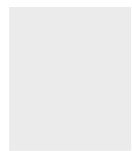# ISSUE DESCRIPTION

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COMMITTEE   Security Council
ISSUE   Mitigating the Hostilities in Cyprus
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APPROVED BY   Vilmos Eiben, President of the General Assembly

Introduction

Cyprus, a rather small island – located in the Mediterranean – has always been a remarkably significant strategic stronghold for nations and cultures as well. With a coup d'état, the small island has created disastrous geopolitical tensions in the region, especially due to its complex inter-communal dynamics.

Cyprus, the island visible on the map below, historically has been a clash point between Catholic and Islamic forces since the Middle Ages. After the fall of the Ottoman Empire – a huge step back for the Islamic world – many would have believed that the small island would gain its independence and after centuries of fighting, peace would finally be achieved. However, after a bit of a power struggle between Great Britain and Türkiye, in the Treaty of Lausanne (1923), the treaty for the Ottoman Empire after the Great War, Cyprus belonging to the Turkish Republic was out of the question.

The British not only had the right to administration on the island, as was the case from 1878 up until the island's British conquest in 1914 but established a Crown Colony. This caused tension between former allies of the UK and the Greek Republic since there was also a claim made by the latter for the island due to the island being densely habited by Greek Cypriots.

History's shadow remained on the community living in Cyprus, and after nearly a decade-long British rule, what we know today as the Greek Cypriots Revolt began. Enosis, a unification with Greece, was the main goal the Greek Cypriots vowed to achieve, but the uprising was suppressed.

Definition of Key Terms

EOKA (Ethniki Organosis Kyprion Agoniston) - A nationalist guerrilla organization formed in 1955 with the aim of ending British colonial rule in Cyprus and achieving union with Greece (Enosis). Led by Georgios Grivas, EOKA carried out armed campaigns and was a central force in the struggle for Cypriot independence.

Republic of Cyprus - An independent state established in 1960 after the end of British colonial rule, based on the agreements between Britain, Greece, and Türkiye. It was founded as a bicommunal state with power-sharing arrangements between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. Its governance and sovereignty have been challenged since the division of the island in 1974.

Greek Cypriots - The Greek-speaking, majority ethnic group on the island of Cyprus. They are primarily of Greek Orthodox Christian faith and have historically sought closer ties with Greece, particularly through the concept of Enosis.

Enosis - The political movement advocating for the union of Cyprus with Greece. Enosis was a driving force for Greek Cypriots during British colonial rule and contributed to tensions with the Turkish Cypriot community, who opposed such unification.

London-Zurich Agreements - A set of agreements signed in 1959 by Britain, Greece, Türkiye, and representatives of the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities. These agreements established the framework for the independence of Cyprus in 1960, creating a constitutional arrangement to balance power between Greek and Turkish Cypriots and ensure the involvement of guarantor powers (Britain, Greece, and Türkiye).

NATO - Refers to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, an intergovernmental military alliance formed in 1949. Both Greece and Türkiye are members of NATO, which played a complex role in the Cyprus crisis, as the organization struggled to mediate between the two allies during the 1974 events.

UNFICYP (United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus) - A United Nations peacekeeping mission established in 1964 to prevent further conflict between Greek and Turkish Cypriots following intercommunal violence. After the events of 1974, its role expanded to monitoring the buffer zone (the "Green Line") that divides the island and facilitating negotiations for a resolution to the Cyprus problem.

Greek Junta - The Greek Junta, also known as the Regime of the Colonels, refers to the military dictatorship that ruled Greece from 1967 to 1974. This regime came to power through a coup d'état on April 21, 1967, led by a group of right-wing army officers, including Georgios Papadopoulos, who sought to prevent what they perceived as a communist takeover.

