AN APPROACH TO MAKING CYPRUS A REUNITED AND INDEPENDENT STATE

BY

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The views expressed in this academic research paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense, or any of its agencies or the official policy or position of the Argentine Government or the Argentine Army.

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ABSTRACT

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This paper is based on the personal experiences of the author as Commanding Officer of the Argentine Task Force in Cyprus during 1996 and on other sources of information about this ancient and often-contested island. It describes the situation in Cyprus from the historical, geographic and political perspectives. It also analyzes the strategic situation of the island and the interests of the neighboring countries and major powers in it. The paper concludes with the author's suggested approach to a solution of the on-going conflict.

A solution to the conflict can best be achieved by accepting the existing divisions between the Greek and Turkish communities and areas and then working on the social-psychological and economic levels to achieve the cooperation and confidence building that will make possible political cooperation in the future. This alternative is preferable to the attempts at high-level political settlements that have been tried unsuccessfully in the past. The author maintains that despite the difficult situation Cyprus has faced in the past, the people of both the Greek and Turkish communities want to and deserve to live in peace in a reunited republic. This would serve to safeguard the interests and existence of both communities, promote the prosperity of the country and enhance the security of the eastern Mediterranean.
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ....................................................................................................................... iii

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS............................................................................................... v

INTRODUCTION ................................................................................................................. 1

SECTION I  General Situation ....................................................................................... 3
   A. Geographical Environment .................................................................................. 3
   B. Historical Background ....................................................................................... 7
   C. The Population .................................................................................................... 11

SECTION II  The Conflict ............................................................................................... 14
   A. The Roots of the Conflict ................................................................................... 14
   B. The Turkish Invasion (1974) ............................................................................ 16
   C. Strategic Situation ............................................................................................. 19
   D. The Orthodox Church in the Conflict ............................................................... 22
   E. The United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus ........................................ 24
   F. Economic roots of the Conflict ........................................................................... 29

SECTION III  An approach to a solution ...................................................................... 30

SECTION IV  Conclusions ............................................................................................. 34

BIBLIOGRAPHY .............................................................................................................. 39
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1. Map of the eastern Mediterranean ..........................................................3
Figure 2. Map of the topography of Cyprus...............................................................4
Figure 3. Map of the British Sovereign Bases in Cyprus.............................................6
Figure 4. Map of Cyprus during the Byzantine time..................................................7
Figure 5. Map of Cyprus during the Ottoman Empire..............................................8
Figure 6. Map of UNFICYP at the beginning of the mission...................................25
Figure 7. Map of UNFICYP at the present time.......................................................26
AN APPROACH TO MAKING CYPRUS A REUNITED AND INDEPENDENT STATE

Introduction

A little known conflict (except for those directly or indirectly involved in it) in the small but strategic island of Cyprus is still in progress. The existing status quo is unstable, making the Cyprus problem one that is still very much with us. The political arrangements for a sharing of power between the two very different ethnic communities stipulated by the architects of 1959 independence failed to produce the climate of moderation and harmony the designers had envisioned.

For more than twenty-four years, the new republic has been embroiled in political turmoil. At the core of the conflict are the two major ethnic groups: the numerically and politically dominant Greek Cypriots and the Turkish Cypriot minority. Each community has pressed toward its own concept of a sovereign and independent Cyprus. The concept emphasized by the Greek Cypriots has been a united state with majority rule; the Turkish Cypriots have focused on a federal framework with a relatively autonomous minority area. Not less important has been the political tension within the Greek Cypriot community itself, where a minority sustains the idea of “enosis” (union with Greece), while the majority no longer views that cause as possible or desirable.

Although, the solution to the political tensions in Cyprus seemed at first a purely domestic matter, it soon involved Greece, Turkey and the great powers. Thus, Greece and Turkey continued their involvement in the island’s affairs, not just as guarantors of the settlement arrangements but in pursuit of their own political and security interests.
Those interests touched as well the conflicting strategic goals of the United States and the Western alliance on one hand, and the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc on the other with respect to stability in the eastern Mediterranean.

The 1974 Turkish invasion was a turning point in the history of Cyprus and radically changed the balance of power on the island. The most immediate effect was the partition of the territory and the new perception among the Greek Cypriots that mainland Turkey was the real power center in future settlement decisions. Meanwhile, the Turkish Cypriots felt a sense of increased security.

The population shifts following the invasion were initially dramatized by the large exodus of Greek Cypriot refugees from the north. These shifts were accentuated later by the airlifting of Turkish Cypriot refugees from the south to northern Cyprus via Turkey. The end result was the almost complete segregation of the two ethnic communities.

This situation—an alternation between periods of tense peace and occasional conflicts involving bloodshed—has continued from the early 1960s to the present. Its effects have been felt by the ordinary people from both communities. They have been deprived not just of their own land, but also contact with their friends, relatives, properties, and, most importantly, their "identity."

Considering the historical and the geographical situation as well as the present strategic situation, Cyprus and those outside powers directly involved should now make efforts for the island to become a truly independent and reunited state. The point of departure for the approach to achieve this objective described in this paper is the current reality that there are two peoples and two states on the island searching for an acceptable system that will safeguard the security and survival of both peoples. But from the author's point of view, a solution to the Cyprus
problem can be found not in the traditional way of trying to look for a comprehensive political solution but rather in a gradual approach which emphasized confidence-building through social-psychological and economic cooperation to promote shared prosperity first and closer political cooperation later. This solution not only would help both communities but would contribute to peace and security in the sensitive eastern Mediterranean and Europe as well.

This paper draws on the experiences of the author with UN Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) as the Argentine Task Force Commander between January 1996 and February 1997 in addition to written descriptions and analyses of the history and current situation in Cyprus.

SECTION I

General Situation

A. Geographic Environment

The island of Cyprus, a nation replete with complications and contradictions, is located in the eastern corner of the Mediterranean sea at the meeting point of three continents: Europe, Asia and Africa, (See map 1.) Its location has added considerably to the importance and development of the island. With an area of 9,250 square kilometers and approximately 800,000 inhabitants, it has always

Map 1 – Eastern Mediterranean
been considered a key geostrategic position in the Middle East. Due largely to its geographic situation, Cyprus has had an eventful history since early times.

