

Forum: United Nations Peacebuilding Committee (UNPBC)

Issue #20-02 : Resolving the Question of the Cyprus Dispute

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Introduction:

Cyprus's recent history has been dominated by conflicts between its Greek and Turkish residents. For decades, the Cyprus Dispute has appeared to defy the UN's full capacity. There have been many scenarios which became the causes of the situation today, including a quarrel between Greece and Turkey, past British colonial rule, and a build-up of violence and tension that never seemed to have a suitable counterforce.

The historical background of the debate is crucial, as it will determine how nations act. In a nutshell, Cyprus is in a state of division. Turkey invaded and occupied the northern part of the island after ethnic tensions. Cyprus has been separated into two halves for a long time. Greek Cypriots make up around 80% of the population of Cyprus and live in the southern two-thirds of the island. Turkish Cypriots live in the "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" (TRNC), with about 36,000 Turkish troops providing security to the TRNC. As peace talks have routinely stalled, the conflict has never truly found an end, since the Greek Cypriots in the south want the entire island returned to them; and the Turkish Cypriots in the north want the division made official, their land recognized as a state, and the UN buffer zone removed.



Map of Cyprus showing north-south divide

Definition of Key Terms

Annan Plan

Annun Plan was a UN proposal named after UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, and aimed to resolve the dispute by forming a united Cypriot Republic. The proposal was to restructure Cyprus and allow the two regions to maintain a level of independence; while, they would be joined with a federal government.

Air Sovereignty

Defined by the International Civil Aviation Organization, air sovereignty is the fact that "each State has complete and exclusive sovereignty over the airspace above its territory." In this instance, the air sovereignty of Cyprus has been infringed upon multiple times by the Turkish military, shown through the Turkish military jets flying over Cyprus without permission. This caused the Cyprus government to buy a surface-to-air missile system from Russia, creating the \$300 Missile crisis.

Buffer Zone

The UN Buffer Zone in Cyprus is a demilitarized zone, patrolled by the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), that was established in 1964. The Buffer Zone was extended in 1974 after the ceasefire of 16 August 1974, following the Turkish invasion of Cyprus, and the de facto partition of the island. Stretching across the width of the island, the Green Line has served to ensure that any dispute between the two sides can take place in safe, agreeable locations, and that all military activities can be kept to a minimum to ensure safety. Many regions of the buffer zone are agricultural and/or inhabited, in accordance with UNFICYP's mandate to work for a return to normal conditions. Within the Buffer Zone, there are various villages or special zones (known as Civil Use Areas) where more than 10,000 people live and/or work. These areas are free to attend. Civilian movement or activity in the buffer zone requires specific authorization from UNFICYP elsewhere.



Buffer zone barricade near the Ledra Street checkpoint

General Overview

The unrecognized state of Northern Cyprus

Northern Cyprus hasn't been recognized by any other nation than Turkey. The United Nations has stated that the attempt to create a "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" is invalid and called on other States to refrain from recognizing the state with UN Security Council Resolution 541 and UN Security Council Resolution 550. When Cyprus joined the European Union in 2004, only Greek Cypriots got the benefits and responsibilities of being part of the EU, while the membership was suspended in the Turkish Cypriot area due to an earlier decision that the north could only join if the island was reunited.

The Missile Crisis

In January 1997, the (Greek) Cypriot administration announced that it had acquired S-300 anti-aircraft missiles from Russia. It also created a small airbase in Paphos, western Cyprus, for the use of Greek military aircraft. The Greek Cypriots insisted these were legitimate self defense programs mounted in response to the threat posed by aircraft of the Turkish military forces stationed within easy range of Greek Cypriot targets. The Greek Cypriot government eventually, in December 1998, transferred the S-300s to Crete under persistent pressure from the U.S. and European governments.

2004 Referendum

A referendum planned according to the Annan Plan was held in both regions of Cyprus asking whether the two communities approved of the UN proposal of reuniting the island. While about 65 percent of Turkish Cypriots approved of the UN plan, 75% of Greek Cypriots rejected the proposal.

