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Reaching Across the Dividing Line: Building a Collective Vision for Peace in Cyprus*

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Although the conflict on the eastern Mediterranean island of Cyprus has resisted for decades attempts by third parties to negotiate a political solution, and in spite of communication barriers that until recently made contact between ordinary citizens extremely difficult, a number of initiatives have brought together groups of citizens who have formed interpersonal alliances across the buffer zone that divides the island. This article focuses on one of these citizen groups that met over a nine-month period, examining in detail the phase of the group's work in which participants created a 'collective vision statement' to guide their peacebuilding efforts. The group encountered many difficulties, ranging from internal dissent to outside pressures, but it was able to work through them by employing a structured methodology for dialogue that gave voice to individual contributions and promoted a consensus that reflected the variety of needs and opinions within the group. The vision statement created by the group was instrumental in its future work, in which the group developed and implemented a collaborative action agenda for peacebuilding activities. It is suggested that such vision statements, developed through a consensus process that assists groups in managing their discussions fruitfully, help focus the group toward a common set of goals, while preserving individual views and perspectives.

Introduction

The ethnically divided eastern Mediterranean island of Cyprus provides an instructive example of a protracted conflict (Azar, 1990), one that arose during the height of Cold War politics and has outlasted both the Cold War and many of the other disputes that have consumed the majority of the world's attention in recent years. Like many similar situations, the conflict in Cyprus was driven originally by extreme nationalist rhetoric, intolerance of cultural differences, abuse of minorities, and use of violence to subvert the political process (Anastasiou, 2002; Anderson, 1995). Although there has been minimal intercommunal violence since a ceasefire was declared in 1974 and a UN-patrolled buffer zone was created between the areas that are under the control of the two communities, the diplomatic community has made little progress in bringing the Cyprus conflict to a successful resolution (Mirbagheri, 1998; Richmond, 1998). Factors such as historical memory (Hadjipavlou-Trigeorgis, 1998), regional hostilities (Bahcheli & Rizopoulos, 1996/97; Joseph, 1997), major-power interference in internal affairs (O'Malley & Craig, 1999; Papadakis, 1998), and reluctance to change the status quo (Bolukbasi, 1998) have prevented political leaders of the two communities from reaching an agreement on most of the key issues.

In addition to the political stalemate, communication barriers resulting from the de facto ethnic partition of the island have until

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recently make it extremely difficult for ordinary citizens to meet together during the past 25 years (Constantinou & Papadakis, 2001).[1] These barriers prevented the formation of interpersonal or group alliances that might have helped ease the political deadlock. In spite of these barriers to communication, a number of citizen-based bicommunal initiatives have taken place since 1974.[2] This article will focus on a group of Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots who worked over a nine-month period to develop a strategy and a set of activities for their peacebuilding efforts. Drawing upon the author's experience as primary facilitator for the planning sessions, the emphasis will be on the dynamics of a particular stage of the group's process, when they were engaged in forming a collective vision for their work.[3] The following sections will describe the process used to conduct the meetings, ways in which the group struggled as it worked together, results of their efforts, and the role their vision statement played in the group's subsequent peacebuilding activities.[4]

[1] Restrictions on freedom of movement were partially lifted in April 2003, greatly expanding the opportunity for ordinary citizens to cross the buffer zone for visits, meetings, and other face-to-face communications. The effects of this move have not been adequately analyzed, and at the time of this writing it is too early to say how it will affect the formation of new bicommunal groups.

[2] A major player in sponsoring these initiatives, especially during the period 1990–97, was the Cyprus Fulbright Commission, a US-based educational exchange program. Various diplomatic entities have also been instrumental in organizing and funding bicommunal programs, including the US Embassy, the British High Commissioner, the European Commission, the Slovak Embassy, and others, in particular the United Nations Mission in Cyprus. In recent years, significant funding for cross-community projects has come from the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and from the European Commission.

[3] I facilitated the work of this group in my role as Senior Fulbright Scholar in communication and conflict resolution, a position I held during 1994–96. Since that time, I have continued active involvement in working with bicommunal groups in Cyprus.

[4] I am able to offer personal observations about the nature of the dialogue that took place within the group, but I am not in a position to evaluate the results of this work and its impact on the conflict. An external evaluation of the group whose work is described in this article is reported in Wolleh (2001).

Background

Cyprus is a war-torn island divided by differences in language, cultural heritage, religion, politics, view of the past, and vision of the future (Attalides, 1979; Calotychos, 1998; Denktash, 1982; Joseph, 1997; Hitchens, 1997; Kizilyurek, 1993; Koumoulides, 1986; Markides, 1977; Stearns, 1992; Tamkoç, 1988; Theophanous, 1996; Volkan, 1979). Because of past actions by each side toward the other that brought disruption, displacement, loss of life, and other forms of suffering, both sides see themselves as victims of aggression, and neither side trusts the other. The physical division of the island in 1974 has affected nearly every aspect of people's lives including the psychological condition of residents, who carry a sense of injustice about the past and anxiety about the future. For overviews of the current situation, see Anastasiou (2000, 2002), Barkey & Gordon (2001/02), Savvides (2002), and Yesilada & Sozen (2002).[5]

Despite the protracted nature of the conflict, the obstacles to communication, and the failure of negotiators to make progress towards its resolution, numerous efforts have been made to bring bicommunal groups together in Cyprus. The citizen-led reconciliation activity started in the 1970s (Doob, 1974; Fisher, 1992; Hadjipavlou-Trigeorgis, 1993; Stoddard, 1986; Talbot, 1977), often utilizing the problem-solving methodologies described by Burton (1969), Fisher (1997, 2001), Mitchell (1981), and other conflict theorists. The efforts began to grow in the early part of the 1990s (Broome, 1998), owing in large part to assistance by various third parties (Diamond & Fisher,

[5] In Turkey, the Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TSEV), http://www.tesev.org.tr, publishes ongoing reports about Cyprus, while in Greece, the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP), http://www.eliamep.gr, produces occasional papers about the Cyprus conflict.

1995).[6] Although it is difficult to determine how the efforts of these bicommunal groups have affected the political situation in Cyprus, they provided an opportunity for individuals from a broad cross-section of society to meet and develop relationships with members of the other community, and they will likely play a critical role in the implementation of any negotiated agreement (Hampson, 1996; Lederach, 1997).