To the north, lies Turkey, just 60 kilometers away at the nearest point. Syria, Lebanon and Israel lie to the east, and Greece lies about 400 kilometers to the west.

The island is divided by two mountain ranges, a fertile central plain and two ethnic communities confronting one another in frank opposition. (See map 2.) Apparently, centuries of social processes are responsible for the ethnic makeup of contemporary Cyprus. One can find that over the millennia, the inhabitants of the island have adapted to local environments in different ways, all of them within less than 10,000 square kilometers of land.

The Troodos Mountains cover most of the southern and western portions of the country, accounting for roughly half of the total area. The narrow Kyrenia Range extending along the
northern coast occupies less area and its elevations are lower. The eastern peninsula of Karpasia points towards Asia Minor, to which Cyprus belongs geologically.

In *Bitter Lemons*, published in 1934, British writer Lawrence Durrell described the Troodos mountains as “an unlovely jumble of crags and heavyweight rocks” and the Kyrenia Range as “belonging to... the world of Gothic Europe, its lofty crags studded with crusader castles.”

In antiquity, rich copper deposits were discovered on the slopes of the Troodos mountains. The mining and working of this metal shaped the country’s political and economic development from the time it was discovered until the twentieth century. During the late 1970s, the mining of asbestos was developed and vineyards were planted widely in the region because of the suitability of soils and drainage in the mountains. Most of the inhabitants of the area have been fruit and vine cultivators, living in villages located at the head of the valleys where water is available.

The Mesaoria plain is the agricultural heartland of the island. Its productiveness for wheat and barley depends very much on winter rainfall; other crops are grown using irrigation. Little evidence remains that this wide central plain was once covered with rich forests whose timber was used by ancient conquerors for building their vessels. The now divided capital of the country, Nicosia, lies on the middle part of this central plain.

Nicosia is unique among the Mediterranean island capitals for not being located close to the seaside. It is now divided by the so-called “Green Line,” which separates the capital city of the (Turkish) north, named Lefkosa, from the capital of the (Greek) south, Nicosia.

The areas occupied by the British Sovereign Bases complete this geographical description. As a part of the United Kingdom, these bases (Dekelia and Akrotiri) were created in 1960 as a
result of the provisions of the Zurich-London agreements. (See map 3.) Great Britain retained perpetual sovereignty over these two areas on the southern coast of Cyprus that cover about 260 square kilometers as well as some other areas to ensure the effective operation of the bases. In the past, the bases served as headquarters and supply areas for the British forces in the Middle East. More recently, during the Gulf War, they were chosen to support and monitor the air campaign against Iraq. Despite of the economic benefits for Cyprus derived from the bases, they have been seen as a controversial point in the country. All of the island’s political parties have agreed that the United Kingdom should not hold sovereign right over the areas in perpetuity.
B. Historical Background

The existence of Cyprus can be traced back to the 7th millennium B.C during the Neolithic Period. In the 13th century B.C during the last part of the Bronze Age, the Mycenaean Greeks came to Cyprus for the first time as immigrants and merchants. They settled down and introduced the Greek language and culture, both of which have been preserved to this day.

As a result of the Greek settlers, Cyprus became part of the kingdom of Alexander “The Great” at the end of the 4th century B.C. During the first century B.C, it was made a province of the Great Roman Empire of the East. This lasted until the 4th century A.D and the split of the Roman Empire. Control of Cyprus shifted to Constantinople and the Byzantine period in Cyprus began. (See map 4.) The Crusades brought an end to Byzantium’s rule in the 12th century A.D, when crusaders led by King Richard the Lionhearted of England conquered the island. One year
later Richard gave the island to Guy of Lusignan from France, and it was ruled by the Lusignan family until 1489 when it became part of the Republic of Venice. In 1571, Cyprus was conquered by the Ottomans and remained under Ottoman rule (along with the Greek mainland) for centuries. (See map 5.) The substantial Turkish population on the island dates from this period.

Map 5 - Cyprus During the Ottoman Empire

After the Greek war of independence in 1828, in which a large number of Cypriots participated, the possibility of the incorporation of Cyprus into the Greek state was raised. This did not happen, however, and Cyprus remained under Ottoman rule until 1878. In that year, the expansionist policy of Tsarist Russia led the Turks to cede Cyprus to Great Britain in return for a British promise to help Turkey in the event of an attack by Russia on certain bordering provinces. The Turkish-British agreement was concluded in complete disregard of the interests and wishes of the Cypriot people, many of whom wanted union of the island with Greece (the first sign of "enosis").
At the outbreak of World War I, Cyprus was annexed to the British Empire, and in 1925 it was officially declared a British colony. During this time, the Turkish population of the island—descendants of members of the occupation force and others—were invited to choose between repatriation to Turkey or permanent settlement in Cyprus. A number of them chose to remain in Cyprus. Between 1878, when Cyprus was handed over to Great Britain, and 1955, when the struggle for liberation from British rule was started by the Greek Cypriots, the Turks in Cyprus shared the island with the Greeks and lived in peace and harmony with them. When the independence movement against the British by the Greek population began in 1955, however, the Turkish Cypriots began to agitate for partition.4 The active involvement of Greece and Turkey in the struggle in support of their respective ethnic groups dates from this period.

Cyprus became an independent republic in 1960 after a four-year period of guerrilla warfare by Greek Cypriots against the British. Its independence was based on compromises reached in Zurich between Greece and Turkey and in London between representatives of Greece, Turkey, Britain and the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities that ruled out both partition and "enosis" (union). Archbishop Makarios, head of the Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus, was elected president of the new republic while a Turkish Cypriot leader became vice-president. Greece and Turkey were also permitted to station small military forces on the island to train the new Cypriot armed forces.

In the early 1960s, political misunderstandings produced a deadlock in intercommunal political relations. The hostility between the leaders was followed by intercommunal conflict that led to the segregation of the two ethnic communities. After 1963, there were, in effect, two administrations calling for totally different objectives. The result was stalemate and violence. In 1964, the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) was established. Even with
the UN troops as a buffer, the conflict continued and brought Greece and Turkey close to a war. After a few days of negotiations and a short cease-fire, the Turkish government reinforced its troops on Cyprus and ordered them to secure the northern part of the island. By the early 1970s, Cyprus had become, in fact, a partitioned country, and the presidential authority of the central government did not extend into the Turkish enclaves.

