

The Conference Concept

Governments and international organizations engaged in peace mediations across the world are frequently confronted with the dilemmas of whether the public should be consulted at critical junctures for the peace process and if so how. Conventional wisdom assumes that the people should be directly engaged in peace processes whenever they face important decisions. By extension, peace settlements should be more effective and sustainable when bolstered by widespread expressions of public support. Successful referendums are described in the peace and conflict literature as adding legitimacy and durability to a negotiated settlement. In the cases of South Africa (1992) and Northern Ireland (1998) referendums have been viewed as facilitating peace settlements by engaging broader segments of the society and limiting the role of violent opposition groups. Moreover, successful peace referendums could be special moments in the development of peace settlements—a litmus test of a society's capacity to overcome deep divisions and to bring forward new political dynamics.

At the same time, evidence from conflict-ridden societies suggests that the merits of referendums should not be overstated. Referendums could fail, even under promising conditions, as in the Colombian peace process or inflame already unstable ethnic relations as suggested in East Timor and demonstrated in the cases of Kyrgyzstan, Egypt, and Crimea. Empirical evidence suggests that only a handful have so far been successful while “illegitimate or wrongly designed” referendums could inadvertently turn into conflict-inducing rather than conflict-mitigating opportunities (e.g. Iraq). Even when they aim to facilitate positive political transformation, referendums might have unintended side effects by excluding important groups (e.g. minorities, vulnerable groups or the diaspora) or by creating opportunities for protest vote.

The two-day conference in Nicosia will aim to address these debates and to present a new conceptual map in the study of referendums and their impact in peace mediations drawing on experts' views particularly in the comparative analysis of public opinion surveys, communication strategies and alternative institutional designs. Quintin Oliver, the event's keynote speaker, is a leading international conflict expert and the director of Stratagem International www.StratagemInt.com. He has previously served as the Chairman of the “YES Campaign” during the 1998 Good Friday/Belfast Agreement referendum in Northern Ireland.

INVITATION

We cordially invite you to the open discussion:
Referendums in Peace Processes:
Psychological, Political and Legal Aspects

October 26, 2016:

Home for Cooperation
(Working Language: English)

October 27, 2016

University of Cyprus, Room B108 (building "AG Leventis").
(Working Languages: Greek/Turkish/English with simultaneous interpretation)

Organisers:

Genetic Social Psychology Lab of the University of Cyprus,
Conflict Analysis Research Centre, University of Kent
The Cyprus Association of Social Psychology and
The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung

Sponsors:

British Academy
Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES)



Home for Cooperation, Nicosia October 26

14:30-15:00 Welcome coffee and registration

Opening: Iacovos Psaltis

15:00-18:00 Public Opinion Surveys and Peace Attitudes: Cyprus and its Region (Chair: Panayiotis Stavrinides)

Speakers:

1. Ahmet Sozen
2. Alexandros Lordos
3. Charis Psaltis
4. Djordje Stefanovic
5. Edward Morgan-Jones
6. Betul Celik

18:00- 18:30 Coffee Break

18:30-20:00 Keynote Speech: Quintin Oliver, Stratagem International (Chairman of the YES campaign for the Good Friday Agreement referendum)

October 27: University of Cyprus – Conference Room B108 (building "AG Leventis")

14:30-15:00 Welcome coffee and registration

Opening: Costas P. Constantinou

15:00-17:00 A comparative approach to Peace referendums: South African and Colombian Perspectives (Chair: Giorgos Kakouris (Politis))
Speakers:

1. Dave Steward (South Africa) Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the De Klerk Foundation. Former Ambassador to the United Nations and Chief of Staff to FW de Klerk while he was President [live link]
2. Elias Eliades, Honorary Consul, Colombia
3. Luis Fernando Medina, University Carlos III of Madrid
4. Professor Humberto De la Calle former Vice-President of Colombia and Chief-Negotiator (Colombia) [live link] (TBC)

17:00-17:30 COFFEE BREAK

17:30-19:00: Legal and Political Aspects of a Referendum in Cyprus and the Diaspora (Chair: Hubert Faustmann, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung)

1. Klearchos Kyriakides
2. Isik Kuscu & Hayriye Kahveci
3. Neophytos Loizides
4. Nicos Trimikliniotis

19:00-20:30 Roundtable on Quintin Oliver's ten commandments of referendums (<http://www.stratagem-ni.com/latest/authors/quintin/>) (Chair: Esra Aygin (Havadis/Cyprus Weekly))

Commentaries by:

Erol Kaymak
Erato Markouli
Emine Colak
Achilleas Demetriades
Niyazi Kizilyurek
Quintin Oliver.

20:30-21:30 DINNER/WINE RECEPTION

About the British Academy: The British Academy is the UK's national body for the humanities and social sciences—the study of peoples, cultures and societies, past, present and future. We have three principal roles: as an independent Fellowship of world-leading scholars and researcher; a Funding Body that supports new research, nationally and internationally; and a Forum for debate and engagement—a voice that champions the humanities and social sciences.

About Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung: The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) is a non-profit making, private,

independent institution, dedicated to the ideas and basic values of social democracy. We aim to further worldwide democracy, social justice and development, to contribute to peace and security and to strengthen international solidarity in the context of globalisation. Furthermore, the FES supports the enlargement and involvement of the European Union. The foundation strives to reinforce these ideals in more than 100 countries as well as in Germany.