Legality of Invasion and Legal Confrontations

The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is known as Turkish-occupied territory of the Republic of Cyprus. The occupation is deemed illegal under international law and the United Nations has condemned the situation in Resolution 367(1975). The international community considers that this is an illegal occupation of the European Union since Cyprus became a member in 2004. The UN Security Council in resolution 541 (1983) considered the declaration of an "independent state" in the areas occupied by the Turkish army as "legally invalid" and called for its withdrawal.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

Greece

Greece argues that the Turkish government has illegally held troops in Northern Cyprus, and that it is the most militarised area in the world. (Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.). Greece is not willing to keep the division across the island, as it supports what they see as a false Turkish claim. It is within Greece's interest to ensure no other country recognises Northern Cyprus other than Turkey, all of Turkey's forces and settlements are terminated or withdrawn quickly, and that the internal matters of Cyprus are to be resolved by the government of the Republic of Cyprus. Greece still searches to resolve UNSC Resolutions 541 (1983) and 550 (1984), which states that the Turkish claim for TRNC is invalid, and that all states should recognise the 'sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity, unity and non-alignment of the Republic of Cyprus'. (United Nations Security Council, 1984)

Turkey

From a historical perspective, Turkey claims interest on Cyprus with regards to the Anglo-Turkish Treaty of 1878, in which the administration of Cyprus was voluntarily given to Britain. Then, the island's sovereignty was fully devolved into

Britain. the Treaty of Lausanne. Therefore, Turkey insisted that the issue of Cyprus was between Turkey and Britain. Turkey now portrays the 1960 Zurich-London agreements and their supplemented treaties as the establishment of a division over the island and believes that the conflict in 1963-74 was pushed by Greece and Greek Cypriots. Turkey intervened in 1974 which was a response to the Cypriot military coup d'etat. The main cause of this intervention was the fear that the Greek military junta would expand and threaten the lives of Turkish Cypriots who had previously faced violence, which was supported by the Council of Europe as per the Guarantee Treaty of 1960. The intervention, regardless, has found international backlash due to the violent nature of what happened. Turkish Cypriot leaders believe that a peaceful solution would be two independent and sovereign states in Cyprus.

United Kingdom

The United Kingdom is a member of the Security Council and plays an active role in the island. Cyprus achieved independence in 1960 after the 1959 Zurich agreements between the United Kingdom, Greece, Turkey and the two Cypriot communities. The United Nations Security Council dispatched a United Nations peacekeeping force (UNFICYP) to the island in March 1964 as a result of the clashes at the start of 1964. The United Kingdom still holds sovereignty over two areas in the island, Akrotiri and Dhekelia, which are also equipped with British military facilities. Britain aims to maintain its presence and influence in the island.

United States

The United States holds bilateral relations with Cyprus in order to strengthen its strategies with the European Union and the Middle East. The Republic of Cyprus has also shown support to the US relations with Israel along with giving exclusive rights to the US to extract natural gas and oil from Cypriot waters. Both countries

have stated before that they wish to end the division of the island and the isolation of the Turkish Cypriots.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
1571	Cyprus was annexed by the Ottoman empire
1878	Cyprus was ceded by the Ottoman Empire and given to Great Britain, while it remained nominally under Ottoman sovereignty.
1914	Cyprus was officially annexed by Britain.
1955	Greek Cypriots begin guerrilla war against British rule. The guerrilla movement, the National Organisation of Cypriot Combatants (EOKA), wants enosis (unification) with Greece.
August 1960	Cyprus gained independence from Britain under a power-sharing constitution between Turkish and Greek Cypriots, giving both Turkey and Greece the right to interfere in all institutions of the new republic.
March 1964	The United Nations establishes a peacekeeping force in Cyprus.
1974	After a coup d'Etat by ultra-nationalist Greek Cypriots, Turkish armed forces intervene and occupy the northern third of the island.
1983	Rauf Denktash becomes president with the unilateral declaration of independence from the Republic of Cyprus by the Turkish Cypriot parliament.
1998	EU lists Cyprus as a potential member. Government drops plans to install Russian-made anti-aircraft missiles after Turkey threatens military action.

- 2002 The mandate of the UN peacekeeping force is extended, and a peace plan aiming for broad power-sharing is proposed. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan holds separate meetings with the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders.
- April 2004 Referendums take place on both sides of the island on whether to accept the UN reunification plan. While the plan is endorsed by Turkish Cypriots, it is overwhelmingly rejected by Greek Cypriots.
- May 2004 Cyprus joins the EU, but does so as a divided island.
- 2006 President Papadopoulos and Turkish Cypriot President Talat begin discussing current issues, agree on measures to improve communication between the two communities.
- April 2008 The Ledra Street barricade which divides Nicosia between South and North is removed in April 2008.
- January 2008 The Republic of Cyprus adopts the euro as currency.
- April 2010 Derviş Eroğlu, who favors independence, wins against Mehmet Ali Talat who loses popularity with pro-unity ideals.
- 2011 The Democratic Rally, liberal-conservative, wins the parliamentary elections.
- July 2012 A UN resolution passes noting that the progress made in negotiations has not been sufficient, and urges the sides to continue the discussions to reach decisive progress on the issues.
- 2014 Renewed negotiations begin again to solve the Cyprus dispute but it comes to a halt in October after Turkey sends a warship to Cyprus.
- May 2015 The presidents of the Republic of Cyprus and of Northern Cyprus resume negotiations on reunification, which end inconclusively in July 2017.