This article will focus on one of the bicommunal groups that was formed during 1994 and that has continued to meet regularly during the past decade. Consisting of 15 Greek Cypriots and 15 Turkish Cypriots,[7] this group engaged in a nine-month sequence of interactive problem-solving and design sessions, resulting in a collaborative-action agenda that subsequently guided the peacebuilding activities of the group (Broome, 1997).[8] As part of these design sessions, they produced a document titled a 'Collective Vision Statement for Peace Building Efforts in Cyprus', which provided the group with a focus for taking steps forward in their work. Their effort represents a special case of alliance building (Collier, 2002), where individuals separated by war and a heavily militarized buffer zone reached across the dividing line to develop working partnerships.

Building a Collective Vision Statement

The work described in this article is grounded in the theoretical construct of 'relational empathy' (Broome, 1993), which draws from Stewart's (1983) conception of 'interpretive listening' and Stewart & Thomas's (1986) 'dialogic listening'. Relational empathy involves both the psychological constructs of 'de-centering' (Barnlund & Nomura, 1985) and 'role-taking' (Mead, 1934) and the interactive process of 'third-culture building' (Casmir, 1978; Useem, Useem & Donoghue, 1963). In practical terms, relational empathy suggests the application of methodologies that place participants in a position where they can gain a greater appreciation and respect for the perspective of the other (through de-centering and role-taking) and simultaneously create together an understanding of the future to which they can all agree to direct their peacebuilding efforts (third-culture building).

In conflict settings such as Cyprus, development of relational empathy is not an easy task. However, it can be promoted through third-party intervention that utilizes a systematic approach capable of helping individuals and groups progress through the maze of both content and relational difficulties that confront them. Appropriate methodologies can help participants explore critical issues in depth and learn to work together productively. This requires going beyond approaches that focus primarily on helping each individual understand the other better or helping

[6] Louise Diamond, of the Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy (IMTD), based in Washington, DC, made several trips to Cyprus between 1990 and 1993. IMTD and the Conflict Management Group (CMG) at Harvard University, along with members of National Training Labs (NTL), formed the Cyprus Consortium in 1993 and conducted several workshops during 1994. This work served as a major catalyst for promoting the growth of bicommunal activities in Cyprus.

[7] For a short period of time, the Turkish-Cypriot group consisted of 17 members. Approximately one month after the start of the design sessions, two additional Turkish Cypriots joined the group, coming at their own initiative, without a specific invitation from the group. Both members had close ties to the ruling political party, and their entry into the discussions was never fully accepted by the other group members. As described below, these two members left the group at the beginning of the bicommunal discussions of the vision statement, leaving the Turkish Cypriot group with its original 15 members.

[8] Initially, there were nine men and six women in the Greek-Cypriot group and nine men and six women in the Turkish-Cypriot group. In both groups, ages ranged from the mid-20s to the mid-50s, with most of the participants in their 30s and early 40s. They were professionals in various fields, including education, business, counseling, and civil service. Political affiliations ranged from the left/liberal (including the communist party) to the right/conservative (including the ruling party in each community). Participation was voluntary.

people get along in a more civil manner. By constructing together a new framework for interpreting the events surrounding the situation, participants in deep-rooted conflicts are no longer trapped in incompatible views of the past and future, and they can avoid making unsatisfactory compromises that may lead to an eventual breakdown of any agreement they might negotiate.

In protracted conflict situations, the construction of a collective framework for viewing the future can assist the group in two primary ways. First, the product of their work can provide direction and guidance for a group. In order for groups to work together in an effective manner, it is helpful for them to understand where they want to go as a group. The vision statement assists the group in constructing a clear image of the future, and it provides a gauge for making choices about how to reach it. Second, the process of working together to think about the future helps participants understand and accept individual differences in aims and objectives. When people come together to work in a group, each member brings a somewhat different motivation and purpose for engaging in group work. Sometimes, these differences cause friction and conflict as members argue the merits of various proposals for action. The vision statement helps focus the group toward a common set of goals, while preserving the individual differences.

Overcoming Barriers to Working Together

The group of citizen peacebuilders whose work is described in this article encountered many obstacles in their attempts to work together. First of all, because there were few communication links across the buffer zone in Cyprus, bicommunal meetings could take place only with special arrangements, relying on third parties to help bring them together. The process was burdensome, the requisite permissions often were not granted, and the need to depend on third-party assistance added a complicating variable to the situation (see discussion below). Logistically, the process of organizing workshops, seminars, and other events was cumbersome and often frustrating (see Broome, 1999, for a specific example of such difficulties).[9]

A more serious barrier, however, was the social (and often official) pressure (on both sides) placed on participants to avoid contacts with the other community. Those who participated in rapprochement activities were often branded as 'traitors to the national cause', and at the very best they were thought of as 'naive' or involved in a meaningless activity. In addition, because usually bicommunal meetings were arranged by external third parties, participants were sometimes accused of being 'used' by the international community as political pawns to promote the interests of outsiders. For many of the participants, involvement in conflict resolution training and seminars negatively affected their careers, their social life, and even their family situations. A few times, there were threats issued against those involved, and there was occasional physical damage to property of participants. Quite often, the media wrote slanderous articles about individuals who participated in the bicommunal activities, and for several years there were weekly protests by a Greek-Cypriot group outside the buffer zone checkpoint, creating an intimidating 'gauntlet'

[9] Permissions for Turkish Cypriots to hold bicommunal meetings had to be obtained from the Turkish-Cypriot authorities. In addition, the police at the Greek-Cypriot checkpoint had to be sent a list of Greek Cypriots who would be crossing into the buffer zone, and arrangements had to be made with the United Nations forces to hold the meetings in the buffer zone. The vast majority of the meetings were held in an old luxury hotel called the Ledra Palace, where the UN forces are now housed. Although the procedure for Greek Cypriots was relatively straightforward, the willingness of Turkish-Cypriot authorities to grant permission for bicommunal meetings was closely tied to political concerns and to a general policy that opposed such meetings.

through which participants had to pass in order to attend meetings.

In addition to the difficulties and pressures faced by those who decided to meet with 'the enemy', it was necessary during most workshops and seminars to work through the prejudices, misconceptions, and mistaken information that are part of the education of all Cypriots and that are propagated daily by the media and political figures. The risk of failure was very real, and even though those taking part in the peacebuilding efforts usually entered the work with a positive attitude, bound together by their desire for peace, differences of opinion about major issues of the conflict often pushed Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots apart. There have been many instances where well-intentioned individuals came together to seek mutual understanding and came away with a sense of hopelessness about the possibility of working through the conflict. The decision to work together requires a strong commitment to succeed as well as a willingness to risk failure.