In Greece, the military junta that had seized power in 1967 considered Makarios as an obstacle to an acceptable settlement of the Cyprus problem. With Greek encouragement, a group of Greek Cypriot dissidents opposed to Makarios’ policy formed a political front in 1973 that advocated “enosis” (union). Makarios felt in a position to challenge the opposition to his government in the Greek-officered National Guard and announced a purge of disloyal officers and a proposal to reduce the period of conscription. The reply to Makarios' challenge came soon in the form of a coup d’etat led by the Greek officers, who acted on instructions from Athens. As a result of the coup, Makarios was ousted on July 15, 1974, and managed to escape to London through the British bases. The Cypriot government did not foresee, however, the Turkish reaction to the coup.

On July 20, 1974, Turkey invaded Cyprus and occupied the northern part of the island. It justified its two-phased intervention in Cyprus by pointing to the threat the Greek-sponsored coup against Makarios posed to the security of the Turkish Cypriot community. Clearly after this operation, Cyprus would never be the same: some 180,000 persons became refugees during the fighting and many on both sides were killed or kidnapped. Another result of the invasion was the collapse of the Greek military government, the resignation of the freshly installed President of Cyprus and the return of Makarios to power. The movement of populations would continue, and by 1977, the buffer zone between the two cease-fire lines marked the almost total segregation of
ethnic communities on Cyprus. The Turkish invasion caused not just the loss of territory and lives, but it has been a matter of deep animosity among the population of the island as a whole.

Since the partition of the island in 1974, UNFICYP (United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus) forces have created and manned the “buffer zone” which separates the cease-fire lines of the Cyprus National Guard in the south from the Turkish forces in the north. The northern area is inhabited mainly by the Turkish forces deployed on the island and the Turkish Cypriot minority. This area constitutes about 38% of the island’s territory. Within the buffer zone that is under UN supervision, a handful of villagers have been living and working since 1974. Presently, some problems and minor provocations between the two armies and communities come from these settlements.

Free movement across the line is actually forbidden. The only crossings permitted are by occasional government officials and authorized outsiders, who enter and leave at the single checkpoint located in the old town of Nicosia-Lefkosa.

C. The Population

In the aftermath of the 1974 war, the ordinary people in Cyprus have been the real victims of humiliations and sufferings. The effects of the conflict on the Cypriot population, Greek and Turkish Cypriots alike, have been so deep that they will take a long time to overcome.

Before 1974, Cyprus had experienced large scale internal migrations as a consequence of the intercommunal conflict. The first one came in 1963, when the Turkish Cypriot minority withdrew into enclaves located in the northern and southern parts of the island. The second one occurred barely ten years later after the Turkish invasion.

Between 1960 and 1963, though, Turkish Cypriots lived within the Greek Cypriot community without incidents. The old pattern of peaceful cohabitation under British rule prevailed
and the two communities lived together in rural areas and towns as well. In 1964, however, after fierce intercommunal conflict, 20,000 to 25,000 Turkish Cypriots left the areas where they were in the minority and moved to areas of communal concentration where they lived as refugees in isolated enclaves surrounded by Greek Cypriots. Until 1968, they were not allowed to leave the enclaves and survived with essential supplies provided by mainland Turkey. For these people it was a particular struggle for survival. Water, electricity and telephones were furnished by the Greek Cypriots. Even today, some cities in the north are still being supported by the south.

The Turkish invasion in 1974 had dramatic consequences for the population, producing not just heavy casualties but also creating about 180,000 refugees. Even though both sides suffered losses, the Greek Cypriots experienced by far the greater loss. More than 6,000 Greek Cypriots were reported killed and 3,000 missing. After a prisoner exchange in 1979, Cypriot authorities charged that 2,000 persons were still missing. Of the Cypriots who became refugees in their own land, 150,000 were identified as Greek Cypriots who left their homes and properties in the north and fled to the south.

The situation of the Turkish Cypriot refugees was solved in two ways: some managed by their own to escape to the north, and others, who were under British protection on the bases in southern Cyprus, were flown out to Turkey from where they were sent to the Turkish-occupied areas in northern Cyprus.

Meanwhile, emigration also affected the Greek population in northern Cyprus. Those leaving the country went to Greece, Great Britain, Australia, the United States of America, and to countries in Africa in search of work. By 1977, the buffer zone between the two cease-fire lines marked the almost total segregation of ethnic communities on Cyprus, with a few Turkish Cypriots remaining in the south and some Greek Cypriots living within the enclaves in the north.
Presently, the Turkish Cypriot population in the north fears potential difficulties coming from problems in mainland Turkey, including unemployment and an increasing inflation rate. Political difficulties have arisen from the contrast between the economic problems in northern Cyprus and the recovery and prosperity in the south. Further, Turkey’s policy of settling thousands of Anatolian Turks in northern Cyprus is tending to destroy the Turkish-Cypriot ethnic identity.\(^9\) The mainland settlers are estimated presently at about 35,000.

In addition to these problems, there are some others, such as the alleged misbehavior of the Turkish occupation forces in the north. A confidential UN report written in 1994 condemned the Turkish Cypriot authorities for the systematic abuse of the human rights of the enslaved Greek Cypriots who remained in the occupied areas following the 1974 invasion. According to the report, these offenses include restrictions on travel, on the right to own property, on freedom of movement, and discrimination in education, health care and freedom of religion. The report concludes: “The Greek Cypriots of Karpas are now a small minority in a part of Cyprus which was once almost totally Greek and they are subject to a system whose long term aim appears to be directed towards the eventual extinction of this community in Karpas.” Additionally, it states: “The UN peacekeeping mission has been frustrated, hampered and limited in its efforts to monitor and implement the Vienna Agreement” [under which the Turkish Cypriot side agreed to protect the interests of the enslaved population]. “This is the result of a deliberate policy on the part of the ‘northern authorities.’ That policy is based primarily on restricting UNFICYP freedom of movement and access to the Greek Cypriot community, and is contrary to the Vienna Agreement.”\(^{10}\) A delegation from ASME-HUMANITAS, a German humanitarian organization, which visited Cyprus in April 1976, had instructions to investigate violations of humanitarian provisions. They had the opportunity to visit the Turkish occupied part of Cyprus and talk to the
authorities responsible for the Turkish Cypriot community. Despite protests from the Turkish Cypriot leader, Rauf Denktash, the delegation continued its investigations and completed its final report in 1977. According to that report: "b) the population in the north faces great difficulties because of the lack of security for their lives and property. c) The conditions of life of the Greek Cypriots in the north are particularly oppressive as they are deprived of their basic human rights. In particular:

- They are deprived of the freedom of movement and trade
- They live under permanent fear for their life and property
- They are deprived of proper medical services and of secondary education.

