Cyprus: Peace, Return and Property

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The future of the properties of the 210,000 internally displaced people who had to leave their properties beginning with the first inter-communal strife in 1964 is one of the most difficult issues of the new set of peace negotiations which began in Cyprus in 2008. After giving a brief historical account of the displacements—how they were managed and perceived on both sides of the island—this article studies the property issue with a specific focus on the management of the IDP properties. Moreover, analysing the problems mainly via reactions to the Annan Plan, the article underlines three issues of security, economics and justice as the keys to comprehend the essence of the problems of property and IDP return, finally making the claim that there is a need to separate the question of IDP return and return of property rights.

Keywords: restitution, Cyprus, property rights

Early in 2008 a new set of peace negotiations began in Cyprus. The future of the properties of the 210,000 internally displaced people (IDPs hereafter) who had to leave their properties beginning with the first inter-communal strife in 1964 is one of the most difficult issues of the peace talks. This article argues that there is a need to separate the question of IDP return and return of property rights. Keeping in mind that every new peace agreement in Cyprus builds on the previous one, this article utilizes the former UN Secretary-General Annan's Plan for Cyprus, which had raised many debates on the Cyprus question in general and the property issue in particular. The data compiled from the results of the referendum on the Annan Plan provide an important tool for analysis of the factors affecting the property issue, particularly pertaining to IDP return, which can be cited as security, economics and justice.

There are approximately 210,000 IDPs (both Greek and Turkish) in Cyprus, which means that one third of the island population had to uproot themselves and leave behind their houses, lands and other immovable property between 1963 and 1974 as a result of inter-communal strife and/or military action. These people have been internally displaced for at least three

decades, generating the longest-standing internal displacement situation in Europe (IDMC 2005). In contrast to the great majority of protracted displacements in the world, those displaced in Cyprus have resettled and resumed their lives and so no longer have pressing humanitarian needs, though a large majority of them, especially the Greek Cypriots, have articulated a strong desire to return to their property (ibid.). As this article will demonstrate, Greek and Turkish Cypriots have completely contrasting views on the property issue, which has created a serious obstacle to a peace settlement on the island. The long duration of displacement further complicates the property problem in Cyprus: over time there have arisen conflicting (Greek v. Turkish) claims for the same land, and this is a common phenomenon rather than an aberration on the island.

This article will revisit the issue of property and IDP return in Cyprus with the hope of contributing to the peace process in the island through its policy implications. The next section will give an overall analysis of the displacements in the island, followed by a part describing the pre and post-1974 property situation and the management of IDP properties on both sides. The subsequent section will analyse the reactions of the islanders towards the Annan Plan and the final section will present the conclusions.

Displacements

Cyprus has the longest standing internal displacement problem in Europe. Depending on the source, the total number of IDPs is anywhere from 210,000 to 265,000. According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), there were 265,000 IDPs in Cyprus in 1999, comprising about 200,000 Greek Cypriots displaced to the south of the island and about 65,000 Turkish Cypriots displaced to the north. (Since 1999 Cypriot IDPs have not been included in UNHCR IDP statistics, and the IDPs on the island are considered to have resettled within the country.) The UNHCR figure is confirmed by the government of the Republic of Cyprus, which reports a total population of 265,000 IDPs. However, according to United Nations Peacekeeping Force (UNFICYP) estimates, by the end of the year 2000, the total IDP population in Cyprus was 210,000 persons comprising 45,000 IDPs in the north, and 165,000 in the south. These discrepancies are most probably the result of applying different criteria for the status of IDPs, with UNHCR in 1999 including children born to displaced persons after the crisis, while UNFICYP in 2000 did not. A 2001 amendment to the Refugee Law extended national IDP status to such children, clarifying the uncertainty in their status which had existed before. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC) database uses the figures estimated by UNFICYP, which have remained constant since 2001 (2005). The CIA World Factbook estimate of the total population of Cyprus is 788,457, of whom 77 per cent are of Greek origin, 18 per cent are Turkish, and the remaining 5 per cent is made up of Maronite, Armenian, and other minorities (2007). Hence, the seemingly small difference of 55,000 IDPs among sources equals 7 per cent of the entire population of the island, a significant figure.

The causes and context of internal displacement in Cyprus can be analysed in two chronological phases:² (1) internal displacement caused by the inter-communal violence of 1963-1964, and (2) dislocation produced by the Turkish military intervention of 1974 and the concomitant events. When an incident took place in Nicosia in December 1963 between an angry Turkish Cypriot group and a Greek Cypriot police patrol, inter-communal tensions were already running high due to the political crisis over the 1960 constitution. During the concomitant street fighting, a few thousand Greek Cypriots were internally displaced, but the majority were able to return to their homes in a matter of days (Patrick 1976: 340). Of the displacements caused by the inter-communal conflicts of 1963-1964, an overwhelming majority of the IDPs were Cypriot Turks (ibid.). In 1970, about 20,000 Cypriot Turks were registered as displaced with the Turkish-Cypriot welfare authorities (ibid: 343). Taking into account non-registered IDPs, the United Nations estimated the number of Turkish Cypriot IDPs to be as high as 25,000, of whom a very large majority were still displaced in 1974 when the Turkish military intervention took place (ibid.). This was almost 24 per cent of the entire Turkish Cypriot population at that time. Thus, by 1970 it was already possible to talk about a de facto secession by the Turks, who were mostly living in armed enclaves (Loizos 2004).

The exodus following the Turkish military intervention of 1974 was massive: 201,000 Greek Cypriots, one third of the entire population of Cyprus, were displaced as an immediate result. (While many of these people could return to their homes by 1977, 167,000 Greek Cypriots remained displaced.) In the aftermath there were still about 13,000 Greek Cypriots living in the Turkish-army-occupied North, and approximately 34,000 Turkish Cypriots living in the South (Kliot and Mansfeld 1994: 334).