General Overview

The island in the Mediterranean, Cyprus has hosted hostilities and tension for decades now, causing both local and global challenges. Competing aspirations for the island fueled significant unrest, with the Greek Cypriot guerrilla group named Ethniki Organosis Kyprion Agoniston (EOKA) launching a campaign against British rule from 1955 to 1959. The violence and political turmoil drew the attention of regional powers, Greece and Türkiye, further complicating the island's path to independence. A breakthrough came with the Zurich-London Agreements of 1959, negotiated by Britain, Greece, and Türkiye. These agreements provided a framework for an independent Cyprus governed by a unique power-sharing arrangement between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities. The constitution outlined a bicommunal government, with a Greek Cypriot President and a Turkish Cypriot Vice President, ensuring representation and protections for both communities. Furthermore, Cyprus was prohibited from aligning with any other nation, barring both the Greek Cypriot aspiration for union with Greece and the Turkish Cypriot fear of partition.

THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS IN DE-ESCALATING THE CYPRUS CONFLICT

The United Nations has played a critical role in attempting to de-escalate the conflict in Cyprus, a dispute rooted in ethnic divisions and territorial disagreements between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. Since the island's independence in 1960, tensions have escalated repeatedly,

culminating in the division of Cyprus in 1974. Throughout this period, the UN has been a key mediator, deploying peacekeeping forces, facilitating negotiations, and proposing settlement plans to resolve territorial and political disputes.

THE ORIGINS OF UN INVOLVEMENT

The UN became involved in the Cyprus conflict in 1964 after the outbreak of intercommunal violence between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. The violence followed a constitutional crisis in 1963 when Greek Cypriot President Archbishop Makarios III proposed amendments to reduce Turkish Cypriot representation in government. This move was rejected by the Turkish Cypriot leadership, leading to widespread clashes. In response, the United Nations established the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) in March 1964.

The mandate of UNFICYP was to prevent further hostilities, maintain law and order, and create conditions conducive to negotiations. The peacekeeping force established a buffer zone, commonly known as the Green Line, which divided the island's Greek and Turkish communities. The Green Line remains in place today and continues to symbolize the unresolved nature of the conflict.

THE 1974 CRISIS AND EXPANDED UN ROLE

The conflict escalated dramatically in 1974 when a coup by Greek Cypriot nationalists, supported by the military junta in Greece, sought to unite Cyprus with Greece (Enosis). In response, Türkiye launched a military intervention, citing its rights as a guarantor power under the 1960 Zurich-London Agreements. Turkish forces occupied approximately 36% of the island's territory, leading to the displacement of thousands and the division of Cyprus into a predominantly Greek Cypriot south and a Turkish Cypriot north.

The UN responded by expanding UNFICYP's mandate to include humanitarian assistance for displaced persons and monitoring the ceasefire lines established after the fighting. The peacekeepers played a vital role in stabilizing the situation, preventing further violence, and managing the tensions between the two communities.

WHY DOES IT "STILL" REMAIN SUCH A CRITICAL TOPIC?

As both nations present in this conflict are current members in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (from now on NATO) and a clash between two such members could mean the threat of collapse of the original intent of the biggest military and economic organization in the world. Amongst NATO rules are the following:

"The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them… shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence recognised by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking… such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area."

(Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty; https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_17120.htm)

Member states of NATO are aware that an act of aggression from the outside would immediately summon the whole of NATO's defense forces, to counter and protect the attacked nation. However, many NATO summits were held, due to this tension, in numerous crises, but not one such could fully solve the historical conflict of Cyprus.

Major Parties Involved:

Türkiye: Türkiye's involvement in the Cyprus conflict is rooted in its role as a guarantor power under the London-Zurich Agreements of 1959. Following the Greek-backed coup aiming for Enosis, Türkiye launched a military invasion, citing its obligation to protect Turkish Cypriots. This operation, known as "Operation Atilla", resulted in Türkiye occupying the northern third of the island. The invasion led to the displacement of Greek Cypriots from the north and Turkish Cypriots from the south, solidifying the island's division. Türkiye has since supported the establishment of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), recognized only by Türkiye.

Greece: Greece has historically supported Enosis and the Greek Cypriot majority in their aspirations to unify Cyprus with Greece. The Greek military junta orchestrated a coup in Cyprus to overthrow President Makarios III and install a pro-Enosis regime. This action directly triggered Türkiye's intervention. Greece's actions escalated tensions and contributed to the island's division. Post-junta, Greece has largely supported diplomatic efforts for reunification.

