

Didier Pfirter: **The Annan Plan: Its Philosophy and Genesis**

The parties to the Cyprus talks were motivated by two diametrically opposed aspirations: one strived to return to a situation as close as possible to the status quo ante (i.e. before 1974) and the other aspired to basically legalize the current de facto situation.

These two opposing aspirations run like red threads through the parties' positions on all the core issues. They determine the attitude of the parties on the questions of territory, property and returns of displaced people in a straightforward way. They also define a conceptual Gordian knot encompassing the coming into being of a new state of affairs, the issue of sovereignty and the terminology used, with further ramifications into issues of governance and citizenship. This conundrum is entangled in bitter historic experiences and perceived future threats and very much represents the psychological essence of the Cyprus problem.

When it became clear that the parties would not on their own be able to find common ground, the United Nations was confronted with the challenge to bridge the sizeable gaps in a way that would permit each side to consider that its glass was more than half full. The United Nations believes that it has successfully achieved such a result in the way in which it has cut the Gordian knot, largely putting those issues to rest. The more linear issues of territory, property and returns are less prone to creative solutions. However, the Secretary General's proposals on these issues establish fair and viable compromises, which respect the basic legitimate needs and aspirations of both sides and over all generate more benefits than hardships.

One of the obstacles to solving the Cyprus problem has been a persistent perception on both sides, that it was a zero-sum game and one side's gain was the other side's loss. The political leadership on both sides has used this perception for crude short-term gains. If the problem is to be solved one day, a paradigm change is required for both sides to realize that a solution such as the one proposed by the Secretary General would create a win-win situation while the persistence of the current state of affairs in the long term does not benefit either side and represents a lose-lose outcome.