During the peace talks that took place in Vienna in July and August 1975 between the representatives of the two communities,

Mr. Denktash [the founder and former president of the later self-declared TRNC] reaffirmed, and it was agreed, that the Greek Cypriots at present in the North of the Island are free to stay and that they will be given every help to lead a normal life, including facilities for education and for the practice of their religion, as well as medical care by their own doctors and freedom of movement in the North (Vienna Agreement 1975, Article 2).³

The agreement also stated that those Turkish Cypriots who were left in the South would be free to move to the North. Despite the Vienna III Agreement, the migration of Cypriot Greeks from north to south continued until the 1980s due to discrimination, harassment and intimidation, and the number of Cypriot Greeks in the north declined to a negligible 500 (ECHR 1976; Gurel and Ozersay 2006a: 3).

The Turkish Cypriot population living in the Greek Cypriot South also decreased significantly due to transfers carried out by the UN or the ICRC immediately after the conflict and following negotiations in Vienna in July and August 1975. In total, 45,000 Turkish Cypriots had moved to the North by the end of 1975.

Overall, almost a quarter of the inhabitants of the island, 210,000 Cypriots, both Greek and Turkish, have been internally displaced for over 30 years (IDMC 2005). Thus, the ethnic demography of Cyprus is totally different from what it was in the 1960s and 1970s, reflecting the *de facto* division of the island into two ethnically homogeneous communities of Greek and Turkish Cypriots.

The island has also undergone other demographic changes. To begin with, the population density in different areas has been significantly altered. For example, once a prosperous holiday resort, the Greek Cypriot city of Varosha in the district of Famagusta in the North remains a ghost city. Also, the population density of the southern part of the island is twice as high as the density in the north due to displacement (IDMC 2005). Second, the ratio between rural and urban populations has also been transformed, because although about 75 per cent of the displaced population had a rural background, the displaced Greeks did not occupy the villages abandoned by the Turkish Cypriots, but settled in the main cities of Nicosia, Larnaca, and Limassol (*ibid.*). Finally, as a side effect, the ethnic demography of the island has also changed considerably due to Turkish migrants from Anatolia, who were brought into the North and immediately provided with citizenship rights as part of a policy of Turkification in the North.

Managing Displacement

The mass exodus of populations in and after 1974 was managed well by the humanitarian relief operation coordinated by UNHCR (Wolff 2004: 21). The \$22 million in emergency relief in 1974 was followed by \$18 million in 1975 and \$30 million in 1976. This figure decreased to less than \$10 million by 1997 when UNHCR officially ended its involvement on the island (*ibid.*). From 1974 until 1997, the focus of UNHCR activities changed from emergency relief to a series of projects aimed at assisting IDPs in achieving self-sufficiency (*ibid.*).

The administrations of the two sides also took measures to assist emergency relief and to help the IDPs to achieve self-sufficiency. In the South,

a number of welfare-socialist measures were rapidly made law, reminiscent of Britain in the Second World War: empty houses and rooms were requisitioned, rents fixed at low levels, ration-food given free to the refugees, small cash allowances, and later loans, made to farmers and businessmen to get them restarted. Refugees were permitted by the government to squat in abandoned Turkish houses and cultivate Turkish fields ... (Loizos 1981: 136).

In later stages in the South, the government also began a housing programme that:

consists of construction of some 13,600 government estate houses, 11,600 self-build houses financed by government loans and grants on government sites and services projects, 12,000 self-build houses similarly financed on privately owned plots and some smaller initiatives. ... In all, by 1993, some 43,000 units had been constructed and the entire 'eligible' refugee population (some 150,000 of the original 180,000) housed in permanent structures. Housing is also provided for second generation refugees (Zetter 1994: 310).

Moreover, the state also granted Greek Cypriot IDPs the right to free health care and subsidized the costs of secondary education, as well as assisting with re-housing costs (Loizos and Constantinou 2007).

In the North, resettlement was pursued 'through the distribution of land and property to people who had left their homes, thereby providing jobs and security for them' (Morvaridi 1993: 222). As time passed, the standards of living for both displaced communities began to improve. However, due largely to the embargo on the North, which was a result of UN Resolution 186 passed on 4 March 1964, the Cypriot Greeks had an easier time in improving their quality of life than their Cypriot Turk counterparts (Wolff 2004).

The national economy of the unoccupied 64 per cent of Cyprus, helped by several externalities, proceeded to develop rapidly, and with the passing of the years the refugees were able to live with reasonable dignity (Loizos and Constantinou 2007: 90).

Perceiving Displacement

Although members of both ethnic communities were displaced in Cyprus, their experiences of displacement were quite different, resulting in different definitions of displacement, different policies of resettlement, widely divergent expectations for the future, and conflicting ideas about a solution to the property issue.

To begin with, the word 'refugee' connotes very different experiences for the two communities. Based on their experiences from 1963 to 1974, for the Turkish Cypriots, being a refugee means living under conditions of extreme danger, being exposed to the enemy's nationalist agenda to gain territory, and thus, having to leave their unsafe and insecure homes in order to go to a safe place (Anastasiou 2002: 585).

In contrast, for the Greek Cypriots, being a refugee means:

living a life of safety and prosperity and then being forced to leave one's home overnight, and, having lost all one's belongings, being placed under conditions of complete uncertainty, insecurity, and exposure to physical danger in the face of an advancing army (*ibid.*).

They left their safe homes and found themselves in absolute ambiguity. For the Greek Cypriots, everything was fine until the Turkish army arrived and created disorder in their lives. For the Turkish Cypriots, everything was uncertain until the Turkish army arrived and put an end to that uncertainty.

