THE CYPRUS CONUNDRUM- IT AIN'T OVER TILL IT'S OVER

Anna Koukkides-Procopiou
Research Associate at the Center of European and International Affairs, University of Nicosia

Fifty percent of all worldwide peace agreements fail within five years of being signed[1], the rate of relapse worsening, year in, year out, with every passing decade since the 1960s[2]. It seems we have all along been signing 'agreements without peace', failing to see that peace is a process and not a deal. And yet, navel-gazing of the utmost urgency seems to be the name of the game in the on-going Cyprus peace talks, exacerbated by a rhetoric of 'last chances', 'windows of opportunity' which may not reappear again and stars which are finally 'well-aligned'. What is missing from the mix is the reality check necessary to carry a nation through, long after Day 1 of a solution, when the limelight is gone and the realization hits home that no newly-emerged state can survive and no agreement can be kept for long, unless it meets citizens' expectations and needs.

In the absence of any clear understanding of the importance of inclusive security in Cyprus negotiations- that is 'a framework that places social and economic concerns on equal footing with military and political issues, based on the premise that, in order to have real security, you have to have include of all of the stakeholders around the table'[3], it is highly unlikely that citizens' security and threat perceptions are clearly mapped, to begin with, and thus, effectively addressed, if and when a solution framework is at some point formalized. It is no exaggeration to say that for the last 40 years or so, Cyprus negotiations have been secretive, non-transparent and non-participatory, handled by a 'denocracy'[4] of elites. The pitfall is obvious.

Putting aside the ensuing problem of groupthink (i.e. the practice of thinking or making decisions as a like-minded in-group, resulting typically in fiascoes through unchallenged, poor-quality decision-making) during negotiations, one cannot ignore the conundrum which follows, when a solution is reached in such a way. That is, when citizens have no ownership of a process, they can rarely identify with it. With legitimization of the process and its outcome, thus, ranking low, despite any last-minute

---

[1] King, Charles 1997. Ending Civil Wars. Oxford: Oxford University Press for the International Institute for Strategic Studies
[2] World Bank. 2011. World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security, and Development. World Bank. © World Bank.
https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/4389 License: CC BY 3.0 IGO.
[3] For a clear and concise introduction to the concept of inclusive security and how this came about, see Women Waging Peace: Swanee Hunt's Vision for Inclusive Security, Global Giving Matters, Oct-Dec 2008, Synergos. Available at
www.synergos.org/globalgivingmatters/features/0812hunt.htm
[4] Decision-making in a closed 'den' of a few, similarly-minded people

call to a referendum, citizens are less willing to embark on any kind of reconciliation efforts to create/recreate levels of social cohesion (reflected in trust in institutions and levels of civic engagement), when reality hits home. Unless there is conscious grass-roots effort towards this end, there can be no timely and successful implementation of a new state of affairs.[5]In fact, this could prove a self-reinforcing negative phenomenon, as failure to identify with institutions and those decision-makers running them, makes levels of social cohesion sink even further, with clear implications as to what this may ultimately mean.

The late Glafkos Klerides, in 'My Deposition', perfectly summed the implosion of the young Republic of Cyprus in the '60s thus: it was a state with a flag for which no one of its citizens were willing to die. It does not take much to conclude as to what this may have possibly meant. For most of the Greek-Cypriots, the Republic was simply a slap in the face, a sharp reminder of their failed aspirations for Enosis with Greece, while Turkish-Cypriots felt increasingly alienated by and from a state, run by the Head of the Cyprus Greek-Orthodox church, Archbishop Makarios.

In addition to this, even though notions of 'hard' security (namely armies, guarantees, borders, sovereignty) remain important, individual citizen concerns about human security (ranging from personal protection against extremism and violence, to educational, health and food security and to the safeguarding of communal, political, economic and environmental concerns) can only be ignored at a state's own peril. In fact, research-driven findings point to the direction that as levels of human security fall, risk of conflict rises[6]. All the more so, the absence of security becomes especially worrying, if one considers its impact on the economy, both in terms of consumer expectations and levels of risk-related borrowing and investment. Security begets prosperity, prosperity begets peace. In fact, risk of conflict remains higher in lower-income environments.[7]

As Cypriot elites (in both communities) persist in their ferocious clutching of the exclusively particular peace process we are faced with today, focusing on high-end politics but neglecting all other realities on the ground, the island does not stand much chance of success. Deal or no deal, the conundrum will remain. It can never really be over until it's over.

---

[5] For elaborate findings on Cyprus, refer to SeeD SCORE reconciliation index, research conducted by the Centre of Sustainable Peace and Development, findings for Cyprus, 2013-2015, available at www.seedsofpeace.eu

[6] New Threats to Human Security Study Documents Causes of "New World Disorder", Worldwatch Institute, 1996. Available at www.worldwatch.org/new-threats-human-security-study-documents-causes-new-world-disorder

[7] Extensive evidence to this end is available via data collected on Fragility, Conflict and Violence throughout the years by the World Bank. Such data can be accessed at www.worldbank.org/en/topic/fragilityconflictviolence