"The problems of the population in the north are becoming greater because the attitude of the mainland Turks who have settled there in thousands. We received many complaints of many crimes and atrocities committed by the mainland Turks against the population of the north, both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots without being punished."

In the south, the situation of the population is different because of economic prosperity, the high level of education and a well-developed health care system. Nevertheless, the effect of the conflict can be perceived mainly in the feelings of the entire population, above all, because of a permanent sense of insecurity and danger.

SECTION II

THE CONFLICT

A. The Roots of the Conflict

The roots of the Cyprus conflict lie in the struggle of the Greek Cypriot majority to achieve "enosis" or union with Greece, an idea that emerged in 1820 during the Greek war of independence, and developed during the British rule. "Enosis" however, has always been hated
by the minority Turkish Cypriot population, who consider Turkey as their motherland and for whom “enosis” would mean becoming an even smaller minority within Greece. Therefore, they responded with their own vision of a divided Cyprus: “taksim” (partition). Strong ties between Greek Cypriots and Greece and between Turkish Cypriots and Turkey were soon established and have endured.

Intercommunal violence was a feature of life in the 1950s in addition to the anti-colonial struggle against the British. Both communities had weaponry smuggled into the island from supporters in Greece and Turkey. In addition, the pro-enosis Greek Cypriot organization EOKA conducted a campaign of terror against the British and the Turkish Cypriots, and the British provided arms for the Turkish community as protection against EOKA. The governmental structure of the new Cypriot state set out in the 1959 constitution attempted to deal with these divisions by avoiding either enosis or taksim and by establishing a system of shared powers by the two communities. After a brief period of peace and cooperation, the disputes and violence between the two communities resumed.

Another point of dispute between them was the proposed amendment of the Constitution in 1963 that would have weakened the position of the Turkish community. According to the Turkish Cypriots, the amendments were an attempt of Makarios, who supported "enosis" or union with Greece, to destroy the bi-communal character of the Republic.  

For the Greek Cypriots, there was a more threatening reaction from the Turkish Government. Thus the Greek Cypriots’ rebellion against their own state, and threats of invasion from Turkey itself, which used the presidential proposals for amending the Constitution as an excuse for putting into effect a plan for the partition of Cyprus. The above-mentioned differences ended up in a major confrontation between the Turkish and Greek Cypriot irregular forces in
1963 with numerous casualties and the taking of hostages of both sides. As a result, both Turkey and Greece threatened intervention. The situation suddenly escalated and seemed on the verge of an international conflict. In response to the fighting, a British peacekeeping contingent was installed on the island. Initially welcomed by the Greek Cypriots, who feared a Turkish invasion, it soon became clear that the British mission was not acceptable to either side. The Greek Cypriots felt the British could not be impartial and the Turkish Cypriots felt the force was not strong enough to deter the larger Greek Cypriot forces. Therefore, in March 1964, the UN Security Council approved the establishment of an international peacekeeping force, the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP).^{13}

The UN force succeeded in separating the opponents and, although isolated incidents continued, there was no major fighting for several months. Nevertheless, in June 1964, the Greek Cypriot government organized the National Guard, who soon became actively involved in the intercommunal conflict. Greek army soldiers were infiltrated into the new army in large numbers. After several incidents, however, President Makarios was convinced that the goal of “enosis” was almost impossible to achieve because of Turkey’s willingness to use its superior military power. Soon, pro-enosis Cypriot groups and Greek officers began a campaign to subvert the Makarios Government. Their efforts resulted in the overthrow of Makarios in 1974 and the subsequent Turkish invasion.

**B. The 1974 Turkish Invasion**

The Turkish invasion of 1974 and the final division of the island had its roots in the 1963 struggle between Turkish and Greek Cypriots in Nicosia. During this crisis, the vice-president (a Turkish Cypriot) declared: “the Republic of Cyprus had ceased to exist”^{14} and representatives
from the north withdrew from the government on the pretext that the government of Cyprus and its forces were ready to annihilate the Turkish Cypriot minority.

Turkish agents in the north started moving the Turkish Cypriot population, not for their protection as was alleged, but in order to create compact Turkish areas to sustain the geographical separation of both communities. The Turkish military contingent stationed in the north of Cyprus actively participated in assisting those rebelling against the Greek-Cypriot led national government by moving out of its barracks and deploying in the northern part of Nicosia.

"Taksim" (partition), advocated by the Turkish Cypriots, and "enosis" (union), called for by the Greek Cypriots, were the extreme positions sustained by both most radical sides, impeding any attempt at the negotiation of a resolution of the problem.

In 1974, two days after the coup against Makarios was carried out, Turkish Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit flew from London to seek the British participation in a joint military operation on Cyprus under the Treaty of Guarantee signed in 1959. London denied the request and stepped aside in the conflict. However, according to private conversations carried out by the author during 1996 with some Greek Cypriot officials, Britain may have indirectly given its support to the Turkish side. Finding the true story is difficult because one side's version is totally opposite from the other.

With his request denied, Ecevit returned to Ankara to prepare a unilateral military intervention on behalf of the Turkish Cypriot community. Western countries, aware that Turkey had threatened intervention on several occasions during the 1960s, thought that diplomatic pressure would dissuade the Turks again. They were mistaken.

On July 20, 1974, Turkey launched a seaborne assault backed by air support on the northern coast of Cyprus. Three brigades of about 6,000 troops participated in the invasion. Soon
after the invasion began, 1,000 paratroopers were dropped on the Mesaoria plain close to the capital city of Nicosia.

When the UN attempted to impose a cease-fire on July 22, Turkish troops held a triangle-shaped territory in northern Cyprus, with the city of Kyrenia in the center. Although the negotiations were being carried out in Geneva between representatives from Britain, Greece, and Turkey, Turkish troops continued operating, with the purpose of broadening the bridgehead of their occupation forces.