Thus, for the Turkish Cypriots who had been displaced since 1963 and who had been living in enclaves under harsh conditions, the move to the North was seen as a gateway to a new beginning (Canefe 2002). Some of these people had already tried to return to their houses in the South before 1974, but they were mostly deterred by the threat of political violence and terror, by seeing their damaged, ruined or occupied houses, as well as by discouragement of the Provisional Turkish Cypriot Administration (ibid.: 13). Therefore, when the conditions in the North were developed enough for resettlement and to provide opportunities for a new life, most Cypriot Turks saw it as a better option.

Based on interviews with Turkish Cypriot officials, it is reasonable to assume that they were anticipating such a movement, and that they were getting ready to be able to provide opportunities for the newcomers. According to Kliot and Mansfeld,

during the 1960s when the Turkish Administration evolved in the Turkish held enclaves, a survey of all Turkish property in both abandoned and non-abandoned villages was carried out. Accordingly, the whole inventory of farming land, livestock, shops and houses was well documented in order to assign to each village community a village in the North as similar as possible to the original one in the South (1994: 348).

Unlike their Turkish Cypriot counterparts who had already been displaced for a decade by 1974, for the Greek Cypriots, displacement was sudden (ibid.). Following Kunz's categorization, while the Turkish Cypriots were 'event-alienated anticipatory refugees' who regarded their relocation to the North as permanent, the Greek Cypriots became 'acute refugees' as a result of the 1974 military intervention and expected to go back home once the issue was settled (Kunz 1973, 1981; Kliot and Mansfeld 1994). Interviews with Greek Cypriot IDPs immediately after 1974 as well as the narratives of the time stress their expectation to return home (Loizos 1981; Pierides 1998; Layoun 2001). Kliot and Mansfeld summarize how these different experiences with displacement produced the different policy trajectories of the two administrations:

The event-alienated anticipatory Turkish Cypriot refugees and their leaders consider their migration to the North as a permanent movement. Because of this position, all the measures and policies adopted in the North by Turkish Cypriots aimed at a quick and permanent solution for the Turkish refugees. The Greek Cypriot refugees and the de jure Government of Cyprus emphasized the temporary nature of the process, namely, the myth of return was reinforced hence delaying integration of the Greek Cypriots (1994: 328).

Since 1974, the Greek-Cypriot controlled Republic of Cyprus has emphasized that the problem of internal displacement on the island is temporary. For the Greek Cypriots an ideal solution to internal displacement is the return of all IDPs to their pre-1974 properties. Thus, in peace negotiations, Republic of Cyprus officials steadfastly support a policy of return. The sooner more IDPs return, the better. In contrast, in the TRNC, there is almost a complete denial of the mass displacement of Greek Cypriots caused by the events of 1974 and the consequent demographic mayhem is usually seen as a result of the creation of casualties of war on both sides (Canefe 2002: 16). For TRNC officials the problem of internal displacement of Turkish Cypriots was solved in 1974, when the Turkish army saved the inter-communal-conflict-induced IDPs of 1963–1964 from their enclaves. They consider the current division of the island along ethnic lines desirable for security and recognition of the Cypriot Turkish administration, and in case of peace, the lower the number of Greek Cypriots that moved to the North, the better.

These two entirely opposite views of return, and of the nature of the problem in general, have also produced two very different approaches to the property problem in Cyprus, which is closely related to the phenomenon of IDP return.

The Property Situation in Cyprus

Property in Cyprus is a complicated and sensitive issue for quite a few reasons. First of all, resolving land disputes on the island is essential to resolving the overall political crisis. Disputes over access and claims to land and the use and security of land have been a dominant issue throughout the Cyprus conflict, and not addressing these disputes hinders the maintenance of a delicate and emergent peace (de Soto and Castillo 1995). Due to a game on both sides of inflating and reducing the numbers based on different political agendas, there are no accurate data, neither on the actual numbers of the displaced (see the previous section on displacement), nor on the quantity of land and property involved in the peace negotiations (see the next section). However, the property issue is a great concern to the approximately one-third of the island's population that had to uproot as a result of civil strife and Turkish military intervention.

Second, there is the economic aspect to property. The broad agricultural sector, despite the reduction of its contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP) and total employment due to development of other industries like tourism and real estate, continues to be a fundamental sector of the economy. Agricultural exports (raw and processed) make up 30.7 per cent of total domestic exports in Cyprus.⁵ Thus, land is an important economic asset.

The land that the Greek Cypriot IDPs abandoned in the North is considered an even more important economic asset when weighed against the other parts of the island. In the 1970s, the North of Cyprus was not only fertile and rich in agricultural land resources, but also well developed from

the residential, tourist and industrial points of view (Karouzis 1977: 125). It is estimated that in 1972 about 70 per cent of total gross output from all sources originated from the land which would be occupied by the Turkish army in 1974 and the adjacent affected area (*ibid.*).

Third, land in Cyprus has a sentimental or psychological value as well as an economic one. Many Cypriots do not see land and property simply as an economic tool, but also as a symbol of status and wealth and as a connection to a past that they have lost. Property in Cyprus, especially land ownership, has traditionally been 'a principal criterion of status and differentiation' (Zetter 1994: 308; Karouzis 1977: 65). Conducting fieldwork in Cyprus in the 1960s, Loizos asserts that when villagers described a man's economic position, they typically did so in terms of his land holdings and the number of children he had (2004: 310). Thus, loss of land takes an additional psychological toll on the displaced for it also represents a loss of status.

Finally, there is also a cultural aspect to property. Although identity is not the real cause of Cypriot conflict, the conflict has evolved into a problem of national identity. Once civil wars involve national identity, they also become about territory. Occupation of a homeland is an important element of nationalism, which acts as a glue to unite a nation (Smith 2001). Thus, in the case of Cyprus, the cultural implication of property becomes clear in the ways that national identity and nationalist debates have evolved, especially in terms of the Greek Cypriot rhetoric about returning 'home'.