Getting Started – Separately

The group experienced a serious setback to their initial plans when they were unable to obtain permission to meet in a bicommunal setting. Although they could not meet together, they decided to continue in separate communal groups until permissions were granted, something that did not happen until nearly three months after the work started. A design process called Interactive Management (IM), based on the work of Warfield (1976, 1994), was used to guide the group work during the nine-month period. Meetings were held one evening each week with the Greek Cypriots and the next evening with the Turkish Cypriots. Both groups followed a similar schedule and used the same methodology for working together. With both community groups, the author served as the facilitator for the design sessions. Although the participants were disappointed that they could not meet in a bicommunal setting, the separate communal meetings allowed both Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots to explore intragroup differences that might not have surfaced had the meetings taken place from the beginning in a bicommunal setting, thus providing an unanticipated advantage to monocommunal meetings.

In the initial three-month period, the two groups worked separately to analyze the situation they faced in promoting citizen peacebuilding activities in Cyprus. This analysis was important preparation for future work, since it allowed relationships among group members to be strengthened, and it provided them with a better understanding of the issues. In addition, it helped 'unload' many of the concerns, anxieties, and doubts that could block their ability to think creatively about the future. Although the separate meetings were productive, the group was eager to meet together in a bicommunal setting to exchange results of these discussions. When they were finally able to do so, participants learned much about the perspective of the other community, seeing for the first time the variety of views that were held by those usually considered a monolithic entity. The groups were also confronted by the reality of the many differences that separated community groups, and they began to realize how difficult it might be to engage in sustained peace activities (see Broome, 1997, for a more detailed description of the problem analysis phase).

The problem analysis discussions set the stage for the next phase of the work, in which the groups began to look toward the future. Again working in separate communal sessions (because permissions were not granted for meeting together), participants first proposed and discussed characteristics of the desired future for peacebuilding efforts in Cyprus. Each group engaged in idea

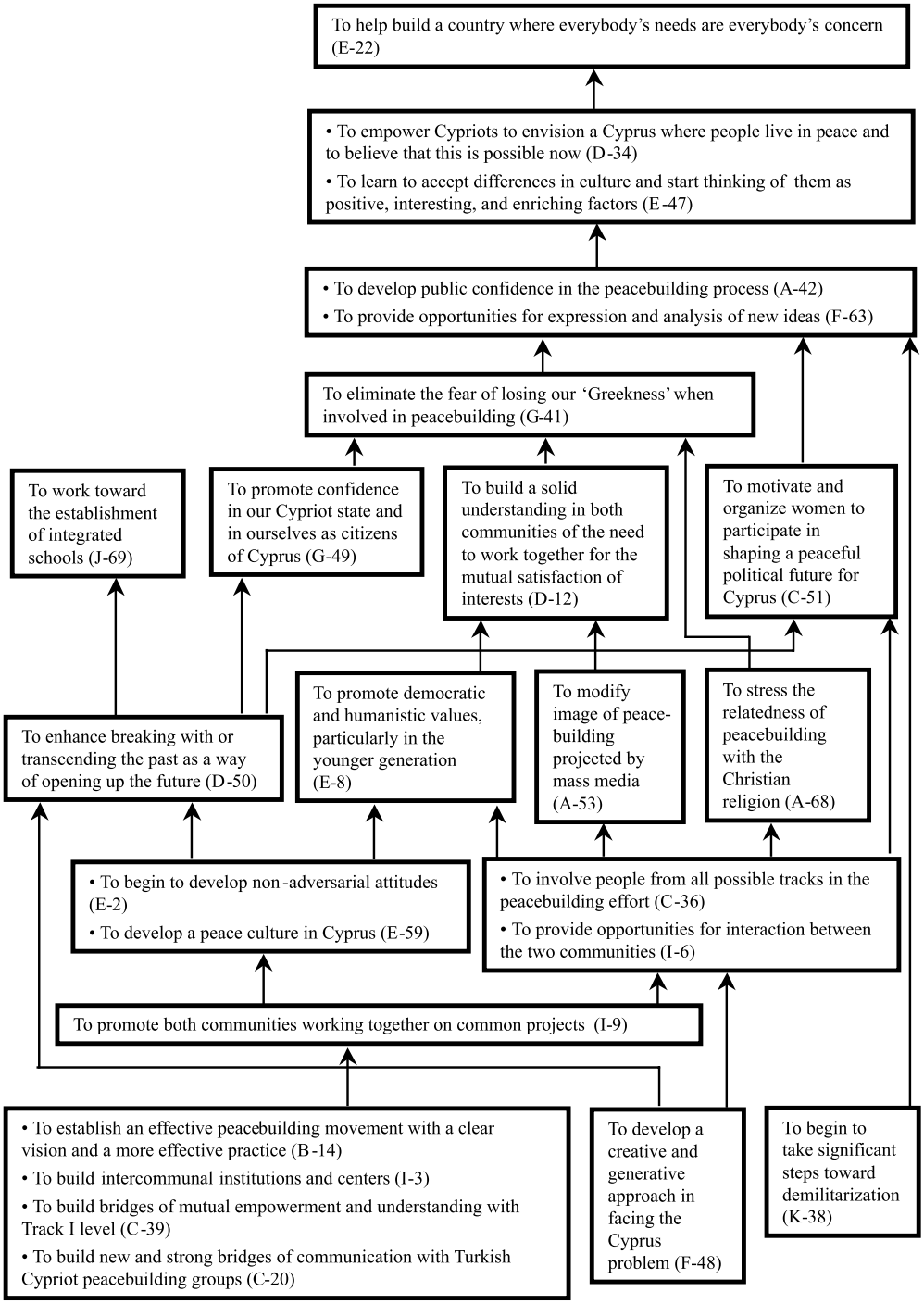
generation, clarification, and categorization, using a sequenced turn-taking process (a modified form of Nominal Group Technique developed by Delbeq, Van De Ven & Gustafson, 1975) in which each participant had the opportunity to propose ideas, clarify these ideas, and ask clarification questions about the ideas of others. Participants responded to the following guiding question: 'What are desired goals for our peacebuilding efforts during the next decade?' During the idea-generation process, Greek Cypriots proposed 72 desired goals for their work, and Turkish Cypriots proposed 101 goals. Through a facilitated process of categorization, these goals were organized under the following themes:

A. Image of Peacebuilding
B. Strengthening the Peacebuilding Movement
C. Bridge Building
D. Peace Mentality
E. Peace Culture
F. Problem-Solving Approaches
G. Identity Issues
H. Bicommunal Understanding
I. Bicommunal Communication and Exchange
J. Youth and Education
K. Political and Economic Issues

Through a multi-voting selection process, each community identified from the full list of their proposed goals a subset they considered most important. Using this subset, the group engaged in a facilitated process of exploring the supportive relationships among the selected ideas, resulting in an 'influence structure', which is a graphical portrayal of individual goals and their perceived interrelationships. The development of the influence structure was accomplished using Interpretive Structural Modeling (ISM), a methodology developed by Warfield (1994), with the following relational question: 'In designing the future of peacebuilding efforts in Cyprus, would the accomplishment of goal A significantly support the accomplishment of goal B?' The 'support' relationship examines the positive influence that goals can have on one another, and it can be interpreted as 'makes it easier to accomplish', 'increases the likelihood of', 'helps achieve', or 'promotes'. Following a visual display of the resulting influence structure, the participants discussed and amended it. The resulting Greek-Cypriot structure is depicted in Figure 1, and the Turkish-Cypriot structure is shown in Figure 2.

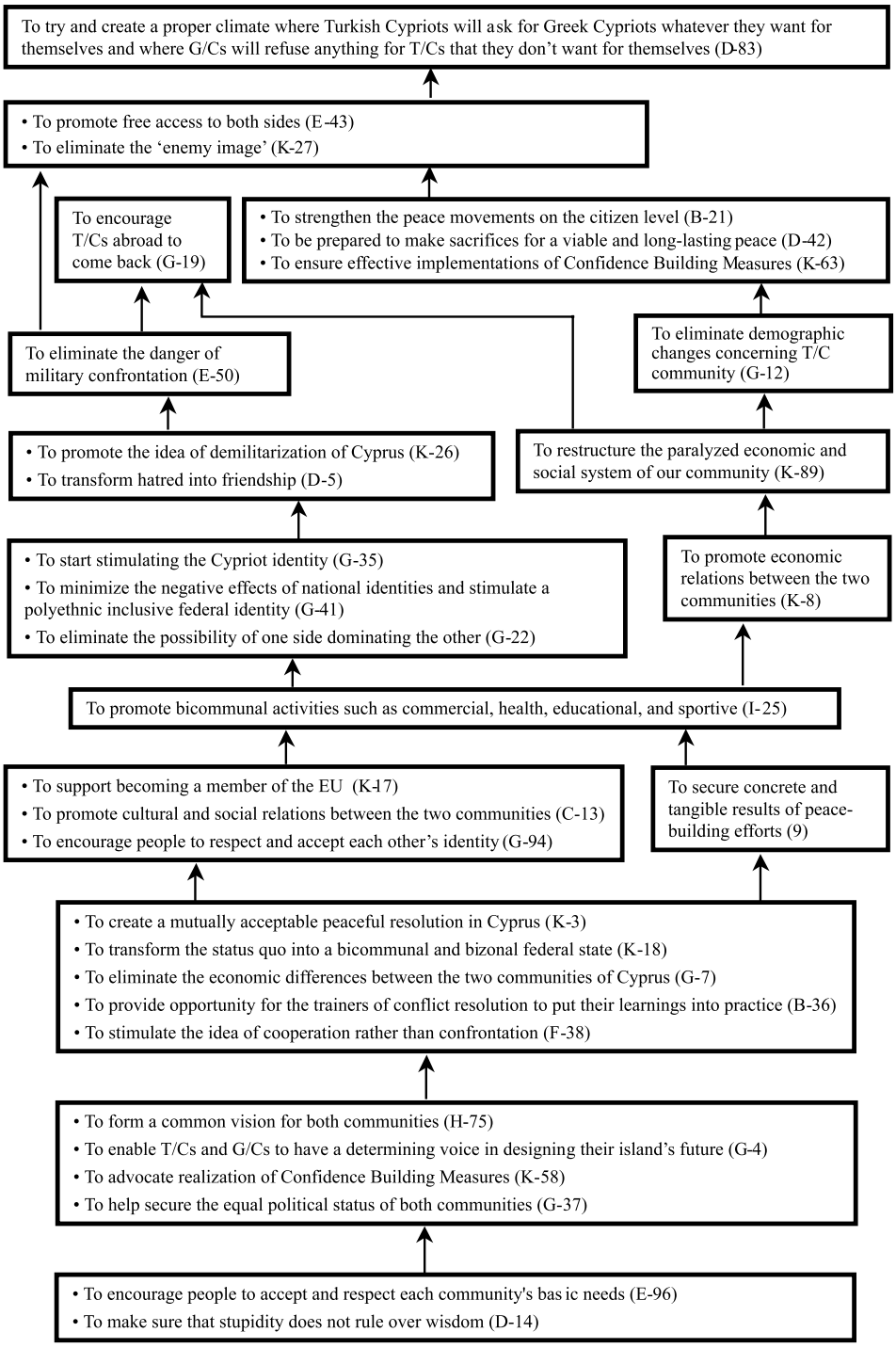
In a general sense, the structures show the impact that particular goals might have, if they can be realized, on the accomplishment of other goals. Each influence structure can be read from bottom to top, with the goals displayed at the base of the structure perceived as providing significant support for those goals that lie above them in the structure. Correspondingly, those goals that are displayed at the top level of the structure are perceived as requiring the support of the goals that lie beneath them in order to be realized. Steps toward accomplishing the goals at the lower levels make it more likely that the goals at higher levels can be attained, while goals at the higher levels are very difficult to reach unless some progress is made in accomplishing the goals that precede them in the structure. Those goals that are together within a single box are mutually supportive, meaning that the lines of influence between them flow equally in both directions. The letter–number combination in parentheses at the end of each statement is used simply to indicate the category within which the indicated goals were placed (see earlier discussion of categorization) and the initial order in which the various goals were proposed.

Figure 1. Vision Statement for Greek Cypriots



The arrow should be interpreted as 'significantly supports'. The letter–number combination after each statement indicates the category in which the item was grouped (see results section) plus a numerical label for the item.

