO is also the Party of the current President. EDEK is the Socialist Party in Cyprus. EDI (*Enomeni Dimokrates/United Democrats*) is also a centrist party. NEO (*Neo Orizontes/New Horizons*) is a nationalist party that wants a return to a centralized unitary Cyprus state with clear majority rule. The Greens (*Kinima Ekologon Perivallontiston/Ecologist and Environmentalist Movement*) are ‘environmentally-friendly’ as their counterparts in other countries.

Euroko (*Evropaiko Komma/European Party*) and Eurodi (*Evropaiki Dimokratia/European Democracy*) are splinter groups from DISY because their leaders did not agree with DISY’s support of the Annan Plan in 2004. Euroko has associated itself with NEO and ADIK, thus securing parliamentary representation in the last two years of the 2001-2006 Parliament. Finally, ‘Free Citizens’ was only launched as a party in November 2005, thus further complicating any understanding of such a small political polity (‘small’ here refers to demographic dimensions, with less than 800000 Greek Cypriots). Therefore, there are now 9 political parties, all -but ‘Free Citizens’-with parliamentary participation in the legislature that has just completed its term (2001-2006).

This fragmentation is not only relatively new for Cypriot political life<sup>11</sup>. An alternative scenario could be the possibility of an eventual polarization *à la grecque* (mainland Greece with New Democracy and PASOK). Another alternative could be the creation of

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<sup>10</sup> It is the only political party that has its website in Greek, Turkish and English.

<sup>11</sup> Based on the author’s interviews and on information gathered from newspapers, and TV programmes during his February-May 2006 stay in Nicosia. The author would like to thank the following people for their sharing their insight in Cypriot politics with him: Mr Costas Apostolides, *EMS Economic Management Ltd*, parliamentary candidates Mr Christos Giangou and Mr Harris Georgiades (respectively for *DIKO* and *DISY*), and my Spring 2006 *Intercollege* colleagues, Profs Van Coufoudakis, Peter Loizos, Nicos Peristianis, Drs Hubert Faustmann, Christos Iacovou, Marios Sarris. Thanks also extend to a number of Foreign ministry and Parliament officials who expressed their wish for anonymity. The usual proviso about responsibility applies here too.

a strong Center party that would come out of a merger between DIKO and EDEK. According to a DIKO member, there is a strong possibility for such a scenario ‘now that DIKO appears to be gaining a lot of support throughout the country’. Whatever the future may hold, the current fragmentation also complicates the workings of the *Ethniko Symvoulío* (National Council), a special body created after 1974 to deal mainly, but not exclusively, with the “national problem”, namely the Island’s division. All parties that are represented in the Cypriot Parliament form part of the *Ethniko Symvoulíou* with two representatives, plus the country’s President, Foreign Minister, Attorney General, Government spokesman, and an Undersecretary to the President. As a result of this proliferation of political parties, the body<sup>12</sup> has lost in its coherence and, to a certain extent, some of its representation and legitimacy as there is no proportionally based participation. All parties are present, if they desire to do so whether they have one MP or twenty in the Parliament (in March 2006 DISY has decided to boycott its meetings).

The outgoing Parliament consists of the following parties (27 May 2001 elections results):

AKEL:	34.71% of votes,	20 seats
DISY:	34%	19 seats
DIKO:	14.8%	9 seats
EDEK:	6.5%	4 seats
NEO:	3%	1 seat
EDI:	2.5%	1 seat
ADIK:	2.1%	1 seat
Greens:	2%	1 seat.

## **(2) THE POST-ANNAN REFERENDUM PERIOD**

As for the current political landscape in Cyprus, one must start with the views as expressed at the time of the 2004 referendum on the Annan Plan<sup>13</sup>. The President had expressed powerfully his opposition to the Plan in his 7 April 2004 speech to the Nation. What follows looks into the reasons why the NO vote won so comfortably and

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<sup>12</sup> the current membership as of March 2006 is listed in the annex.

<sup>13</sup> [www.cyprus-un-plan.org](http://www.cyprus-un-plan.org).

overwhelmingly in April 2004<sup>14</sup>. On the basis of a recent survey<sup>15</sup>, it is possible to argue that the following reasons (in decreasing order of importance) explain the NO vote:

- A withdrawal of Turkish troops should occur much sooner than foreseen in the Plan (76%);
- Turkey should pay compensation for those who do not have their property returned (75%);
- A greater number of Turkish settlers should go back to Turkey than provided for in the Plan (75%);
- the overall cost of reunification should be more equally shared by all parts, and not only by the Greek-Cypriots (73%);
- there should be solid international guarantees for the implementation of a final agreement, with serious consequences for any violations (72%);
- the new state should be the legal successor to the current Republic and not a totally new state (66%);
- the future influx of Turks should be limited (64%);
- return of property should be greater than provided for in the Plan (63%);
- guarantor powers should not have the right to unilateral intervention (61%);
- all Turkish and Greek troops should eventually go (58%).

