

**EPON** 

Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network

# Assessing the Effectiveness

**of the United Nations Peacekeeping  
Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP)**

and the Office of the Special Adviser to the  
Secretary-General on Cyprus (OSASG)

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# Assessing the Effectiveness of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) and The Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus (OSASG)

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# Contents

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Acknowledgements	7
Acronyms	9
Executive Summary	13
The effectiveness of UNFICYP and OSASG across six critical dimensions	15
Impact and Constraints over Effectiveness of the UN Presence in Cyprus	20
The Way Forward for the UN Presence in Cyprus: Recommendations to Move From Keeping the Peace to Building it	22
1. Introduction	25
2. Analytical Framework and Research Methods	31
3. Historical and Contextual Analysis: History, Nature, Actors and Drivers of the Conflict	37
3.1. Origins of the Conflict: The Birth of a Nation Without Unity, and the Difficulty in Implementing the 1960 Constitution	39
3.2. The Nature of the Conflict	55



3.3.	The Five Actors of the Conflict	57
3.4.	International, Regional and Local Drivers of a Frozen Conflict	67
3.5.	History of the UN Presence in Cyprus: Key Episodes of UNFICYP and the Secretary-General's Good Offices	76
4.	An Overview of the UN Presence in Cyprus	91
4.1.	The Current Deployment of UNFICYP	94
4.2.	The Military Component: Managing the Buffer Zone through a Combination of Static Observation Posts and Mobile Patrols	101
4.3.	The Police Component: Facing New Security Challenges	105
4.4.	The Civilian Component: Diversifying UNFICYP's "Civil Affairs" Activities	108
4.5.	The Mission of Good Offices	110
4.6.	The Missions' Current Challenges	114
5.	Analysis and Findings (Across Six Dimensions)	127
5.1.	Political Primacy: The Multiple Interactions between Peacekeeping and Peacemaking	127
5.2.	Realistic Mandates and Matching Resources of Interposition and Mediation	136
5.3.	Legitimacy and Credibility of the UN Presence in Cyprus	141
5.4.	People-Centred Approaches: Acting as Connectors and Conveners towards a Stronger Role for the Civil Society	155
5.5.	Women, Peace and Security: Advocating for Women's Meaningful Participation in the Peace Negotiations	164
5.6.	Integration, Coordination and Partnerships	171
6.	Impact and Constraints Over the Effectiveness of the UN Presence in Cyprus	177
6.1.	Strategic Impact of the UN Presence in Cyprus	178
6.2.	Constraints on the UN Missions in Achieving their Mandate	184
7.	The Way Forward for the UN Presence in Cyprus: Moving from Peacekeeping to Peacebuilding?	191
7.1.	The UN Presence in Cyprus: Upgrading to Building Peace	195
7.2.	Changing the Parameters and the Methodology of Negotiations	199

Annexes	205
Annex 1: List of UN Special Advisers of the Secretary-General, Senior Officials, Special Representatives of the Secretary-General, and Force Commanders of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus	206
Annex 2: Major reports of the Secretary-General on UNFICYP and the Good Offices	209
Annex 3: The Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network (EPON) Project Summary	211



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# Acronyms

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5+1	China, France, Russia, the UK, and the US, plus Germany
5+UN	China, France, Russia, the UK, and the US, plus the UN
A4P	Action for Peacekeeping
AKP	Justice and Development Party ( <i>Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi</i> )
BBF	Bizonal Bicomunal Federation
CBM	Confidence-Building Measure
CMP	Committee on Missing Persons
CPAS	Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System
DPO	Department of Peace Operations
DPPA	Department for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EOKA	National Organization of Cypriot Fighters ( <i>Ethniki Organosis Kyprion Agoniston</i> )
EPON	Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network
EU	European Union
FES	Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung
IOM	International Organization for Migrations

