Comments and Discussion

The way Cyprus is functioning now amounts to a *de facto* secession. There are enormous obstacles to an integrated peaceful solution. Each side "suffers" and there is "too much history, too close to the surface." Both parties use the term "right" in their discourses (i.e., right to security, right to property) – a tendency which contributes to intractability. The proposals made today for reconciliation are identical to those made in 1974. Many of the same people are also involved. There seems to be no better alternative than the *status quo,* besides the preferred options (outlined in earlier remarks).

A catalyst is needed to move the stalemate. Possibilities include:
1.   A change of regime in the North (left-wing parties are more amendable to resolution).
2.   An increased economic burden on the TRNC (which would pressure Turkey to increase its commitments).
3.   South Cyprus could enter the EU alone.
4.   South Cyprus could decide to separate or "bolt." While this may sound improbable, one could recall the peaceful separation of former Czechoslovakia.
5.   South Cyprus could recognise the TRNC.

There are two scenarios the Greek Cypriot side is pursuing:
1.   Due to harsh economic conditions, the Turkish Cypriots will elect leaders who are more amendable to concessions.
2.   The growing economic and financial burden Northern Cyprus imposes on Turkey will lead to a shift in the approach of Turkey towards the Greek Cypriot position (*vis a vis* EU membership, etc.)

CULTURES AND IDENTITIES

The Turkish Cypriot Identity

Altay Nevzat (Eastern Mediterranean University) said that with the Ottoman conquest of Cyprus, toward the end of the 16th century, two main groups came to occupy the island: Orthodox Greeks and Muslim Turks. For close to four centuries these groups interacted relatively peacefully and cooperatively, but never integrated into a single people. Though religious identity was initially the main dividing line between the two groups, it was not the source of any major social friction.

By the 19th century the two communities began to develop competing national identities that failed to coexist with the same ease that their religious, cultural and linguistic identities had done in the past. Mass education during the British period served to strengthen the divergent and conflicting aspects of the two identities. The British allowed both sides to develop separate educational systems, with many teachers and textbooks brought in from Greece and Turkey.

The growth of two national identities in Cyprus was due to several factors including:
-- the spread of nationalism to the Ottoman Empire