In terms of political parties, except for DISY and EDI, all other parties campaigned for a NO vote. In terms of referendum results, more than 2/3 of traditional DISY voters backed a NO vote in spite of its leadership's contrary opinion. Most AKEL voters followed the last-minute decision to campaign against the Annan Plan (it has been argued that the change was due to a realization that there was no way a YES vote would prevail<sup>16</sup>). The followers of the President's own party DIKO overwhelmingly voted against the Plan. The other parties are minor ones in the political system.

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<sup>14</sup> In the South, 75.83% rejected the Plan whereas 24.17% supported it; in the North, 64.91% supported it and 35.09% rejected it. In terms of total numbers, the results were: 355,677 voted YES and 107,622 NO.

<sup>15</sup> Lordos, Alexandros (2004), *Can the Cyprus Problem be Solved? Understanding the Greek Cypriot response to the UN Peace Plan for Cyprus. An evidence-based study in cooperation with Cymar Market Research Ltd*, Nicosia, especially pp 37-64.

<sup>16</sup> based on the author's interviews and on the information gathered from newspapers, and TV programmes during his February-May 2006 stay in Nicosia.

Since then<sup>17</sup>, the DISY-AKEL opposition has continued unabated with a number of extremely harsh attacks from both sides: President Papadopoulos had called those who voted yes and in particular the DISY leadership *nainaiyiakides*, a reference to those who had not backed British decolonization of the Island in 1960. The DISY leadership, and in particular its President Nicos Anastasiades<sup>18</sup>, have accused the President, his party (DIKO), and AKEL, to want a permanent division of the Island with its northern border fixed 'at Lydra Palace' (the main checkpoint on the Green Line in Nicosia). Those comments have continued throughout the post-referenda period. They are currently being repeated in one form or another during the electoral campaign for the May 2006 parliamentary elections. In short, there are those who are asking the DISY leadership and all those who voted YES 'to ask for forgiveness because they were wrong', whereas on the opposite side, there are those who argue that 'History will be the final judge' of the Plan rejection.

As noted above, there has been a proliferation of new parties as a result of further fragmentation of the political system following the 2004 Referendum result. In the forthcoming May 2006 parliamentary elections (to enter Parliament, the threshold is 1.8%), observers forecast (when compared to the 2001 parliamentary elections) that there will be a drop in AKEL's support, a larger drop in DISY's, a substantial increase in DIKO (President Papadopoulos' Party), and a small strengthening of all smaller parties, including those that have appeared after the 2004 referendum. Two opinion polls offered the following results in late March 2006. The first was commissioned by AKEL and was carried out through a Public Opinion telephone poll (with a representative sample of 1200 persons) and suggested the following voting intentions<sup>19</sup>:

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Anastasiades also 'lodged a complaint with the European Parliament concerning the manner in which the Greek Cypriot referendum campaign had been handled by the government, alleging that voices in favor of the Annan plan had been suppressed'. He was also later the unhurt victim of a grenade attack against his home in Limassol, in *Hellenic News of America* (April-May 2004, accessed 10.05.06):

<http://www.hellenicnews.com/readnews.html?newsid=1863&lang=US>. For more details of the DISY's leader views, see his [in Greek] two speeches, one during a meeting of the Party's Higher Council on the New York agreement (24 February 2004), and the other an extraordinary meeting of the DISY Party on the Annan Plan and referendum (15 April 2004): [www.disy.org.cy](http://www.disy.org.cy) (accessed 24.03.06).

<sup>19</sup> *Cyprus Weekly*, 24-30 March 2006.

28.2% AKEL  
27.2% DISY  
19.1% DIKO  
4.9% EDEK  
3.5% Euroko  
0.8% Eurodi  
1.1% EDI  
3% Greens  
0.5% others

(blank and invalid votes at 4.4%; 5.9% not decided yet; 1.4% would not vote).

The second survey is an ongoing monthly poll conducted for *ANT-1* (Cyprus) TV, one of the most important private channels on the Island. I reproduce here the February, March, and April 2006 results. It is important to note that the phone poll conducted in February resulted in 14.8% expressing their intention either to vote blank or to have their vote count as invalid, with 21.8% expressing either no answer or no decision yet. Those are rather high percentages. In the March poll results, the two figures were down to 7.9% and 9.8% respectively<sup>20</sup>. The April figures are more general as they are reproduced from a newspaper report and not directly from the TV programme<sup>21</sup>:

	Feb	March	April
AKEL	20.9	25.7	33.3%
DISY	20.3	25.2	31.3%
DIKO	12.5	17.4	18.3%
EDEK	4.7	5.4	7.3%
EVROKO	2.5	3.3	4.1%
GREENS	2	2.8	2.6%
EDI	1	1.5	1.7%
EVRODI	0.5	0.6	0.7%
Free Citizens	-	0.4	0.6%

Finally, this section ends with a reference to a recent opinion poll on how Greek-Cypriots feel about a number of relevant issues. It is not my purpose to present a detailed analysis

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<sup>20</sup> [in Greek] 'The road to the elections', *ANT-1 TV*, 27-28 March 2006.