Even after the cease-fire lines were drawn on August 14, two divisions of the Turkish Army advanced on August 14, crossing the cease-fire lines. During the attack, the Greek Cypriot resistance was broken under heavy artillery, air and armor bombardment. By August 16, the Turkish advance reached the predetermined "Attila Line," with Turkish troops in control of almost 40% of the territory of Cyprus.

According to Turkish statements, this operation, far from being an invasion, was a "peace operation," undertaken to prevent possible atrocities by Greek Cypriots after the coup d'état, and because of the threat from the Greek Junta to proclaim formally the "enosis." For these two reasons, Turkey invoked its right to intervene unilaterally under the Treaty of Guarantee.

The segregation of the Greek and Turkish Cypriot ethnic communities, as well as the permanent presence of two regular divisions of the Turkish Army on the north, gave the Turkish Cypriots a sense of security, absent since 1958. By 1996, only about 70 Turkish Cypriots remained in the south.

In February 1975, the "Turkish Federate State of Cyprus" was formally proclaimed under the protection of 30,000 Turkish troops. It is not recognized as a sovereign state by countries other than Turkey, however. Despite the military success, friction between mainland Turks and
Turkish Cypriots, including 47,000 refugees from the south arose over the acquisition and occupation of abandoned Greek Cypriot properties. After the struggle, Turkish soldiers who fought in Cyprus were allowed to settle with their families in former Greek Cypriot homes. In this situation, the overcrowded Turkish Cypriot population in the north, in addition to the Turkish troops stationed there, had to live in inadequate and scarce housing which forced them into poverty and the precarious situation they still face. In addition, a number of immigrants from Anatolia (the southern part of Turkey close to Cyprus), were authorized and encouraged by the Turkish Government to settle in northern Cyprus with the dual purpose of occupying the area and tending to change the local ethnic balance.

Even though the outcome of the Turkish invasion clearly benefited the Turkish side from the military point of view, the precarious political, economic and social situation is driving the unrecognized and lonely state of northern Cyprus to a dead end.

C. Strategic Situation

The number of old and new fortresses that cover the Cypriot landscape is proof of the island’s history of armed conflict. Its minerals and forest resources and the island’s strategic location along trade routes between the Middle East and Europe have made Cyprus the victim of repeated occupations.

In this strategic environment, the conflict that has developed within this small island seems at first glance to be a tactical arena for the front-line contestants. Behind them, however, the competing interests of Greece and Turkey in Cyprus following the end of British colonial rule in 1960 have deeply affected the national security of the country. Competition between these two outside countries has created and encouraged intercommunal tension. The subversive Greek
actions against the Makarios government, for instance, culminated in the coup and provoked the final Turkish military intervention in 1974.

The responsibilities accorded by the Zurich-London agreement in 1959 to Greece and Turkey, as well as Great Britain, for guaranteeing the security of the island have often been ignored or misused. Both Greece and Turkey have intervened in Cypriot affairs in ways that went beyond their legitimate security roles and Britain has usually stood aside.

After 1974, the strategic situation in and around Cyprus changed for the worse, and the simple local conflict expanded its scope due to the active military engagement of outside participants. Thus, Greece and Turkey—ironically both NATO members—have been the powers directly involved in the conflict. Behind them, the United States played an active but ambivalent role between the two allies that constitute the southeastern flank of NATO. Meanwhile the Soviet Union supported Greece because of their strong political and religious ties. The Soviet Union was quick to capitalize on these disputes in order to keep the NATO Alliance off balance.¹⁶

These intricate relationships lately have led to an escalation of the conflict even with the collapse of the Soviet Union. In 1996, Cyprus acquired the T-80 Russian made main battle tank, despite the threats from Turkey that it would sink ships transporting the tanks. In a military parade that year, carried out to celebrate Independence Day, the tanks were presented. Their appearance in Nicosia surprised not only the Turkish authorities, who reacted angrily, but also most of the foreign officials and the Cypriot population as well. The Turks responded by increasing the size of their forces in northern Cyprus in addition to modernizing their tanks, weaponry and equipment on the island.¹⁷

Strong criticism came from around the world and a UN Security Council resolution on 23 December 1996 expressed concern over the introduction of sophisticated weaponry into the
Greek Cypriot arsenal. Nevertheless, the Greek Cypriot authorities have decided to go ahead with
the purchase of the highly developed Russian S-300 (SA-10) and TOR-M1 missile system, whose
150-kilometers range would reach well inside Turkey. Turkish officials have declared that if the
missiles are installed, they will conduct pre-emptive strikes against the missile bases and will
establish a naval blockade of Cyprus.

The actions taken by the Greek Cypriots have forced Turkey to make public its own arms
purchase options too, and have introduced Israel as another actor in the scene. In February 1998,
Turkish officials revealed the existence of an open defense relationship between the two countries.
From the military material perspective, a Turkish-Israeli relationship makes sense, because both of
them actually operate a great deal of US equipment that has been modernized by Israeli industries.
It is still unclear whether this relationship might figure into a solution of the Cyprus problem, but
it is one of several possibilities being considered. Meanwhile, NATO’s suggestions for the
cancellation of Turkish and Greek flights over the island have not been heeded.

Despite the broad range of shared strategic interests and the close cooperation in dealing
with Iraq since 1990 of the United States and Turkey, some developments have complicated US-
Turkish relations. The first one was in 1990 at the end of the Cold War when Turkey perceived
that its strategic importance as a front-line state in the NATO-Warsaw Pact confrontation was
diminishing. The second one occurred when many Turkish officials viewed US restrictions on
arms sales as an undeclared arms embargo on Turkey, leading Turkey generals to worry that the
United States might not be a reliable partner. From the US perspective, Turkey’s insistence on
completing a natural gas pipeline project with Iran has raised great concern in Washington. This
direction of Turkish energy policy directly challenges US efforts to contain Iran through an
economic embargo.
At the same time, Turkey is worried about NATO enlargement. From Ankara’s point of view, NATO’s enlargement plans are focused too much on central Europe and ignore areas to the south where Turkey believes security challenges could arise. Turkish discomfort comes from the increasing Russian military presence on its southern flank, and its involvement in the Caucuses.

