What next for Cyprus?

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Despite years of intercommunal negotiations and repeated efforts by the international community the Cyprus problem remains unresolved. Certainly the overwhelming presence of Turkey as well as Ankara's objectives have been and continue to be the most important factor shaping developments on the island. Be that as it may the fundamental question is what model can lead to a viable solution.

From the outset it must be clear that there are very specific conditions which may lead biethnic and multiethnic states either to social prosperity and progress or alternatively to tensions and even conflict. Models which do not encourage the advancement of common institutions and instead are exclusively based on ethnic pillars are likely to lead to tensions.

The European and the American historical and political records, for example, have similarities as well as differences. One of the fundamental differences is how nationalism was perceived in Europe and also how it influenced the overall political landscape. In the American experience nation-building revolved essentially around a common value system as well as common institutions with respect to diversity despite the fact that the USA had its own history of ethnic and racial strife and antagonisms. And it is of utmost importance that this record did not lead to a federal system based on ethnic and racial pillars. It is indeed essential to stress the election of President Obama, an election which signified, among other things, the triumph of politics over ethnoracial considerations. This is significant not only for Americans but also for the international community as a whole.

It is also interesting that in the last years we are witnessing two opposing forces in various parts of the world: on the one hand integrationalist forces

advancing and on the other hand the forces of disintegration leading to radical political, social and economic ramifications and in many cases disruptions.

Furthermore, conflict and violence on the one hand and efforts for reconstruction and reconciliation on the other are emerging in increasing numbers around the world. One of the great tasks is to understand the factors and prerequisites that affect these variables and be able to act preemptively. It is also important for policymakers and international institutions and organizations to have an understanding of those forces and factors which may encourage and advance the objectives of reconstruction, reconciliation and integration.

In several parts of the world, including Cyprus, one of the challenges is to arrive at a political structure and framework which respects the ethnic background and identity of individuals and groups but also advances a common value system and common institutions. To what extent this can be done and how it can be achieved is of course another issue. At the same time it must be acknowledged that different countries and peoples having their own historical experiences and record may choose alternative options.

Coming back to the case of Cyprus it may be difficult to have the best possible opportunity for a creative breakthrough when Turkey maintains more than 40.000 troops of occupation on the northern part of Cyprus and while there are more Anatolian settlers than Turkish Cypriots. It should be also noted that in previous efforts including the one which culminated with the rejection of the Annan Plan by the Greek Cypriots international pressures were directed toward the weaker Greek-Cypriot side rather than the Turkish-Cypriot side and Ankara. Curiously when Ankara faces major turning points with respect to its relations with the EU there are always "new initiatives" and expectations for a fruitful outcome but, unfortunately, in substance no major change of Ankara's policy toward Cyprus occurs.

If indeed there will be a momentum for substantial progress and eventually a solution of the Cyprus problem Ankara must recognize and respect the Republic of Cyprus as an independent state member of the UN and the EU. Once this step is made the rest will follow.