Figure 2. Vision Statement for Turkish Cypriots



The arrow should be interpreted as 'significantly supports'. The letter–number combination after each statement indicates the category in which the item was grouped (see results section) plus a numerical label for the item.

Analysis of Community Perspectives

An analysis of the community-based vision statements, conducted prior to the first joint meeting, revealed interesting similarities and differences. Overall, the two structures showed a greater degree of similarity than expected. Each group placed emphasis at the base of their structure on communication and the need to work with the other community, while in each structure there was a focus on building empathy between the two communities as a long-term goal. In addition, each structure showed a concern about identity issues in the middle level. Such similarities indicated that a basic framework existed upon which it would be possible to build a collective vision statement. At the same time, the differences between the goal structures of each community – divergent views about the role of the peace movement, the greater emphasis by Turkish Cypriots on political and economic issues, and the different emphasis on identity – presented significant challenges to creating a vision of the future that would reflect the concerns and viewpoints of both communities.

The discussions that took place within each community group during their work on the influence structures continued the learning process that had begun during the earlier problem-analysis phase of their work. Participants started to understand the variety of motivations, aspirations, and points of view that existed within their own community, and they began to accept these differences as inevitable and healthy. However, building a collective vision statement that could guide their joint efforts required the give-and-take of intercommunal dialogue. Despite the anxiety about whether or not it would be possible to generate a consensus about goals for peacebuilding, participants were eager to work in joint sessions on the task of creating a vision for the future. The bicommunal group took up this task as soon as they were allowed to meet together.

Confronting the Similarities and Differences – Together

As a starting point to their joint work, the groups discussed the similarities and differences in the two vision statements, using the analysis presented in the previous section as the basis for their discussion. Initially, their talk centered on the unexpected degree of similarity between the Turkish-Cypriot and Greek-Cypriot views about the future. For the Greek Cypriots, the overlap in perceptions was particularly encouraging. After their earlier work in phase one, they had been deeply disappointed by the realization that the Turkish Cypriots viewed the current situation so differently from their group, and they had been hesitant to continue with the vision phase of the work. They had resigned themselves to the possibility of failure in attempts to develop a collective view of the future, since views of the past and present were so different. Now, they were encouraged by the fact that the community-based vision statements demonstrated more commonality in thinking than they had anticipated. Not only did this give them more confidence in the validity of their efforts to develop a peace movement, but it also helped confirm the official position of the Greek-Cypriot leadership, which posits that Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots share a common heritage and should live together in a unified state under a single government (see Anastasiou, 2000).

For the Turkish Cypriots, on the other hand, the unexpected overlap in goals brought a less enthusiastic response. They had come away from the earlier exchange of products in phase one with a high degree of satisfaction about being able at last to help the Greek Cypriots understand that the two communities were different, that even though the Turkish-Cypriot participants were part of peacebuilding efforts, their ideas still reflected those of the larger community on many issues. Just because they were

willing to work for peace did not mean they held the same views as the Greek Cypriots. After so many decades feeling themselves in the position of minority, they were pleased to send the Greeks a 'wake-up call'. The analysis of the vision statements, on the other hand, seemed to be counter-intuitive to the Turkish Cypriots; how could more agreement exist about the future than about the past? The results also put them in an awkward position socially and politically, since the official policy of the Turkish-Cypriot officials, which holds that it is necessary to divide Cyprus into two independent ethnic zones, is based in part on the different views of the future they believe each community holds. The fact that their group had now produced a document that showed so much commonality with Greek-Cypriot views of the future would not be received well by their friends, neighbors, the media, and the Turkish-Cypriot leadership. To make matters worse, they believed that the Greek Cypriots would see the results as reinforcement for their long-held argument that the future of Cyprus belonged in a unified state (with majority rule by the Greek Cypriots). For the Turkish Cypriots, this meant a step backwards in their efforts to help the Greek Cypriots take the community differences more seriously.

This mismatch in responses to the results from the analysis of community-based vision statements meant that the next steps had to be taken very carefully. The Greek Cypriots needed to have their encouragement reinforced but tempered with sensitivity to the Turkish-Cypriot response. The Turkish Cypriots needed to keep in mind that the vision statements had shown also many differences, in addition to the similarities, and by going forward with the work they would have the opportunity to continue the process of making their views known more clearly to the Greek Cypriots and the international community. Both groups needed to be aware of the hard work and commitment it would take to develop a collective vision statement, and everyone needed to be prepared for failure. After the facilitator held separate meetings with individuals from each group to discuss these issues, the group decided to hold a bicommunal meeting to decide whether or not to continue their work.

The bicommunal meeting resulted in some very difficult discussions, centered on the issues described above. All of the Greek Cypriots and most of the Turkish Cypriots expressed a desire to start work on a collective vision statement. However, a number of Turkish Cypriots, particularly those more closely tied to ruling party politics, were hesitant about continuing the work, and they argued that the sessions should be stopped or the direction of the group's work should be changed. For a long period in the meeting, the discussion revolved around arguments about why this work was dangerous to the Turkish-Cypriot cause – it would be misrepresented by the media, misunderstood by officials, and used as propaganda by the Greeks to support their own cause. Following this discussion, two individuals, both connected closely to the Turkish-Cypriot political establishment, decided to leave the meeting and indicated (to the facilitator) that their continued participation would be harmful to them personally (because of their positions) and to the future of the bicommunal activities (because of the reasons mentioned above).

After the departure of the two Turkish-Cypriot members, the atmosphere of the group changed considerably. What had been a tense, highly charged discussion quickly developed into a supportive exchange of views. Greek Cypriots acknowledged the concerns of the Turkish Cypriots, who in turn expressed appreciation for their understanding and sensitivity. There was confidence expressed that the group could

overcome its differences and build on the similarities that existed in the community-based vision statements. Over the next two months, the group met regularly to undertake the delicate job of examining the future of peacebuilding efforts in Cyprus. Their work resulted in a Collective Vision Statement, portrayed in Figure 3.

The group started with the shared goals from each community's vision statement, including those that had been structured at similar and different levels, and they generated additional goals they wanted to include in the collective vision statement. As might be expected, significant discussion took place about the wording of some of the statements. A number of goals from the original community structures, as well as some of the new items, included phrasing that was objectionable to various individuals or to the other community. The objections were much deeper than personal preferences; in most cases, the wording reflected critical identity issues. A few examples will help illustrate the discussion.