A remaining question for all of the parties was dramatized by the conflict between Turkey and Greece over an island on the Aegean in 1996. If Athens and Ankara could come to an struggle over a tiny Aegean island, what could happen in Cyprus where so much Greek and Turkish national prestige has been invested for years.

In the meantime, Greece, despite having achieved its major goal of becoming a member of the European Community (an objective not yet reached by Turkey), worries more than ever that the traditional Greek-Turkish strategic balance in the Aegean is changing in Turkey’s favor. Also Greece looks with disfavor on Ankara’s growing role in the Balkans. In 1992, Turkey was among the first countries in the world to recognize and assist the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and it has close relations with Albania, Bosnia also causes increasing problems between Greece and Turkey with the Greeks supporting Serbia and the Turks supporting the Muslims and the government in Sarajevo.

D. The Orthodox Church in the Conflict

The Church of Cyprus, a self-governing Orthodox Church (autocephalous since 431 A.D.) with strong ties to the Greek Orthodox Church, has played a major role in the Cyprus conflict. Only the main aspects of this complex issue are described below. The Church has been for four centuries not only the spiritual support of the Greek Cypriot people, but also a powerful institution involved directly in the country’s economic and political affairs. Indeed, the Church of
Cyprus suffered heavy losses from the Turkish Invasion in 1974, but still remains wealthy and well organized.

During the Ottoman rule, the Church of Cyprus was used as an administrative device for governing the Orthodox Christian Cypriots. The Ottoman system, in which the head of the Church was regarded also as “ethnarch” or civil leader of the Greek Christian population, was continued by the British when they took over the island in 1878. This explains the double role, both ecclesiastical and civil, which was played by Archbishop Makarios III (in office 1950-77) and which was so widely misunderstood by the British public during the Greek Cypriot struggle for independence in the 1950s. Those who regarded Makarios as a churchman who was meddling gratuitously in politics failed to appreciate that he was following a long historical tradition.

During their rule, the British weakened the position of the Church by avoiding it in the appointment of schoolteachers, collecting taxes, and other actions. Inevitably, friction developed between the church and the colonial authorities, provoking active Greek support for “enosis.” Makarios successor, however, Archbishop Chrysostom, who succeeded Makarios in 1977, has, however, acted solely as a religious leader.

For nationalist Greek Cypriots, the idea of the nation was founded upon three pillars: the tradition of Greek Christian culture, the unbreakable unity of church and state, and the union with Greece. Being Christian in Cyprus meant being Greek.

One can conclude that in the Greek community in Cyprus there was no distinction between church and state; religious and political leaders were frequently the same people. Although the Archbishop now acts solely as a religious leader, the influence of the Orthodox Church in the day-to-day life in Cyprus is still important. Islamic religious leaders do not play such an important role within the Turkish community which tends to follow the secular state model of
Turkey. The Islamic faith of Turkish Cypriots is an important part of their culture and identity that separates them from the Greek Cypriots. Accordingly, to be able to understand the Cyprus conflict, western military and political leaders should understand not just the historical background and the political situation but the transcendental role that religion plays in both communities.

E. The United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP)

Nowhere has the United Nations been engaged in a regional conflict longer than in Cyprus. When post-independence intercommunal disputes erupted in a virtual civil war in December 1963 and other mediation efforts were unsuccessful, the United Nations interceded. Since then it has played a critical role. In the aftermath of the war in February 1964, after intense debates in the UN Security Council decided that the only effective course of action was the deployment of an international force under the auspices of the United Nations. In March 1964 the Security Council adopted Resolution 186 authorizing, with the consent of the Government of Cyprus, the formation of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP). 

UNFICYP’s purpose was “to prevent a recurrence of fighting, and as necessary, to contribute to the maintenance and restoration of law and order and a return to normal conditions.” This purpose remained the UNFICYP mission until the drastic change in conditions in 1974. At dawn on March 27, 1964, UNFICYP became operational and deployed a total of 6369 troops. Austria, Canada and Great Britain provided the majority of the troops, augmented by units from Denmark, Finland, Ireland and Sweden. *(See map 6.)* Over the next ten years the overall troop strength decreased to 2800 with Canada having the largest contingent. After the Canadian decision to withdraw the Canadian Battalion from Cyprus in 1993, the force strength dropped to barely 1300 with troops provided primarily by Argentina, Great Britain, Austria and Hungary.
Map 6 - Original UNFICYP Deployments

For its first ten years, UNFICYP troops were posted at different locations throughout the country. They were not in a position to play a critical role in 1974 when the Turkish army invaded and occupied approximately 38% of the island. After a cease-fire agreement, UNFICYP redeployed in a demilitarized zone (DMZ) comprising some 3.5% of the territory that created a thin buffer between the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot areas. The limited size of the Force and the lack of adequate intelligence capabilities did not make it a credible deterrent capable of preventing a renewal of hostilities. From that moment on, the country has been divided by the “Green Line” cutting through the territory from Morphu on the northwest coast to Famagusta on the northeast coast going through the capital, Nicosia. Operationally, the DMZ was divided in four sectors, and the UNFICYP national contingents assigned in each assumed not only military but also governmental responsibilities. UNFICYP’s civilian police (UNCIVPOL), staffed with officers from Australia and Sweden, enforced the law in the DMZ and maintained a liaison with
counterpart authorities in both Cypriot communities. When the Canadians withdrew in 1993, the buffer zone was divided into three sectors: Sector 1 on the west assigned to Argentina, Sector 2 in the center assigned to Great Britain and Sector 4 on the east assigned to the Austro-Hungarian contingent. (See map 7.)

Map 7 – Present UNIFCYP Deployments

The UNIFCYP mandate also changed in 1974 by the Security Council to: “*To maintain the Status Quo at the time of the 1974 Cease-fire Agreement, restore normal conditions and perform humanitarian functions.*” The tasks assigned to the Force were:

- Keep the buffer zone under constant surveillance
- Patrol the buffer zone
- Supervise civilian activities
- Monitor cease-fire violations
• Facilitate civilian humanitarian activities

• Pursue exhaustive discussions with parties.