UNFICYP (United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus): Established in 1964, UNFICYP was deployed to maintain peace following intercommunal violence between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. After the Turkish invasion, UNFICYP's responsibilities expanded to monitoring the Green Line, the buffer zone separating the two sides, and facilitating negotiations. UNFICYP has provided stability and reduced violence but has not been able to resolve the underlying political conflict.

The United Kingdom: Britain was the colonial ruler of Cyprus from 1878 to 1960 and played a major role in shaping its modern political structure. As a signatory to the London-Zurich Agreements, Britain retained two sovereign military bases (Akrotiri and Dhekelia) and acted as a mediator. Britain's colonial policies contributed to intercommunal tensions, and its efforts to broker peace have been criticized as ineffective by both sides.

EOKA (Ethniki Organosis Kyprion Agoniston): EOKA used armed struggle and propaganda to push its agenda, leading to violent clashes with both British authorities and Turkish Cypriots. EOKA's activities heightened intercommunal tensions and drew opposition from Turkish Cypriots, who feared the consequences of Enosis. This division laid the groundwork for future conflict.

NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization): NATO, of which both Greece and Türkiye are members, found itself in a difficult position during the Cyprus conflict. NATO struggled to mediate between Greece and Türkiye, two of its key allies, during the 1974 crisis. Its inability to prevent the Turkish invasion or resolve disputes highlighted weaknesses in the alliance. NATO's limited role in the Cyprus conflict has often been criticized as a missed opportunity for proactive intervention.

Timeline of Events

1878 - British Colonization. In the aftermath of the Russo-Turkish war, Cyprus became part of the British Empire in 1878.

1955 - Formation of the EOKA. The Greek Cypriot guerrilla group EOKA launched a campaign against British colonial rule, aiming to achieve Enosis.

1959 - London-Zurich Agreements. Britain, Greece, and Türkiye reached an agreement, alongside Greek and Turkish Cypriot leaders, to establish an independent Republic of Cyprus in 1960.

1960 - Independence and Constitution. Cyprus gained independence, and Archbishop Makarios III became the first president. The power-sharing arrangements between Greek and Turkish Cypriots were enshrined in a constitution, but tensions soon arose over perceived inequalities.

1963 - 1964 - Period of Intercommunal Violence

1974 - Coup by Greek Junta. The Greek military junta sponsored a coup in Cyprus to overthrow President Makarios and achieve Enosis. This escalated tensions and triggered Turkish intervention.

1974 - Turkish Invasion. In response to the coup, Türkiye launched "Operation Atilla", invading northern Cyprus. This resulted in the occupation of about 37% of the island and the displacement of tens of thousands of Greek and Turkish Cypriots.

1974 - Division of Cyprus. The island was effectively divided into two parts: a Greek Cypriot-controlled south and a Turkish-controlled north. The Green Line, patrolled by UN peacekeepers, became a buffer zone.

1983 - Declaration of TRNC. The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) was unilaterally declared in the north, recognized only by Türkiye. This solidified the division of the island.

2004 - Present - EU Membership and Negotiations. Cyprus joined the European Union in 2004 as a divided island, with EU law suspended in the north. Various reunification efforts, including the Annan Plan, failed due to disagreements. Peace talks have continued sporadically, with no lasting resolution.

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

In addition to its peacekeeping operations, the UN has been at the forefront of mediation efforts aimed at resolving the Cyprus conflict. Over the decades, several rounds of negotiations have been held under UN auspices. The most notable attempt was the Annan Plan, proposed by then-UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan in 2004. It sought to reunify Cyprus as a bi-zonal, bicommunal federation, with significant autonomy for the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot regions.

Although the plan was approved by Turkish Cypriots in a referendum, it was overwhelmingly rejected by Greek Cypriots, who viewed it as compromising their sovereignty and rights. Despite this setback, the UN has continued to facilitate dialogue between the two communities, including the most recent negotiations in Crans-Montana, Switzerland, in 2017, which ultimately failed to achieve a breakthrough.

CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

The UN's efforts in Cyprus have faced numerous challenges. The lack of trust between the two communities, divergent political goals, and the involvement of external powers such as Greece, Türkiye, and the United Kingdom have complicated negotiations. Additionally, the continued presence of Turkish troops in the north and the unilateral declaration of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) in 1983 have entrenched the division of the island. The TRNC remains recognized only by Türkiye, while the Republic of Cyprus is internationally acknowledged as the island's sole legitimate government.

Possible Solutions and Approaches

A FEDERAL MODEL OF GOVERNANCE

One of the most commonly proposed solutions is the establishment of a bi-zonal, bicommunal federation. This model envisions two autonomous zones, one for Greek Cypriots and one for Turkish Cypriots, under a single federal government. Such a system could preserve the territorial integrity of Cyprus while granting both communities a degree of self-governance. However, significant obstacles remain. Turkish Cypriots demand equal political representation, while Greek Cypriots fear that such a setup might weaken the central government's authority. Despite these challenges, a federal model has the potential to bridge divides by addressing both communities' needs and fostering shared governance.

BUILDING CONFIDENCE THROUGH INCREMENTAL MEASURES

Trust between Greek and Turkish Cypriots has eroded over decades of conflict. Incremental steps, known as confidence-building measures (CBMs), could create an environment conducive to broader negotiations. For instance, reopening additional crossing points along the Green Line could facilitate interaction between the two communities. Joint economic projects, such as cooperative energy ventures, could provide mutual benefits and foster goodwill. Cultural and educational exchanges might further break down prejudices and promote understanding. These measures, while small, could help reduce mistrust and lay the groundwork for larger agreements.

A TWO-STATE SOLUTION: A CONTROVERSIAL OPTION

Another approach, though contentious, is the formalization of the island's current division into two separate states. This solution would involve recognizing the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) as an independent entity. Proponents argue that this approach reflects the reality on the ground, where two distinct administrations already operate. However, Greek Cypriots strongly oppose this idea, viewing it as legitimizing the Turkish invasion and occupation. The international community, including the European Union and the United Nations, also favours reunification over partition. While a two-state solution might seem pragmatic to some, it risks deepening the divide and heightening regional tensions.

MEDIATION AND INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT

Neutral mediation by international actors, such as the United Nations or the European Union, has long been a cornerstone of efforts to resolve the Cyprus conflict. Mediators can help propose innovative solutions to contentious issues, such as property rights, territorial adjustments, and governance structures. Security guarantees, possibly involving multinational peacekeeping forces, could also be negotiated to reassure both communities. While external involvement can bring fresh perspectives, it is crucial that any solution is accepted and embraced by the people of Cyprus. Past negotiations have often faltered due to a lack of willingness to compromise.

REGIONAL COOPERATION AS A CATALYST

The Cyprus conflict is not only a local issue but also a regional one, intertwined with broader geopolitical dynamics in the Eastern Mediterranean. Regional cooperation could serve as a

catalyst for resolution. For instance, joint exploitation of Cyprus's natural gas reserves could incentivize collaboration, creating shared economic interests. The European Union could offer financial incentives, while NATO could facilitate security arrangements acceptable to both sides. By aligning the resolution of the Cyprus conflict with regional stability and prosperity, a solution could become more appealing to all stakeholders.

GRASSROOTS ENGAGEMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE

Ultimately, any resolution must be rooted in the support and engagement of Cypriots themselves. Grassroots efforts, such as educational programs promoting coexistence and civil society initiatives fostering collaboration, are vital. By addressing divisions at the community level, these efforts can build a foundation for sustainable peace. The Cypriot diaspora also has a role to play, using its global networks to advocate for reconciliation and act as neutral mediators. Engaging citizens in the peace process ensures that solutions are not just imposed from above but embraced from within.

ADDRESSING SECURITY CONCERNS

Security remains one of the most sensitive issues in the Cyprus conflict. Greek Cypriots demand the withdrawal of Turkish troops, while Turkish Cypriots seek guarantees against potential threats. A phased withdrawal of foreign troops, monitored by international forces, could address these concerns. Establishing a demilitarized zone or creating a joint security framework under NATO or the EU might further ease fears. Effective security arrangements are essential for both communities to feel protected and confident in any agreement.

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