JMAC	Joint Mission Analysis Center
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
MINURSO	UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara
MOLO	Military Observer Liaison Officer
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OIOS	Office of Internal Oversight Services
OPSP	Office for Peacekeeping Strategic Partnership
OSASG	Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus
P5	Five Permanent Security Council Members (China, France, Russia, the UK, and the US)
PRIO	Peace Research Institute Oslo
RoC	Republic of Cyprus
SASG	Special Adviser of the Secretary-General
SCAMLO	Sector Civil Affairs and Military Liaison Officers
SOFA	Status of Forces Agreement
SRSG	Special Representative of the Secretary-General
TCC	Troop-Contributing Country
TMT	Turkish Resistance Organization (Türk Mukavemet Teşkilatı)
TRNC	Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus
UBP	National Unity Party (Ulusal Birlik Partisi)
UN	United Nations
UNCLOS	International Law of the Sea Convention
UNDOF	UN Disengagement Observer Force
UNDP	UN Development Program
UNDP-ACT	UNDP Action for Cooperation and Trust
UNFICYP	UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees



UNIFIL	UN Interim Force in Lebanon
UNMAS	UN Mine Action Service
UNMOGIP	UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan
UNOMIG	UN Observer Mission in Georgia
UNPOL	UN Police
UNTSO	UN Truce Supervision Organization
USAID	US Agency for International Development
WPS	Women, Peace and Security







# Executive Summary

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On 29 July 2021, the UN Security Council renewed the mandate of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) with Resolution 2587 after the Secretary-General submitted his bi-annual reports on the peace Mission (S/2021/635) and on his Good Offices (S/2021/634) on 9 July 2021. The Security Council has had “the Cyprus question” on its agenda for 57 years, following the creation of UNFICYP through Resolution 186 and a subsequent mediation role for the Secretary-General. At the end of 2021, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG), Head of UNFICYP, and Deputy Special Adviser of the Secretary-General for the Good Offices, Elizabeth Spehar, will end her assignment. The two Missions on the island are likely to open a new chapter of their existence. In 2024, the UN Missions in Cyprus will celebrate the 60th anniversary of their presence in the country, and it seems timely to analyse their impact and effectiveness over the years.

Cyprus’ frozen conflict, often referred to by researchers and scholars as the “Cyprus problem”, has a complex history that takes up a third of this report, along with different episodes in the evolution of the two UN Missions. It is considered essential to establish the facts and drivers of the conflict clearly. This history does not start at the same time for the two sides. It begins with the inter-ethnic events of 1963-1964 for the Turkish Cypriots, who cannot forget the violence and humiliation they suffered at the time. For the Greek Cypriots, it begins in July 1974, with the trauma of the Turkish intervention and the flight which followed. The Turkish intervention in 1974 de facto partitioned the island between a legally and internationally recognised country (except for Turkey), the Republic of Cyprus (RoC), and an illegal entity (“Northern Cyprus” or “the north”, also called “occupied areas” by the RoC). From then on, both parts of Cyprus developed as economically, politically and culturally separate, which has continued despite the

progressive opening of crossing points along the “Green Line” since 2003. These differences each constitute stumbling blocks on the path to a settlement of this conflict.

Cyprus is a unique case in international relations and peace operations. Its capital city is the only remaining divided capital in Europe and in the world. Cyprus is the only country in the world to have “Guarantors” with a right to intervene and station troops on a permanent basis. UNFICYP is one of the peacekeeping operations created during the Cold War which continues to operate (along with those in Kashmir, Jerusalem, the Golan Heights, and South Lebanon). These missions belong to a particular period (bipolarity) when super power rivalry during the Cold War limited UN peacekeeping to third-party cease-fire monitoring missions in interstate conflicts. However, the missions in Cyprus and South Lebanon have de facto intervened within a country in a conflict that is also internal. These legacy missions have remained deployed in conflicts referred to as “frozen”. Cyprus is also one of the few cases (besides Western Sahara and Jerusalem) where a peacekeeping mission has evolved alongside a peacemaking mission: the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus (OSASG), also known as the Mission of Good Offices.

UNFICYP has been understudied by the peacekeeping research community, which has been more focused on multidimensional missions. In the current context of a paralysed Security Council, however, lessons from missions created during the Cold War are increasingly important, as is the study of interposition forces as a potential conflict prevention mechanism. What is true for a mission like UNFICYP is also often true for UN special political missions (peacemaking and peacebuilding). Beyond issues around the achievements and the effectiveness of such UN missions, this extended UN presence in Cyprus triggers additional research questions, such as: Can a conflict be resolved without pressure or any sense of urgency? Can a conflict be resolved without leverage or accountability mechanisms? Is time on the side of conflict resolution? Can a conflict be left to the mercy of time? Can it remain unsettled? Can a conflict be solved by one major peace agreement or comprehensive take-it-or-leave-it package? Can efforts to advance gender equality and women, peace and security (WPS) progress when there is a lack of genuine commitment from political leaders in a peace process? Is it possible to move away from the status quo while not moving away from certainty? Can peace be made without paying a certain price and willingness to make concessions?