One of the statements in the Turkish-Cypriot vision statement read: 'to minimize the negative effects of national identities and stimulate a poly-ethnic inclusive federal identity'. Many Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots were uncomfortable with this statement, and it led to a great deal of discussion about the nature of nationalism, national identity, and the possibility of a federal identity. The author of the statement, who was part of the liberal left and a member of the opposition party in the north, explained that she was concerned about how so much damage had been done in Cyprus in the name of 'preserving the Greek nation' or 'defending the Turkish honor' and other ways in which national identity had been used to promote division and conflict. The group agreed with her about the negative effects of such behavior, but they did not believe that the answer to such a problem was to downplay national identity. Many of the group members also opposed the idea of a 'poly-ethnic federal identity', and they did not want to adopt a statement that advocated this as one of the group's goals. After much discussion, a proposal was made to change the statement so that it focused on the negative effects of 'national chauvinism' and promoted a 'poly-ethnic inclusive society'. This change in wording removed the emphasis on identity and placed it on the behavior that was causing the problem, and it focused on creating a structure within which such behavior would not be encouraged. Thus, the group found a wording that not only satisfied everyone but also was a much clearer statement of the intent of the author.

There were a number of disagreements about other statements that focused on identity issues. Several of the items in the Greek-Cypriot vision statement included a reference to 'Cypriots' or the 'Cypriot State', such as the goal that read: 'to promote confidence in our Cypriot state and in ourselves as citizens of Cyprus' (Greek-Cypriot item 49). For the Turkish Cypriots, this statement was a subtle denial of their identity. From their perspective, before the war in 1974 they had lived as a minority in Cyprus under Greek-Cypriot domination, and for most of their lives they had tolerated a perception by the Greek Cypriots and most of the world that Cyprus was a Greek island. For example, Greek Cypriots often speak of 'Cypriots and Turks', meaning Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. Additionally, when Turkish Cypriots traveled abroad and identified themselves from Cyprus, most people initially assumed they were Greek. For them the term 'Cypriot' had come to mean 'Greek'. Even now, the only internationally recognized government in Cyprus was Greek controlled, and the 'Cypriot state' was a synonym for a Greek state, of which they did not desire to be citizens. To their credit, the Greek Cypriots listened and learned much from their Turkish-Cypriot colleagues, and

they agreed to drop this item from the collective vision statement.

In addition to excluding this item, there were several goals added to the structure that emphasized the unique cultural identities of the two communities. For example, the following statements were added: 'to accept and respect each other's identity as Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots and see this as a richness rather than an obstacle to peacebuilding' (bicommunal item 32), and 'to promote the idea in the Greek-Cypriot community that the existence problem of the Turkish-Cypriot community is vital for the whole of Cyprus' (bicommunal item 18). Furthermore, there were a number of items that included terms such as 'the two communities' or 'both communities' (bicommunal items 7, 8, 17, 27, 28, 36, 37, 41). These goals reflect a solid understanding of the identity needs of both communities, and they directly acknowledge the identity needs of the Turkish Cypriots, something that had been long overlooked by the Greek Cypriots as well as the international community.

The most difficult struggle between the Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots came near the end of the structuring process, occurring over the goal: 'To empower Cypriots to envision a Cyprus where people live in peace and to believe that this is possible now' (Greek-Cypriot item 34). Coming after the difficult but productive discussions that led to the changes in wording and inclusion of new items described above, the Greek Cypriots felt that they had been more than accommodating in their willingness to include so many statements emphasizing the 'two communities'. They felt strongly that there should be at least one item in the collective vision statement that used the concept of 'Cypriot', giving recognition to those aspects of culture and heritage that the two communities held in common. It would give too much emphasis to separateness, they believed, if there were no goal stated in a way that acknowledged the ties that all individuals had to the island. The Turkish Cypriots, on the other hand, were unwilling to accept this point of view, believing that such use of the term would merely play into the hands of those who were pushing for a unified state that would deny the equal status of their community. The group had reached a deadlock over this issue. The Turkish Cypriots did not want the statement included in the goal structure, and the Greek Cypriots would not accept the vision statement without it.

As a way to prevent the stalemate from destroying all the progress that had taken place to that point, the group decided to ask a few trusted colleagues from outside the group to try finding an appropriate wording that might satisfy the concerns of both communities. Since the group had been working every week for nearly two months, the chance to take a break from the intense discussions was also welcomed. Fortunately, the outside individuals were able to propose a change in wording that helped the group move forward, although it took more discussion and additional changes by the group before it could be accepted. The proposal from the outside individuals read: 'To empower Cypriots from both communities to envision a Cyprus where people could live in peace and to believe that this is possible now.' This simple addition of 'from both communities' allowed the term 'Cypriots' to remain in the statement while simultaneously recognizing the identities of both communities. However, the Greek Cypriots were still concerned about what they perceived to be an overemphasis on the two communities. Discussion then ensued about the Maronites, the Armenians, and others who lived in Cyprus and may not identify fully with either community. After much dialogue on the subject, a proposal was accepted to change the 'two communities' to

'all communities', thereby acknowledging the existence of 'Cypriotness' as well as the complex nature of Cypriot society.