Relations between UNFICYP and the host government have been uneven from the outset. After the terms of reference for the operation of the force in the Republic were established, the sole representative of the Republic to the Force was the ambassador appointed by President Makarios. The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) has never formally accepted UNFICYP. Rauf Denktash, President of the TRNC, said that his government would cooperate with the UNFICYP only so long as the interests of the Turkish-Cypriot community were protected. Despite this situation, UNFICYP has managed to maintain acceptable relations with the authorities in both communities.

Of particular note is the force’s humanitarian work, which involves facilitating intercommunal contacts, maintaining the supply of water and electricity from one part of the island to another, and arranging for family visits in the south by Greek-Cypriots living in the north. In a quiet way the Force has assisted in the development of confidence-building measures which in the long-run will be the most important contribution to the solution of the Cyprus question.

From the beginning, financial difficulties plagued UNFICYP even though in theory the participating governments and the Government of Cyprus should finance the operation. The practice up to now, however, has been that those governments which have sent contingents pay the bill and hope for some future reimbursement. Eventually the patience and the exchequers of the governments concerned will be exhausted, and UNFICYP will lose its financial viability.

During the past few years, the troop strength of UNFICYP has been drastically reduced and currently stands at just over a thousand troops. Further disengagement, or even total
withdrawal, cannot be ruled out despite the fact that it is widely perceived that the recent
incidents near the “Green Line” in the summer of 1996 (resulting in the deaths of one Turkish and
four Greek Cypriots) might have escalated into something worse were it not for the presence of
UN troops in the general vicinity.

Clearly, both the Greek and the Turkish Cypriot leaderships see some utility in the
continued presence of UNFICYP, although not for the same reasons. For the Turkish Cypriots,
who have been protected since 1974 by a large contingent of Turkish troops, the UN Force serves
only a limited purpose. It is useful insofar as it maintains some stability along the Green Line
buffer zone that separates the two communities—a physical separation that the Turkish Cypriots
welcome, absent any definitive settlement of the island’s status. Of course, the island’s current
territorial division is as favorable to the Turkish Cypriots as it is unacceptable to the Greek
Cypriots. For the Turkish Cypriots it is the Turkish forces, not UNFICYP, that provide an
effective deterrent to the Greek Cypriots who the Turkish Cypriots see as always looking for an
opportunity to reverse the 1974 disaster.

For the Greek Cypriots, the relative stability maintained by UNFICYP also serves their
interests. However, for the Greek Cypriot leadership the greater utility of the presence of the UN
troops lies in securing the uninterrupted involvement of the international community and the
United Nations—specifically the Security Council, which authorized UNFICYP—in the Cyprus
problem. This approach is consistent with the Greek Cypriot policy of internationalizing the issue
as a means of exerting pressure both on the Turkish Cypriot and on Ankara. Greek Cypriots
leaders have always been concerned enough about the end of UNFICYP’s mandate that they have
campaigned to ensure its continuation.
F. Economic roots of the conflict

Since World War II the people of Cyprus have experienced a substantial improvement in their living standards. Cyprus benefited economically from the war, and in some decades its economy grew at the same rate as other countries that experienced the western European economic development that began in the 50's and lasted up to the first oil price increase of 1973. Through this period Cypriot per capita income increased steadily; the economy diversified and ceased being that of a third world colony. This success was achieved despite the political turmoil that occurred during the shaking off of British rule in the 1950s and in the intercommunal warfare of the 1960s.

Some of the fundamental and proximate causes of the breakdown of the 1960 constitutional order were economic. The 1960 Constitution was externally secured by the Treaty of Guarantee but also rested upon an economic equilibrium between the two communities. This equilibrium provided the Turkish-Cypriot community with certain economic rights, including a 30% share of public services posts, 40% of the jobs in the military, and other benefits. It seems however, that the Constitution gave the Turkish-Cypriots too many rights or at least some Greek-Cypriot leaders thought so. But since the Greek-Cypriots dominated the private sector as well as the civil sector, the Turkish Cypriots were at a severe disadvantage and became victims of economic discrimination.

Intercommunal turmoil over jobs, budgets and taxes resulted in Byzantine discussions where any gain by one side required a matching loss for the other side. In fact the breakdown of the Constitution in 1963 was brought about by an impasse over these economic matters, specifically the Turkish-Cypriot attempt to veto the budget in response to Makarios' refusal to implement Turkish Cypriot municipalities as provided in the Constitution.
The Turkish intervention in 1974 and the de facto division of the island have had major economic impacts on the state. Because of the physical separation of the two communities, economic separation has occurred. Two separate economies, one in the northern part and one in the southern part, have been created, each one with its own infrastructure, trade and commerce and currency. North-South economic relations are more confrontational than co-operative.

Despite the massive migration, losses and resettlement problems, the Greek-Cypriot economy has recovered impressively, thanks in part to foreign capital inflow and to the development of a huge tourist industry. In the North, economic growth has been slower due to the Greek-Cypriot economic blockade. Despite a major economic expansion in construction, tourism and exports that has occurred in the last few years, the disparity in economic development between the two economies is substantial and accelerating. Concentrating on solving intercommunal differences first and then moving out towards economic cooperation and power-sharing afterwards could facilitate the peace process and lead to the establishment of the most suitable governmental system for the island.

SECTION III

AN APPROACH TO A SOLUTION

Having understood that the conflict in Cyprus is a regional one, one can identify three levels of causation:

The first is domestic, in the sense that ethnic heterogeneity fuels movements for separation. The second is regional, in which conflicts between regional powers can cause internal divisions among domestic factions aligned with these powers, often exacerbated by the direct intervention of these powers. The third is global, particularly involving East-West relations that
may contribute to a regional conflict as the superpowers attempt to protect their own interests in the region.

The Cyprus example fully covers all these levels, and one can see why regional conflicts are especially complex and resistant to resolution.

With this understanding the problem, the starting point to the approach described in this paper is the existing situation in the island and the following assumptions:

— Neither side is likely to consent to an arrangement that it believes will leave it worse off.
— The historical and cultural ties of both communities will play a major role in the solution of the problem.
— Both communities are looking for security and cultural and economic survival.
— Both communities enjoy relatively high economic and social standards.
— Passions will be overcome by rational behavior in both sides.

a. Social-Psychological

The inhabitants of Cyprus ordinarily are placid, gentle people, their daily lives revolving around their families, their lands and their religion. Turkish-Cypriots and Greek-Cypriots alike want security and control of their destinies—political, economical and social. Both communities are deeply proud of their cultural heritage and strongly wish to maintain their cultural identity. Even though they are distinct peoples with important differences in culture, religion and language, there are also some common characteristics that result from having lived together in relative harmony for a long time.