Studies regarding land ownership in Cyprus go back as far as Neolithic times,⁶ but the confirmation of private property in land came in the late nineteenth century with British colonial rule (Katsiaounis 1996). The move was a result of British fiscal reforms that eliminated communal responsibility for tax payments, which had been the common practice in the Ottoman Empire in line with its *millet* system, and thus effectively amounted to the institutionalization of private property (*ibid*.).

Finding accurate data on property is a problem in the case of Cyprus. Both sides to the conflict amplify or reduce the numbers of IDPs and the land belonging to the IDPs of different ethnic groups, in line with their political arguments in the peace negotiations. Thus, there is quite a discrepancy among different sources about the distribution of land in Cyprus before 1974. The data provided by the Statistics and Research Department of the Cyprus Government's Ministry of Finance (dominated by Greek Cypriots at the time) and by the Planning Department of the Provisional Turkish Cypriot Administration are quite different. While there is no discrepancy between the sources on the distribution of public versus private lands, information from the very same sources on the distribution of land based on ethnic divisions differs. The difference between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot data with regard to two communities' shares of privately owned land amounts to about 669 square kilometres, or 10 per cent of all private lands in 1974 (Gurel and Ozersay 2006b). In an island with a total area of 9,250 square kilometres, this is equal to 0.7 per cent of all the land in Cyprus.

With the events of 1974, the distribution of land in Cyprus turned noticeably in favour of the Turkish Cypriots. The percentage of private land under Turkish Cypriot control increased from 12 per cent to 28 per cent, and the percentage of Greek private ownership fell from 61 per cent to 45 per cent. The post-1974 records of the Greek Cypriot Department of Lands and Surveys and the Planning Bureau and the Turkish Cypriot Mapping Department again differ in the estimates of loss of Cypriot Greek property in the north. While the former estimates a loss of 1,463,382 donums, which is equivalent to 78.5 per cent of all privately owned land in the north, the latter's estimate is 1,228,838 donums, or 63.9 per cent (*ibid.*).

Managing IDP Properties

What happened to the properties of the one-third of the island's population who had to leave them, either as a result of the inter-communal conflicts of 1963–1964, or following the events of 1974? Largely in line with their differing perceptions of the issue of internal displacement, the two constituent states have followed quite distinct paths in their management of IDP properties.

In the north, the Law for Housing, Allocation of Land, and Property of Equal Value (Law No. 41/1977) considered such lands 'abandoned', and the Turkish Cypriot administration adopted a points-based exchange system, which assumed that the 'abandoned' lands in the North and South were equal in value. The administration allowed Turkish Cypriot owners to apply for and receive 'abandoned' property in the north in exchange for the property that they left behind in the south, on condition that the owners agreed to assign all rights relating to their properties in the south to the Turkish Cypriot administration.

There are four problems with the point system that create grievances among Turkish Cypriots and that reflect their concerns about the property problem on the island at large. First, the current values of these properties were calculated based on the information and economic realities of the 1970s. Thus, although factors pertaining to location, e.g., proximity to commercial centres, fertility, and access to water, were considered in the calculation of value, these changed substantially over time, and in many cases, the economic centres themselves have changed. For example, once the most prominent tourism resort, Varosha is a complete ruin today, while the former seaport of Larnaca is developing as a tourism centre with its post-1974 airport. Thus, many Turkish Cypriots complain that they did not receive property equal in value to that which they left in the south.

Second, although the system was originally designed to provide housing, land and livelihood in the north for (1) Turkish Cypriot IDPs, (2) farmers whose average annual income was below a specified minimum, and (3) relatives of people who became martyrs during the conflict, the range of beneficiaries was later broadened. The system became a tool of accommodating

political patron-client relationships in the north: points began to be distributed to those who did 'service to the state' as well as to the post-1974 arrivals from the Turkish mainland, for political gains, i.e., votes in elections.

Third, the system can be manipulated and be a source of unjust enrichment. One such case is that of a Turkish Cypriot who sold the property he had received through the point system (Greek Cypriot IDP property in the north in exchange for the property that he had left behind in the south), while also trying to regain his pre-1974 property in the south in the courts of the Republic of Cyprus. The case is instructive: he was displaced as a result of the post-1974 population movements. Upon his arrival in the north, the Turkish Cypriot administration allocated him Greek Cypriot property in exchange for the property that he had left behind in the south. As time passed, he fell on hard times, sold the Greek Cypriot property that was allocated to him, in 2003 moved back to the south, and opened a case against the Republic of Cyprus to regain his house in the south to which in 1974 he had agreed to assign the Turkish Cypriot administration all rights. In 2006 the court in the Republic of Cyprus granted him the key to his house in the south. Although some commentators applaud the case as a success story for the possible unification of the island—that Cypriots can live together in spite of everything (Uludag 2005)—his motive seems to be more about unjustly making a profit.

Finally, at the beginning, the system only allowed occupation of these properties. Therefore, the allocated land could not be sold or rented, but was only for personal use. As time passed, these rights of occupation went through substantial changes, partly causing the current problem of multiple claims on the same property. Following the foundation of the TRNC and declaration of independence in 1983, a new constitution was put into effect in 1985 by referendum, and was similar to the 1975 constitution of the Turkish Federated State of Cyprus except for a number of new provisions regulating the needs of the new Republic. Article 159 of the new constitution paved the way to full ownership of these lands. In an interview in 2005, the former Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktash explained that this change was designed to ensure that Turkish Cypriots could freely buy, sell, lease and otherwise deal with this property in order to facilitate economic development in the northern part of the island. Along the same line, Morvaridi talks about 'irresponsible farming practices' where land was only rented out for short periods of time instead of granting full ownership (1993: 234).