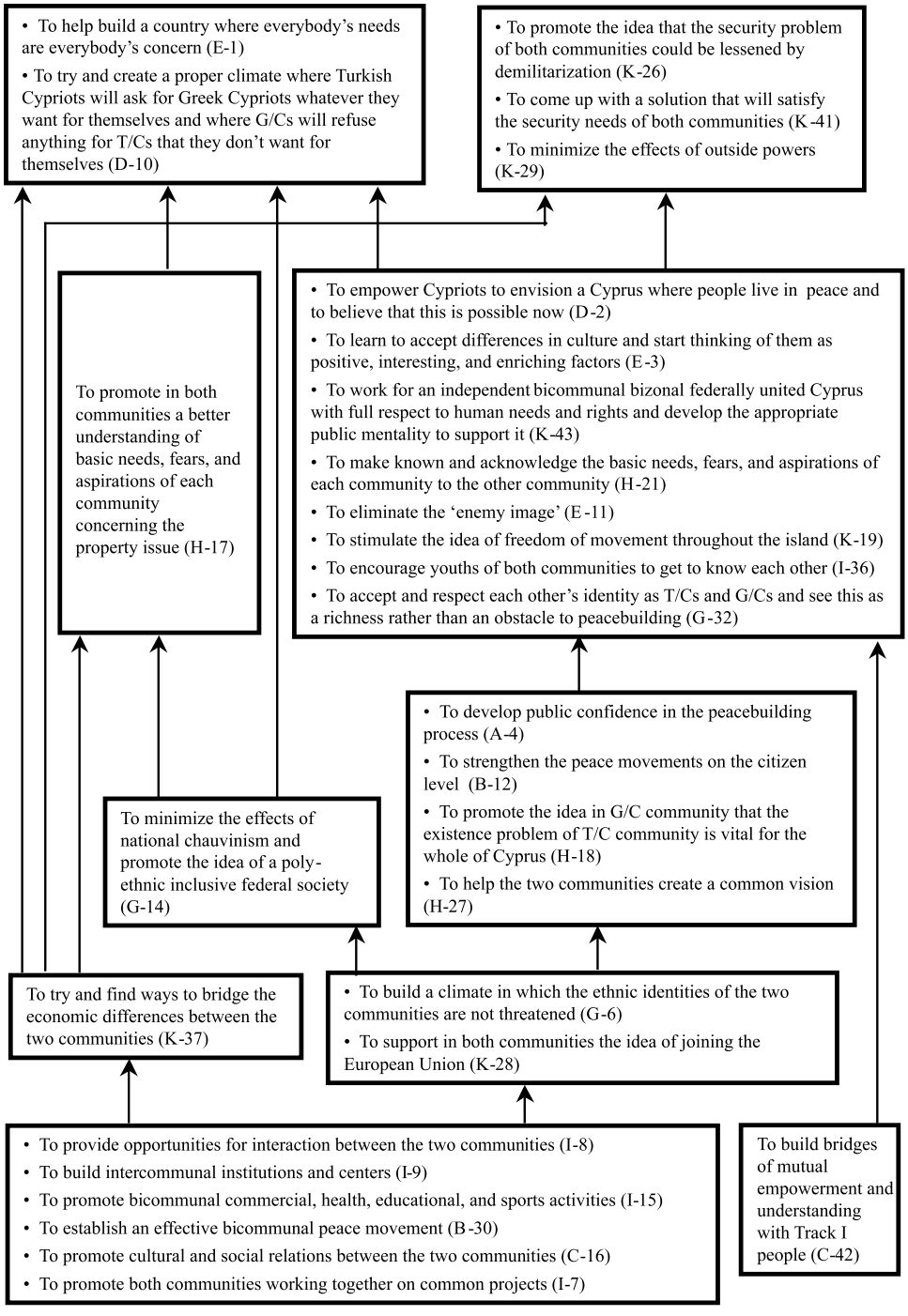
In addition to the discussions about wording of goals, there was also fruitful exchange about the inclusion or exclusion of particular goals. In the Greek-Cypriot vision statement, no emphasis was given to economic goals, while the Turkish Cypriots included several statements that addressed this concern, and they believed that the collective vision statement should recognize the disparity in the economic situation between the two communities.[10] Thus, a new item was created, 'to try and find ways to bridge the economic differences between the two communities' (bicommunal item 37).

There were also some Greek-Cypriot concerns that had not received attention by the Turkish Cypriots, and the group agreed to include these in the bicommunal structure. Unlike the economic issues, which were easily acknowledged by the Greek Cypriots and which did not create controversy, the Greek-Cypriot issues, related to return of property held in the north before the 1974 war and restrictions on freedom of movement for Greek Cypriots to visit the north, were emotionally charged matters that lay at the heart of the Cyprus problem. Although they had not included goals related to these concerns in their community vision statement, the group's discussion about Turkish-Cypriot goals related to political and economic issues brought the Greek-Cypriot concerns to the forefront. Under normal circumstances, the Turkish Cypriots would have been strongly opposed to consideration of these issues. Even though they also faced losses and restrictions resulting from the war, they viewed them as sacrifices that allowed for the first time the creation of their own institutions and rules under self-governance. Any provision for Greek Cypriots to take back their former property or removal of restrictions on access to the north could negate the gains the Turkish Cypriots had made during the previous 20 years. So it was not an easy matter for them to allow statements about these matters into the bicommunal goal structure.

Fortunately, discussion about these issues occurred near the latter part of the structuring process, and all participants were able to view 'threats' from such items in the light of the overall structure rather than as isolated matters. Participants discovered that the controversy over these items dealt not so much with whether or not they were possible as it did with when they would occur. In other words, Turkish Cypriots were not so much opposed to the idea of freedom of movement as they were to the possibility that it might occur under the present circumstances. They believed that if it were to occur any time soon, with so much tension and lack of trust between the two communities, it might allow hostile actions by Greek Cypriot extremists against Turkish Cypriots. Additionally, if Greek Cypriots were allowed to return to their former property or to settle in the north, the Turkish-Cypriot economy was not strong enough economically to withstand such an 'invasion', and they might quickly revert to what they perceived was their former status as a minority dominated by Greek Cypriots. However, Turkish Cypriots recognized that property issues must be dealt with at some point, and they acknowledged the right of Greek Cypriots to be compensated in some way for what they had lost in the war. Everyone realized that such issues could be dealt with much more easily and more realistically under conditions of trust and respect, and when the economies of both communities were strong. This realization made it possible for goals related to

[10] Greek Cypriots enjoy a per capita income that is more than three times that of Turkish Cypriots, and partly because of difficulties stemming from the unrecognized status of the Turkish-Cypriot administration, the economy in the north is depressed.

Figure 3. Collective Vision Statement for Peacebuilding Efforts in Cyprus



The arrow should be interpreted as 'significantly supports'. The letter–number combination after each statement indicates the category in which the item was grouped (see results section) plus a numerical label for the item.

property concerns and freedom of movement to be included in the vision statement in the upper quadrant, recognizing that their accomplishment would require a great deal of support from other goals.

Finally, the group engaged in discussion about where statements related to demilitarization and the peace movement fit in the structure. Both communal groups had included items related to these issues in their vision statements (Greek-Cypriot items 14 and 38, Turkish-Cypriot items 21 and 26). However, the Greek Cypriots had placed both items at the base level of their structure, while the Turkish Cypriots had placed both items near the upper end of their structure. For the Greek Cypriots, a strong peace movement coupled with demilitarization could drive the peace process, while for the Turkish Cypriots neither could occur without significant support from other goals. The discussion led to both groups altering their positions on one of the issues, with the Greek Cypriots realizing that demilitarization might be an impossible goal to work towards in the beginning stages, and the Turkish Cypriots agreeing to support the Greek-Cypriot point of view that if the peace movement could be strengthened in the immediate future, it could help them accomplish many of their other goals.