# The effectiveness of UNFICYP and OSASG across six critical dimensions

## **Political Primacy: The Multiple Interactions between Peacekeeping and Peacemaking**

The UN considers peacekeeping an enabler of political processes. UNFICYP's goal is to create conditions conducive to a successful peace process. Over the years and to this day, the UN has been the only consistent actor accepted by the parties who are relentlessly seeking a solution to the Cyprus problem. Mandated as a mediator, the UN was mostly a facilitator of successive negotiations with specific common features, including:

- Cypriot-owned and UN-facilitated;
- Top-down leadership process, excluding grassroots movements, with information insufficiently shared with the public;
- The search for a comprehensive settlement in a process in which “nothing is agreed until everything is agreed”;
- Deep mistrust between two key leaders;
- Length of open-ended negotiations prolongs the status quo where the two sides are locked into a dead-end; and
- Multiple negotiations and various high-level talks were mainly held abroad, rarely on the island.

These features are generally viewed by EPON interlocutors as outdated, contrary to what the UN would encourage in any other conflict setting, and leading to inconclusiveness. Some thus say that the UN has become part of the Cyprus problem. The two sides wanted to maintain a particular type of process – elitist, exclusive, male-dominated and leader-led – which the UN had to agree to but with which it became stuck. Instead of building up, the negotiations have brought increasing division because their setting has not fundamentally changed, they have lacked inclusivity, and failed to create common ground. During EPON interviews, interlocutors suggested a “healthier process” be devised. They advocated for an incremental approach, focusing more on the conditions for the talks before any comprehensive solution is negotiated and agreed upon, and with the introduction of deadlines and benchmarks that would eventually bring an end to the process.

The division of labour between the UN peacekeeping and peacemaking elements is hard to distinguish as interlocutors assess the effectiveness of the peacekeeping element in relation to

the success of parallel political negotiations on the future of Cyprus. The inconclusiveness of peacemaking processes has contributed to the ineffectiveness of peacekeeping efforts. And the successful maintenance of stability has hampered the peacemaking aspect of the UN mandate. Therefore, one could question whether the political element really freed up the peacekeeping mission from the burden of mediation, facilitation, or shuttle diplomacy between the parties. If the UN has been a successful facilitator in keeping the peace, it has been unsuccessful in breaking down the status quo. The absence of a viable peace process since July 2017 has resulted in numerous substantial changes on the ground and increased tension between the two sides, moving them further apart. One could thus conclude that the leverage provided with the presence of a UN peacekeeping mission alongside a political mission has been under-utilised, given the lack of urgency in finding a resolution to the Cyprus problem, particularly in the Security Council.

## **Realistic Mandates and Matching Resources of Interposition and Mediation**

The mandate of UNFICYP is viewed as adapted to the context and circumstances, despite the lack of a definition for what a return to “normal conditions” would look like, as mentioned in Resolution 186. The two sides have not been able to agree on the meaning of “normal conditions”. UNFICYP’s prevention role has been efficient in that Cyprus has often been referred to as “a conflict without casualties” (since 1996), a “comfortable conflict”, and “difficult to solve but easy to manage”. It is so comfortable that the presence of UNFICYP has made “people forget that no cease-fire agreement exists between the parties or the belligerents.” With a very small contingent, UNFICYP has stabilised the security situation on the ground. Beyond interposition, some interlocutors have advocated for high-impact reporting on human rights, as Cyprus suffers from serious domestic violence and has received the highest number of migrants per capita in Europe.

A number of interlocutors view the UN as a mere facilitator, with the process always remaining in the hands of the parties. They are critical of the UN special envoys selected, while acknowledging that they were often mistreated, especially by the Greek Cypriots. Overall, the UN has had difficulties in explaining its actions and managing expectations. The UN is considered too timid in its approach towards the sides and in pointing out those who have been unconstructive during the various talks held. The lack of will from the parties to engage in a meaningful political process has limited the UN’s effectiveness.