The change from occupation to ownership of properties that are typically owned by Greek Cypriot IDPs allowed the selling of such properties to third parties, and the consequent emergence of multiple claims over the same property. An anecdote can explain this in simpler terms. A Greek Cypriot property under Turkish Cypriot administration is given to a Turkish Cypriot (with actual titles provided by the TRNC, an internationally non-recognized entity) in exchange for his land that he had to abandon in the south (based on the point system explained above). After some years, the Turkish Cypriot decides to sell this land to a developer. Since he has the title provided by the TRNC, the exchange takes place without any legal complications in the north. The developer builds summer villas on this land. A British couple buys one of these villas and they also acquire a title. However, the land that the villa is built on is still owned by a Greek Cypriot who has a title from the Republic of Cyprus, an internationally recognized legal entity. Thus, several claims can be made for the same land.

The trajectory chosen by the TRNC in its treatment of IDP properties abandoned in the north has been the source of more than 2,000 applications by Greek Cypriot IDPs to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) with claims that their property rights have been violated. On December 18, 1996, ECHR agreed that Cypriot national Titina Loizidou's right 'to the peaceful enjoyment of (her) possessions' guaranteed under Article 1 of Protocol No. 1 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms was violated by Turkey (Klarevas 1999; Oxman and Rudolf 1997; Bagshaw 2003). In December 2003, Turkey paid damages of 1.2 million euros to Ms. Loizidou.

In response to the adverse ruling against Turkey in the Loizidou case, and in order to avoid similar judgments in thousands of similar applications to the ECHR, in 2003 the Turkish Cypriot administration established a 'Property Commission' to which Greek Cypriots and other 'foreigners' or owners of 'abandoned property' could apply. In line with the TRNC's general stance on return, the commission initially presented either compensation or property exchange as options available to potential applicants. In a recent case, Xenides-Arestis v. Turkey, the ECHR, while not dismissing the commission altogether, indicated certain deficiencies in its operation, such as the absence of any form of restitution (ECHR 2004, 2006). Following the decision of the court, the TRNC amended its law on abandoned properties to make restitution a possible option for applicants. The commission had received almost 200 applications from Greek Cypriot IDPs by the end of 2008. In September 2007, there was a heated public discussion in the south when a Greek Cypriot IDP, Mike Tymvios, applied to the TRNC Property Commission, and the Commission granted him \$1.2 million in compensation as well as a large plot of land in Larnaca as part of a property exchange. Greek Cypriots were afraid that the case could set a precedent if the ECHR accepted the deal made through the TRNC Property Commission as an adequate domestic remedy. This would mean international recognition of a TRNC institution, and could eventually cause thousands of ECHR applications by Greek Cypriot IDPs being forwarded to the commission in the north for settlement of property issues. On 22 April 2008, the ECHR authorized the settlement, but in August 2008, Mr. Tymvios complained that based on the custodian system, the Greek Cypriot government refused to transfer ownership of the Turkish Cypriot property in the government-controlled area to him, despite the ECHR ruling (USHRR 2009).

Thus, in the south, the Greek Cypriot administration followed a rather different path in dealing with the IDP properties. After 1974, the Greek Cypriot Minister of the Interior was named 'custodian' of all Turkish Cypriot property in the area controlled by the Republic of Cyprus—including movable and immovable property owned by Turkish Cypriot individuals, companies, or the Turkish Cypriot religious foundation Evkaf—'for the duration of the abnormal situation.'8 As long as the abnormal situation created as a result of the Turkish invasion/intervention continued, the Greek Cypriot minister of the interior could administer Turkish Cypriot properties and a Turkish Cypriot Property Fund into which all sums due to Turkish Cypriot owners should be paid. In addition, the interior minister could collect and dispose of the produce grown on these properties, pay for obligations concerning them such as repairs, improvements and cultivation, and lease them.

There are two main problems with this custodial system. First, although the law banned the transfer of ownership of Turkish Cypriot property to avoid further complications regarding claims to the land, in exceptional cases where it would be beneficial for the owner or in the public interest, the ownership rights of Turkish Cypriot IDPs can simply be declared null and void by the Minister of the Interior. In effect, many Turkish Cypriot properties were allocated to Greek Cypriots-mainly internally displaced ones—for use, under nominal rental rates. However, the 'exceptional cases beneficial to the public interest' allowed for the acquisition of Turkish Cypriot land for public purposes, such as building roads and airports. For example, two Turkish Cypriots, Huseyin Helvacioglu and Behlul Sutcu, claim that Larnaca airport in the south was built on their lands that were unfairly acquired by the Republic of Cyprus in exchange for trivial compensation packages to be paid, based on the Greek Cypriot law on IDP properties, only after the solution of the Cyprus problem.

Second, within the custodial system, the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Cyprus is the only recognized authority endowed with the power to return land to Turkish Cypriots. The trick is that such restitution can only take place if a Turkish Cypriot IDP who applies for his or her property has been residing in the Republic for six months or more. If the ECHR accepts the Turkish Cypriot Property Commission's property exchange offer to the Greek Cypriot IDP Mr. Tymvios as a valid domestic remedy, it might put the custodial system at an impasse. Mr. Tymvios will be claiming Turkish Cypriot land that the Ministry of the Interior cannot legally give as the Turkish Cypriot owner has not been living in the Republic. Thus, the legitimacy of the entire custodial system in the south can be challenged by such an ECHR decision.