While the discussion of the peace movement was not overly controversial, the discussion of demilitarization was filled with tension and disagreement, resulting in a change of wording that was much less forceful than the original Greek-Cypriot phrasing. The final statement changed from the original goal 'to begin to take significant steps toward demilitarization' to the modified statement 'to promote the idea that the security problem of both communities could be lessened by demilitarization'. This gave it a meaning that was directly linked to security issues, a key concern for both communities, albeit in different ways – for the Greek Cypriots, demilitarization meant the removal of the Turkish army, which was perceived as their biggest security threat, while for the Turkish Cypriots, the Turkish army provided them with protection from Greek-Cypriot extremists, and demilitarization was the biggest threat to their feeling of security. With the new wording, which recognized the Greek-Cypriot position while acknowledging the security concerns of the Turkish Cypriots, the goal was placed at the top level of the structure, where it was coupled with other statements concerning security.

Interpreting the Collective Vision Statement

After nearly two months of regular meetings, a bicommunal vision statement emerged that was acceptable to members of the group from both communities. Figure 3 displays this product of the group's work. As with the community-based vision statements, the structure is read by starting at the bottom and following the lines of influences upward. Those goals at the base of the structure, which might be viewed as goals that should be given immediate attention, provide the most support for the overall set of goals. Those goals at the top of the structure, which might be viewed as 'long-term' goals, need the support of those goals that lie beneath. The goals that lie in the middle of the structure can be viewed as 'conduits' through which the support passes from the base to the long-term goals.

Two categories of goals provide the base of the support structure. First in overall influence is Bicommunal Communication and Exchange. Providing opportunities for interaction between the two communities, building intercommunal institutions and centers, promoting bicommunal activities in various areas, and developing common projects are seen as the foundation upon which peacebuilding activities must be built. Complementing these activities are goals

related to Bridge Building. Participants felt that stronger links must be developed with Track I individuals at the official government level, and that cultural and social relations must be encouraged between the two communities. Finally, the third category of goals perceived by the group as providing significant support for the overall system of goals is a Strong Peacebuilding Movement. The participants emphasized the need to strengthen the process in which they were engaged, both by expanding it to include more people and by giving it a greater voice both in the government and in society at large. Throughout the structure, there is a strong emphasis on identity needs of the two communities and on understanding the basic needs, fears, and aspirations of each community. The items toward which almost all other goals are directed concern promoting a peace culture and a peace mentality and satisfying security issues, which taken together can be considered the long-term goals of the group's peacebuilding efforts.

Following the completion of the vision statement, the group designed a collaborative action agenda for implementing the goals. They generated a set of 245 options, from which they selected a total of 15 projects to implement during the following year (see Broome, 1997, for discussion of the action agenda). Because of limitations in resources, changes in the political environment, and other intervening factors, several changes were made to this original plan during its implementation over the next few years, but most of the activities were eventually realized in some form.[11]

[11] From January 1997 until the partial lifting of restrictions in April 2003, additional restrictions on bicommunal meetings were put in place that made it difficult for the group to implement many of its activities. The lack of permissions for Turkish Cypriots to pass the checkpoint for meetings with Greek Cypriots brought a stop to many of the groups that had been meeting on a regular basis, although a few maintained contacts through electronic means and several groups continued to meet at the mixed village of Pyla, located next to the buffer zone in the British sovereign base area.

Conclusion

Conflict situations are usually emotionally laden due to historical circumstances and the struggle over resources (Volkan, 1979, 1988). Traumas of past events, memories of personal and collective loses, limited social contact, and destructive communication habits present many obstacles that must be overcome in situations like the one found in Cyprus (Calotychos, 1998). In different ways, these obstacles affect attempts by individuals or groups in such conflicts to form working alliances (Collier, 2002). Even in situations where participants have a personal commitment to peace and a strong desire to promote reconciliation, it is not likely that personal contact alone will be sufficient to help overcome the barriers, because the situation is further confounded by the complexity of factors such as identity issues that are embedded in the conflict (see Hadjipavlou-Trigeorgis, 1998; Rothman, 1997). Although individuals may be committed to changing the status quo, they cannot escape the burden of the past. Citizen groups engaged in peacebuilding activities, while not attempting to negotiate directly the primary issues of the larger conflict, still must deal with outside realities.

The work of the group reported in this article points to the importance of both process and substance in overcoming emotional and identity concerns. The collective vision statement created by the Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots in Cyprus involved many difficult discussions, in which significant differences in viewpoints were expressed and which generated many emotional statements, at times resulting in hard feelings that had to be processed by the group. Both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots developed shared perspectives on issues they originally viewed quite differently, and they developed a deeper understanding of the importance of certain issues

to the other community. This shift in perspectives was not accomplished through a give-and-take bargaining process. Rather, it emerged from the individual and group learning that took place during the discussion about individual ideas and their relationship to other ideas. Thus, the bicommunal statement of goals for the future not only portrays the pre-existing commonality between the two communities but also shows how *convergence* of viewpoints can occur between the two communities when using a structured learning process. Although it was a struggle at times, the end product has resulted in stronger bonds among the group members and a clearer sense of direction both for individuals and for the group as a whole. The finished structure was accepted by the group as representing a vision for which they were willing to commit their time and energy to help make it a reality.

In closing, the reader should be cautioned that the vision statement described in this article was the result of a unique set of circumstances, and it is not certain how far the conclusions reached by the group can be generalized in understanding how the general population of Cyprus views the future of the island. One must also be careful in applying the results of this work to other situations, such as the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, where a great deal of conflict resolution work has also been carried out by third parties (see Kelman & Cohen, 1976, 1995; Maoz, 2000). The vision statement of the bicommunal group in Cyprus was produced by a particular set of individuals working together during a unique period of time under special circumstances, and it was designed to meet distinct needs. Nevertheless, in the end, it is hoped that the detailed examination presented in this article of one group's consensus-building efforts might provide insights into the complex, inadequately understood process of alliance building in protracted conflicts.

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