- 2018 Dherynia checkpoint on the east and Lefka-Aplikasi checkpoint in the west are opened, bringing the total crossing points to nine along the island's 180 km long buffer zone.
- 2020 Ersin Tatar who doesn't support a united state wins in the Turkish Cypriot presidential election, no breakthrough takes place in unity talks.

UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

UN Security Council established the UNFICYP in 1964 to prevent the situation in Cyprus from deteriorating and becoming a threat to international peace.

Following the military intervention by Turkey in 1974, the UNFICYP had the mandate to control the activities in the newly established buffer zone except the inhabited zones. UNFICYP administers the voluntary permanent relocation of Greek Cypriots from north to south and encourages family reunification. After the April 2004 referendum, UNFICYP's function has become even more critical, as the peacekeeping force is the only UN political work on the island.

- On 4 March 1964, the Council unanimously adopted resolution **186(1964)**, [S/5575], by which it recommended the establishment of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), which became operationally established on 27 March 1964.
- UNFICYP's 800-plus troops and 60-plus police officers are in charge of hundreds of events each year in the absence of a formal ceasefire agreement.



UNFICYP, Cyprus

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

From the emergence of violence to today, talks and discussions between Greek and Turkish Cypriot leaders have routinely taken place, and then fallen through before any significant ground can be made. The first attempt at peace after the invasion came from the USA, which proposed the ABC Plan. The plan called for the creation of a federal state within which each community would administer their respective territories and have a central government to administer foreign affairs, defense etc. Both Turkish and Greek sides rejected this plan. Annan Plan was the most promising attempt to make serious changes forward regarding the dispute, which was highly opposed by the Greek Cypriots and failed. The UN invited Turkish and Greek Cypriot leaders, as well as guarantor states Turkey, Greece, and the UK for informal talks in Geneva in April 2021. This was seen as an opportunity to resume the talks on the urgent issues. However, no agreement between Greek and Turkish Cypriot leaders have been made to move forward.

Possible Solutions

Greek Cypriots demand that the guarantor agreement made between Greece, Turkey and Great Britain be changed to prevent any of the three states from interfering in Cypriot affairs. All three states could agree to dissolve the 1960 Treaty of Guarantee, and thus forgoing any legal rights to militarily intervene in the island's affairs. There are also a number of difficulties about the security of the island, where a key role is played by Turkey. Turkey still has over 30,000 soldiers in Northern Cyprus and an agreement on gradually pulling its troops out of Northern Cyprus would be in the interest of the island. There could be incentives presented to Turkey for withdrawing from the Treaty of Guarantee, such as on the condition that Cyprus joins the NATO bloc within the year. If both Greece and Turkey are NATO members, that could be an incentive for the accession of Cyprus to the Atlantic Alliance. Turkish and Greek Cypriot leaders should keep negotiations under the supervision of third parties like the UN and the EU, with representatives from Turkey, Greece and Britain. Along with a decision on the regime, citizens who lost their homes in 1974 should be compensated, with the UN pledging to secure financial support to settle decades-old land disputes. Another incentive for Turkey to approach the bizonal federation or reunification idea is with Cyprus willing to remove its veto on Turkey's EU accession, opening the way for Turkey to become an EU member.

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)

This agenda is closely related to the 16th Sustainable Development Goal (**Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions**). To create a peaceful and inclusive society in Cyprus is the goal of this agenda. The aim is to reduce all types of abuse and violence that has emerged with the Cyprus crisis, develop inclusive political institutions and strengthen international cooperation. Another goal is to decrease the discriminatory laws and practices.

Appendix

- I. Detailed analysis of the Cyprus dispute and the stance of the Turkish government
<https://www.mfa.gov.tr/the-cyprus-issue-overview.en.mfa>
- II. The historical background of the Cyprus dispute presented by the Republic of Cyprus Ministry of Affairs
<https://mfa.gov.cy/historical-background.html>
- III. The text of the Annan Plan presented by the UN
http://www.hri.org/docs/annan/Annan_Plan_Text.html
- IV. The Treaty of Guarantee signed by Greece, Turkey and the United Kingdom
https://www.mfa.gr/images/docs/kypriako/treaty_of_guarantee.pdf

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