Reactions to the Annan Plan

The Annan Plan came about in the circumstances described above. To summarize, the Greek Cypriot government has been pursuing the ideal that more than 200,000 IDPs in the south will return to their properties in the north, while managing the Turkish Cypriot IDP properties left in the south in a manner that emphasizes the temporary nature of the division of the island. On the other hand, the Turkish Cypriot administration in the north has engaged in making the de facto division of the island along ethnic lines permanent via (1) ignoring the refugee problem altogether, (2) reallocating the Greek Cypriot IDP property left in the north, and (3) forming a Property Commission that, although it presents restitution as an option, nevertheless promotes solutions along the lines of compensation and global property exchange. Against this background, and realizing the close relationship between property and IDP return, the Annan Plan did not take on the issue of return per se, but presented solutions to the property problem. The plan underlined freedom of movement and freedom of residence as fundamental rights throughout Cyprus, though it did not emphasize the right to return but the right to property. Accordingly, there were three main property provisions of the Annan Plan: territorial adjustments, one-third rule, and significant improvement.9

However, despite the fact that more than half of the IDPs in the south could go back to their pre-war homes if the Annan Plan was accepted, there was only a majority of 'Yes' votes in nine out of 1,415 polling stations in the south, with 75 per cent Greek 'No' votes overall. Furthermore, surprisingly, research based on the data from a study commissioned from CYMAR Market Research Ltd., a Cyprus-based market research firm that also conducts Eurobarometer surveys in the Republic of Cyprus on behalf of the European Union, shows that there is no relationship between the IDP status of Greek Cypriots and their preferences for a solution (Webster 2005).

After the outcome of the 24th April referendum, the initial reaction of the various intermediaries to the Greek Cypriot 'No' was to claim that the Greek Cypriots did not really understand the proposal which they had in front of them... In a similar vein, it was argued that the Greek Cypriots let themselves get carried away by their President's speech against the Plan... (Lordos 2004: 29).

Indeed, President Papadopoulos was highly critical of the Annan Plan. For the President, the territorial adjustments provision was an empty promise without any evidence of a credible commitment by the Turkish side. The 'lack of enforcement provisions to ensure implementation of Turkey's promises to restore territory and to return homes of refugees' was also emphasized elsewhere as a reason for 'swaying the majority of Greek Cypriot voters to reject the plan' (Palley 2005: 226). The financial burden created by the provisions regarding acquisition of properties and compensation (namely the one-third rule and significant improvement provision) was to be borne by the Greek Cypriots. Not *all* IDPs were granted the right to return. And finally, for those who could return, there were not enough guarantees of security. President Papadopoulos' concerns were largely shared by his

electorate, and can be analysed under three main headings of security, economics, and justice.

Issue 1: Security

As Call and Stanley point out, there is a general gap in peace implementation efforts in terms of security for the mass of civilians (2002). One lesson learned from former peace-building operations is that there is a great need for protection measures for returnees (Lewis 2004). As the UNDP 1994 Human Development Report emphasized, the legitimate concerns of ordinary people who want security in their daily lives have been largely overlooked as the concept of security has been interpreted too narrowly in both policy circles and the political science literature. With the change from interstate to intra-state warfare, the concept of security is changing, and what is at issue in relation to property, return, and reconciliation is 'human security', defined by Roland Paris as 'a label for a broad category of research in the field of security studies that is primarily concerned with nonmilitary threats to the safety of societies, groups, and individuals' (2004: 258).

At the same time, Cyprus has an especially difficult environment in which to achieve civilian security and reassure IDPs that return to their former property is safe. In 1998, it was ranked as one of the most militarized countries in the world. There are approximately 35,000 Turkish mainland troops and 4,500 Turkish Cypriot security forces in the north; in the south, there are 2.000 Greek officers providing training to the Republic of Cyprus army of 19,500 soldiers plus a reserve force of 100,000 (Borowiec 2000). The United Kingdom also has 3,500 troops stationed at its military bases, while the UNFICYP consists of 1,226 peacekeepers (ibid.).

Security was definitely a factor shaping people's voting behaviour in the referendum. For many Greek Cypriots, especially those whose property was left out of the territorial adjustment areas, a heavily militarized environment exacerbated their security concerns about returning to the North, where they would have to live under a Turkish Cypriot administration.

They insist on the eventual withdrawal of all Turkish troops from Cyprus, including the 650 strong contingent that is supposed to stay on the island indefinitely under the current version of the Plan. They neither trust the Turkish army nor do they feel safe to live under its shadow, however small in numbers (Lordos 2004: 57).

In a recent island-wide poll asking the question 'How secure or insecure do you feel living in Cyprus today', over half of Greek Cypriots responded that they feel somewhat or very insecure (UNFICYP 2007). In line with the findings of Lordos' survey, the major source of insecurity for Greek Cypriots was the presence of the Turkish army (ibid.). In contrast, the Turkish army was the source of security for Turkish Cypriots, who almost unanimously responded to the same question that they feel somewhat or very secure (ibid.).

Security was a concern also shared by the Turkish Cypriots, albeit for different reasons. The potential consequence of the property provisions, i.e., once again living with Greek Cypriots, worried them. Especially for the older generation, three decades have not been enough time to erase bad memories of the past. Remembering the atrocities they had witnessed and been victims of, and stressing their security concerns, the majority said they did not want to live with Greek Cypriots, and confirmed their desire for division and bizonality. Two explanations can be hypothesized for this approach. The first is related to the nature of their displacement. As stated earlier, many of the Turkish Cypriot IDPs had been displaced as a result of inter-communal strife, and had been living in the enclaves for almost a decade before the events of 1974. Thus, the arrival of the Turkish army and the resulting status quo means security for them, and they are apprehensive of change. Second, the political rhetoric in the island is based on keeping the memory alive, and neither side is trying to create a ripe environment for reconciliation.

Thus, in the case of Cyprus, the factor of security that revolves around the presence of the Turkish army has an effect on the relation between intensity of conflict and desire to return. In line with their different attitudes on displacement (see previous section), for the Turkish Cypriots who were facing atrocities in the 1960s, the intensity of the conflict was high before the arrival of the Turkish army. Thus, the Turkish army is a source of security. The reflection of this relationship for the Turkish Cypriots is to maintain the present status quo division of the island by rejecting return. On the other hand, for the Greek Cypriots whose lives were shaken by the arrival of the Turkish army, the Turkish army is a source of atrocities, the reason for the intensity of the conflict and their insecurity. The reflection of the 'negative' presence of the Turkish army decreases the Greek Cypriots' desire to return.