<sup>21</sup> *Cyprus Weekly*, 21-27 April 2006. The paper also reproduced another poll that showed reversed results for the first two parties but I do not reproduce it here because the TV poll is an ongoing one. The paper also included an article 'warning against inaccurate polls'!

of this survey. Just to mention those points in order to illustrate further the current political debate in the Island<sup>22</sup>:

1. Are we closer to a solution than a year ago?

56% No

36% Yes

8% do not know, do not answer (DNK/DNA).

As an illustration a year ago the positive perception was as high as 76%. Among those who had voted YES in the Annan Plan referendum, only 17% said they felt we were now closer to a solution, whereas for those who had voted NO, the percentage was 42%. In terms of political parties preferences the results were as follows:

	Yes, closer	No	DNK/DNA
AKEL	51	19	10
DISY	16	80	4
DIKO	51	39	10
EDEK	44	50	6
NEO	50	38	10
EDI	18	82	
ADIK	23	77	
Greens	50	13	27

For the smaller parties the figures may be more 'black and white' due to the small sample used in the poll. These results also show optimism among the parties in power and pessimism among the party that supported the YES vote in the 2004 referendum.

2. should a solution to the Cyprus Problem now be based on the UN or the EU? Or both?

69% both UN and EU

22% EU

5% UN

5% do not know, do not answer (DNK/DNA).

In itself, this is really important because it shows how much expectation there is now for the EU since the Republic of Cyprus has joined it.

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<sup>22</sup> *PIK TV*, 3 April 2006. The poll was carried out after the 28 February 2006 Paris meeting between Papadopoulos and UN Secretary General Koffi Annan.

3. Is EU membership a good thing for Cyprus?

46% a good thing  
11% a bad thing  
41% neither good nor bad  
2% do not know, do not answer (DNK/DNA).

4. Has Cyprus benefited from EU membership?

50% yes  
41% no  
9% do not know, do not answer (DNK/DNA).

The last two results (3 and 4) must be taken together because they show some frustration about the fact that EU membership has not helped solve the Cyprus Problem but also that Cyprus is in a better situation now that it has joined it. It also reflects in part the past position of many Cypriots, especially on the Left, who did not favour EU membership initially.

5. how much sympathy towards the Turkish-Cypriots?

26% a lot of sympathy  
41% little sympathy  
33% neither good nor bad

In the past three years there is a decrease in the positive views. These are important findings that should not be neglected.

6. If at anytime you have to co-exist with Turkish-Cypriots, what would you prefer?

45% to live together  
48% to live separately  
7% do not know, do not answer (DNK/DNA).

Although the TV poll experts stressed that the real question is what kind of co-existence one actually refers to, the results do not strengthen necessarily the view that now that the division is porous (since 2003), there is more eagerness to co-exist together. Significantly, in January 2003, the respective figures were 67% and 28%. Perhaps even more significantly in the 2006 results, 63% of the '18-24 year-old group' prefer to live separately.

7. Are you in favour or against Turkey joining the EU?

66% against  
25% in favour  
9% do not know, do not answer (DNK/DNA).

The results here are quite clear. They also contradict the current official line (from both the executive and from most political parties, with the exception of EDEK) that accepts the European accession process for Turkey (e.g. decision to grant a date for negotiations to start; actual formal start of negotiations on 5 October 2005).

**CONCLUSIONS**

The objective of this short paper was to provide its reader with a general survey of Cypriot politics (that is to say Greek-Cypriot politics) on the eve of the 2006 parliamentary elections. The paper also presented the results of recent polls in order to show what Greek-Cypriot public opinion thinks on a number of issues. The intention of this piece is not to predict the election results or any future development for that matter. All it does is to show that there is growing skepticism about the likelihood of a solution to the Island's division, at least in the short term. It also shows that the impact of the Annan Plan has been highly divisive and that its shadow continues to hang over Cypriot politics. It is hoped however that the paper has shed some light on the intricacies of Greek-Cypriot political life.

## ANNEX

### The *Ethniko Symvoulío* (National Council) membership as of March 2006:

1. President Papadopoulos
2. Foreign Minister Iacovou
3. Government Spokesman George Lillikas
4. Undersecretary to the President Christodoulos Pashiardis
5. Presidential Assistant (Head of Diplomatic Office) Tassos Tzionis
6. AKEL: Demitris Christofias, Nicos Katsourides.
7. DHKO: Nicos Kleanthous, Nicos Pittokopites
8. EDEK: Giannakis Omirou, Vassos Lyssarides
9. EYRO.KO: Demitris Syllouris, Nicos Koutsou
10. EDH: Michalis Papapetrou, Praxoula Antoniadou
11. ADHK: Dinos Michaelides, Edwin Josephides (now merged with EURO.KO)
12. Greens: Nicos Koutsou, plus one(?)
13. DHSY (before suspending its own participation): Nicos Anastasiades, Averof Neofytou

NOTE: As it is an unofficial body, the National Council does not have a permanent members list nor is it completely uncommon for substitutes to attend meetings.