When the colonial structure was in process of dissolution, however, nationalist zealots in Greece and Turkey appeared on the scene to promote internal divisions. But the two communities
still have common factors which can be used to reconcile the parts. In this first step, UNIFICYP as well as another agencies can be used effectively, mainly on the humanitarian side.

The elimination of the existing economic disparities would be a good starting point for a confidence-building process in a deliberate effort at putting economic interest ahead of nationalistic passion. The required amount of rationalism can also be developed through education. In conjunction with economic cooperation, the institution of educational reforms to promote mutual respect between Greeks and Turks would be vital.

Finally, it is the view of the author that despite what national or international officials and politicians can say, the majority of Greek Cypriots seem to be ready to share the island with the Turkish-Cypriot minority. Therefore, they intend to be masters in their own land while the Turkish Cypriot minority has become increasingly pessimistic about its economic future and continued sense of isolation. Indeed, they would prefer to endorse territorial compromises (that their leaders resisted) for sharing in the prosperity that the reunification of Cyprus and accession to the European Union would provide.

b. Economic

The pre-condition for stability in Cyprus is **shared prosperity**—that means prosperity for all Cypriots. Shared prosperity is the way to build solidarity on the island. If a settlement is reached purely on the basis using the standard social-psychological considerations, the short-term passions of the parties may be satisfied but not their long-term interests. Moreover, if economic matters are taken into account at the beginning of the peacemaking process, a measure of confidence building will be injected into the process itself.

At this stage, the European Union, acting with US support, could help in balancing the economy in the island by developing both sides. At the same time, the European Union could

32
make the resolution of the Cyprus problem and with it the ending of the ethnic wars, a condition for EU membership with the great economic and political benefits to be derived from it.

c. **Political**

Having used the social-psychological approach followed by economic cooperation, the last step—the political solution—can be developed.

A Cyprus settlement cannot rely solely on economic and social rationalism to organize a political system in such environment. The success of the system finally depends on human factors: the will of the parties to make it work, to cooperate and to act with goodwill in solving their common problems. These human factors take time and patience to be developed, particularly in Cyprus where there are deep feelings of mistrust and hostility. Reconciliation and cooperation are matters that need to be taught in schools and developed within the communities through confidence-building and a permanent system of conflict management in the political arena.

Considering that in Cyprus there are two different cultural identities, it would appear that the eventual solution of the problem should lie on the following conditions:

- The physical separation of the two communities to ensure security and survival (two states or provinces).
- The establishment of some kind of economic union to level off economic disparities and to improve the trade and commerce.
- The establishment of a central government with proportional representation of both sides and protection of minority rights.
- The provision of sustained security and stability by third-party facilitation (UNFICYP, NATO, or United States) and the withdrawal of all foreign troops (Turkish, Greek and British).
This kind of confederation would satisfy the need for autonomy for the distinctive cultural identities that also have sufficient common ties from the social-psychological perspective to wish to be reunited in the pursuit of independence and shared prosperity.

SECTION IV

CONCLUSIONS

A. The small and often not very well known island of Cyprus, located in the Eastern Mediterranean, has been the object of repeated occupations for thousands of years because of its strategic position.

B. The inability of the country and its two communities to solve their own problems, and the interest and interference of outside powers, had worsened the situation, leading to the Turkish invasion of the island in 1974.

C. The signing of the Vienna Agreement almost twenty years ago, did not provide a solution for the people confined into the enclaves, who are still living in unacceptable conditions.

D. From the humanitarian point of view, unacceptable behavior on the island and tolerance of it by the international community might be a dangerous precedent for some unscrupulous leaders in the future.

E. The intervention and pressure exerted by the powerful Church of Cyprus during the conflict has constituted an obstacle more than a viable way towards a solution.

G. The Turkish invasion in 1974 was the turning point in the history of Cyprus and drastically changed the balance of power in the island. Its most pervasive effect was the political division of the island into two separate ethnic communities, reflecting deeply ingrained feelings of cultural identity.
F. The intervention of Turkey, Greece, the United States and Russia in the Cyprus conflict has tended to escalate matters by endangering the whole strategic area of the Eastern Mediterranean.

G. Despite their military victory in 1974, from political, economic, and social viewpoints, the Turks have been unable to improve the living conditions in the north.

In the end, we go back to where we started: the two sides must accept some short-term risks for the sake of far more substantial long-term benefits. Moreover, their political leaders must have the courage to withstand criticism and personal abuse from the “rebel” communities unless majorities on both sides conclude that there are no long-term benefits (economical or psychological) to be obtained by reuniting the island even under a loose federate arrangement.

This solution would be a victory for those promoting ethnic reconciliation in the entire area and a boon for Greek and Turkish Cypriots alike, people who deserve the sense of security and tranquillity that has eluded them for more than 30 years.

Nevertheless, the key to a solution of the conflict lies in the hands of the United States whose role as the unique superpower allows it to take measures not just to solve the problem in Cyprus by convincing Greece and Turkey (and later on the UK) to leave the island and let the population shape its own future but also to keep the balance of power and the stability in the region.

The starting point in this approach is the de facto reality of two peoples and two states on the island searching for an acceptable federal system able to safeguard their security and survival.

WORD COUNT = 9,343
END NOTES

6 Ibid., 36.
8 Bahcheli and Rizopoulos, 28.
9 McDonald, 21.
11 Ibid.
12 Solsten, 35.
14 According to a report published December 31, 1963, in the *New York Times,* the Turkish Cypriot Vice President stated that "the Cyprus Constitution no longer exists because there was 'no possibility' of the Turkish and Greek communities living together on the island." A similar report in the *New York Herald* of the same date reported: "'The Cyprus constitution is dead,' Dr. Küçük, the leader of the island Turkish community told reporters Asked if he wanted Cyprus partitioned between the Turkish minority and the Greek majority, he replied, 'Call it partition if you like.'
15 McDonald, 18.
17 Bahcheli and Rizopoulos, 38.
19 Bahcheli and Rizopoulos, 33.
23 McDonald, 49.
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