The Greek Cypriots genuinely feel insecure, and mistrust the Turkish side that comprises the main source of their insecurity. Within this background, the Annan Plan lacked the necessary mechanisms for the implementation of the peace agreement. Thus, not trusting that the Turkish side was credibly committed to the peace, the Greek Cypriots considered the provisions of territorial adjustments or refugee return just as empty promises and rejected the plan.

Issue 2: Economics

In the case of Cyprus, the financing of the property provisions is what makes economics an important variable. As properties change hands, people will move again, and relocation is a costly process. For example, the return of Greek Cypriot IDPs to their homes in Morphou and other areas (excluding Varosha) would require the evacuation of these properties by Turkish Cypriots. Based on the assumption that not all Turkish Cypriots will want to return to their original places of residence in the Greek Cypriot

Constituent State, it is estimated that the move would result in 47,000 Turkish Cypriots being re-housed in 12,000 new residences to be built in the north (Vassiliou 2003). 'The total cost of these residences, not including the cost of land, is estimated to be around CYP450 million [approximately US\$1.1 billion], at today's prices' (ibid.: 23). Thus, there is a need of funding for (1) the restoration and rebuilding of thousands of IDP houses, (2) the building of new houses for the relocation of Turkish Cypriot citizens who will have to move out of the territorial adjustment, but refuse to go back to their property in the South, and other 'given' areas, (3) compensation for property claims that will not be reinstated, and (4) incentives for mainland Turkish immigrants to return to Turkey, which is a category that includes both settlers and temporary immigrants.

Different reports confirm that the financial burden created by the provisions regarding acquisition of properties and compensation (namely the one-third rule and significant improvement provision) was to be borne by the Greek Cypriots (Vassiliou 2003; Eichengreen et al. 2004). If it is assumed that this fact had an effect on people's voting behaviour during the referendum, it can still be argued that the hypothesis that economic recovery facilitates the desire to return is confirmed in a different way: the idea that their economic well-being can be threatened by the very process of return made the Greek Cypriots vote against a plan that proposed return.

The Greek Cypriots desire both return and economic recovery on a personal level. A 'Yes' vote on the Annan Plan would have made return a possibility, but it would also bring with it economic loss in general. Also, Greek Cypriots regarded themselves as the sole victims of the Cyprus Problem, so to be asked on top to pay for the resettlements was considered unacceptable. Therefore, the Greek Cypriots voted 'No' on the referendum, choosing to keep the status quo of economic well-being while losing the option of return.

Issue 3: Justice

Despite the caution of some writers, and the sceptical view that peace is about who rules at the end of the war and that it should not be confused with justice—as the act might place a higher premium on legitimacy than peace—justice remains critical in the implementation of any peace plan (Betts 1994; Hampson 1996; Lederach 1997). The perception of justice in peace building is often related to reconciliation. A sense of justice is often an indispensable part of the personal and psychological healing process that allows for reconciliation (Mendeloff 2004). Reconciliation within post-war societies is important to overcome the animosities created as a result of the conflict, and also to overcome further divisions that take place during the post-conflict reconstruction phase.

Property problems can be a source of further divisions. Due to the different trajectories taken by the two sides, especially as a result of the Turkish Cypriot side's reallocation policy towards the property of Greek Cypriot IDPs (especially regarding ownership) in the north, and further complicated by the factor of time, there are multiple claims to the same land by people from different ethnic groups. This remains a potential source of future conflict between Turkish and Greek Cypriots, and therefore, specific care must be taken not to pit individuals against each other. In a recent report, the Secretary-General asserts that:

On the island, the benefits of Cyprus' EU membership are becoming manifest. However, in the area of property, it has opened up new fronts of litigation and acrimony. Already hundreds of Greek Cypriot claims against Turkey for the loss of property rights in the north are pending before the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. Additionally, in 2005, Greek Cypriots approached courts in the south for EU arrest warrants against foreigners buying or selling Greek Cypriot property in the north. In this regard, Turkish Cypriot authorities have warned that they would arrest and detain those attempting to serve court summons. The prospect of an increase of litigations in property cases on either side poses a serious threat to people-to-people relationships and to the reconciliation process (UNSG 2005, emphasis added).

However, justice in the case of Cyprus is not only about reconciliation, but requires a solution to the property problem, i.e., justice in reparations. Land tenure at its most fundamental level is a system of rights and obligations in human relationships (Unruh 2003: 355). In the case of Cyprus, these rights and obligations are in flux. Evidently, rights for one group in Cyprus have been purchased at the expense of the rights of the other group (Bryant 2001: 916). Therefore, to answer the question 'who gets what?' becomes especially important.

The Greek and Turkish Cypriots are also divided on the nature of reparations. The Greek Cypriot IDPs think that everybody should get everything back, i.e., all IDPs should return and get their properties back. Thus, they request full restitution of their pre-1974 properties. One of the major points on which Greek Cypriots criticized the Annan Plan was that it did not make it possible for all IDPs to return, and those who could, could only do so in a restrictive timeframe.

The Turkish Cypriots also believe in some kind of justice in reparations, but their proposal for achieving it is rather different. They advocate two proposals that would maintain the status quo of the island: almost complete ethnic division with Greek Cypriots living under the government of Republic of Cyprus in the south, and Turkish Cypriots living under the administration of the TRNC. The Turkish Cypriots' first proposal is global exchange of lands and houses between IDPs on both sides—through which the Greek Cypriot IDPs in the south could exchange the land they had to abandon in the north for Turkish Cypriot IDP land in the south, and the Turkish Cypriot IDPs in the north could exchange the land they had to abandon in

the south for Greek Cypriot IDP land in the north. The second Turkish Cypriot proposal is compensation, that is, justice received in payments.

Hence, in Cyprus, the relationship between return and property rights must also be analysed in relation to justice. For the Greek Cypriots, a just solution would be for all IDPs to return to their property, i.e., restitution, which is gains-based recovery. For the Turkish Cypriots, a just solution is global exchange and/or compensation, i.e., loss-based recovery.

Kukathas argues 'that the pursuit of justice by making reparation for past wrongs, and particularly for wrongs done more than a generation ago' is morally justifiable only in cases where it is

possible to identify two kinds of agents: the victim of injustice, to whom the reparation is owed, and the perpetrator or beneficiary of injustice who can be held accountable for the wrong or liable for the cost of restitution (2006: 330).

In the case of Cyprus, the line between victim and perpetrator is very much blurred mainly as a result of the time factor.

Conclusions

There is a close relationship between property and IDP return. It is a conventional wisdom to assume that granting people their property rights facilitates their physical return. However, empirical evidence from other peace-building cases shows that granting people their property rights does not always facilitate physical return, but may enable resettlement elsewhere. Partly based on this learned lesson, the Annan Plan did not undertake the issue of return per se, but introduced solutions to the property problem. The plan underlined freedom of movement and freedom of residence as fundamental rights throughout Cyprus though it did not emphasize the right to return but the right to property. This approach of separating the issues of IDP return and property was a valid one, but the plan overlooked other important matters that are closely related with the two issues albeit on different levels. The Annan Plan could not create a sense of either physical or economic security. A large portion of the population in the island was worried about the possible negative scenarios that could take place if the plan was accepted. For the Greek Cypriots, the possibility of permanent residence of the Turkish army, and economic hardships, were important points of departure. For the Turkish Cypriots, living side by side with their Greek counterparts again was a disturbing prospect. Moreover, the issue of justice was almost completely disregarded by the advocates of the Annan Plan.

Thus, this article has certain policy implications that can be useful during a new set of peace negotiations in Cyprus. First, it is important to understand the root causes of the different stances of both sides on the issues of return and property rather than taking these differences for granted. Secondly, it is important to acknowledge that a feeling of security is the foremost need for

people to accept any peace plan. Lastly, and especially pertaining to the property issue, a sense of justice needs to be established throughout the island that will be appealing to both sides. It is a particularly hard task in an island where politicians are constantly playing the victimization card. Nevertheless, despite these challenging objectives, the author still holds onto the optimistic belief that a way of reconciliation is possible in Cyprus.

- 1. Republic of Cyprus Official Gazette, 26 July 2002 (IDMC website). UNHCR data are largely dependent on the government sources.
- 2. There were displacements of both communities in the period 1956–1958, but they were relatively small numbers. This paper is only concerned with displacements after 1963.
- 3. The Vienna III Agreement, 2 August 1975, Article 2, UN Document S/11789.
- 4. Even though they are internally displaced in Cyprus—the Green Line is not an internationally recognized state border so they are considered to be dislocated within the borders of their own country—these IDPs are usually referred to as 'refugees' in both of the local languages.
- The official website of Republic of Cyprus, http://www.cyprus.gov.cy. The figure only relates to Southern Cyprus. Northern Cyprus had been under an embargo since 1974.
- 6. For such a historical analysis see Karouzis (1977).
- 7. 1 donum = 14,400 square feet $(1,337.8 \text{ m}^2)$.
- 8. 'Turkish Cypriot Properties (Administration and Other Matters) (Temporary Provisions) Law of 1991, No. 139/1991, as subsequently amended (succeeding Orders under Laws of 1962 and 1966 relating to Requisition of Property: Greek Cypriot Official Gazette, Not. No. 14202 of 18 August 1975 and Not. No 1218, 11 September 1975)' in Garlick (2005).
- 9. Territorial Adjustments: Since the commencement of inter-communal negotiations, in line with their aim of the 'return of all refugees,' the Greek Cypriot side has claimed territorial adjustments to allow the maximum number of internally displaced people to return to their former homes. In response, the Plan provides territorial adjustments that would facilitate return of more than half of the Greek Cypriots who were displaced in 1974 and their descendants to their former homes. Accordingly, they would 'get their properties back and live in them under Greek Cypriot administration, in areas handed over between 31/2 and 42 months after entry into force of the settlement.' According to UN estimates, 54 per cent of Greek Cypriots who were displaced in 1974 (around 86,000 people; the number is around 120,000 today with their children included) would be able to return to their property if the Plan were accepted. The One-Third Rule: This applies to people (both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots) who have lost property and cannot enjoy full restitution under the territorial adjustments: those 'who lost property located in the other constituent state [of the to-be-built federal state of United Cyprus] could get back up to one-third of their property (in value and area) and be paid compensation for the rest in guaranteed bonds and appreciation certificates that are backed up by real property assets and are likely to appreciate considerably over time.' However, there are certain conditions to getting back the one-third. For example, in order to reinstate one-third of any land that a person had in 1974, one-third of that person's lands must be equal to at least 5

donums, i.e., the person must have owned at least 15 donums in 1974. If the person had land with access to water to irrigate it, then the condition is 2 donums. Also, the one-third rule does not apply to houses: provided that the person built the house himself or herself and/or lived in it for 10 years before 1974, the person is eligible to full restitution. Significant Improvement: The return of property to the former owner could be prohibited if the current user had significantly improved the property during the period of displacement. If the property had undergone construction or work greater in value than the value of the property in its original state, then the current owner could pay compensation for the property as it was in its original state and keep it, given that the improvements had been made before December 31, 2002.

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