## **Legitimacy and Credibility of the UN Presence in Cyprus**

The legitimacy and credibility of a UN mission is the result of combined action by various organs of the UN and its main stakeholders: the Secretariat, Security Council, contributing countries, and host country. A UN mission cannot be credible if it operates in a vacuum and

without any support from the permanent Security Council Members (P5), regional actors, Cyprus' Guarantors, and its host country, even with a sound mandate.

The Security Council has spent little time on the "Cyprus problem" with, on average, two resolutions per year, mainly to renew UNFICYP's six-month mandate, support ongoing negotiations, or reiterate the lack of meaningful progress on the political front. Cyprus is considered "a low-intensity issue on the Council's agenda", reflecting the lack of urgency on the part of the "international community" towards a conflict that has no victims. In the Council, the UK, France and Russia seem to have had a special interest in Cyprus. They follow the issue in the Council more closely than other Members. The UK is the penholder for all resolutions on Cyprus. France and Russia are considered the main defenders of the RoC and the Greek Cypriot community in the Security Council. Russia is the only permanent Member that has used its veto power (three times) on a resolution on Cyprus. The US and China have been more distant Members of the P5 on the Cyprus issue.

Apathy has affected the Council chamber and the Members have not taken any initiative on the Cyprus problem. Several countries view Cyprus in terms of their policy towards Turkey, which obstructs the functioning of the Good Offices. Overall, an effective solution to the problem has been a distant secondary concern for the key international actors.

A number of interlocutors point out how regional tensions can have an impact on the situation on the ground, in the buffer zone, even indirectly. These tensions de facto ended the decoupling between the Cyprus problem and the bilateral relations between Greece and Turkey. As a result, Cyprus is becoming part of a broader dispute. Analysts often view long-term operations as victims of a lack of strategic P5 interest in the regions and countries where they are deployed. UNFICYP is a counter-example of this. It receives intense strategic attention internationally, which has led the P5 to avoid bold initiatives in Cyprus that would change the status quo, making it very difficult for the rest of the UN to operate in the area.

Unlike other peacekeeping missions, UNFICYP has generally enjoyed legitimacy from both sides, although over time, the Turkish Cypriot community began to raise concerns over the impartiality of the UN in Cyprus. Greek Cypriots and RoC authorities are the main supporters of the UN presence in Cyprus, as the status quo is a reassurance to them, and they feel that being an agenda item of the Security Council prevents Turkey from going too far in its domination over the island and the region. Turkish Cypriots consider the UNFICYP mandate imbalanced as they are not party to the "consent" of the host state, and they mainly see UNFICYP as part of the status quo they wish to challenge. The peculiar and unique mode of UNFICYP financing, with a third of its budget covered by one party to the conflict (RoC) and one Guarantor (Greece), is considered another source of partiality of the UN Mission by the Turkish Cypriot community.

EPON recommends that a new discussion be initiated by the Security Council and Secretary-General on the UNFICYP budget to align it with other peace operations, i.e. to be financed

by the peacekeeping budget. This would help counter any accusation of partiality increasingly directed at the UN Mission.

Despite their length, the two Missions are not very well known among Cypriots, except by those crossing the Green Line or involved in intercommunal activities. When they do know about the UN Missions, people have a fairly global and positive view of its actions and want it to do much more. Nevertheless, they lack confidence in the effectiveness of the UN as they connect the work of the peacekeepers to the state of the negotiations. In cooperation with NGOs and researchers, funding should be granted to UNFICYP to conduct a major opinion poll on its work and the model of operations since 2007 to help prioritise some of its activities and develop a targeted communication strategy.

## **People-Centred Approaches: Acting as Connectors and Conveners Towards a Stronger Role for Civil Society**

Both UNFICYP and the Mission of Good Offices have worked as “connectors and conveners” among civil society actors and local community representatives in an environment where those involved in promoting a culture of peace in Cyprus enjoy little political space or institutional support, which has also limited the work of the UN in this context. The difficulty in reaching out to civil society actors outside the Nicosia bubble and the fragmentation and weakness of civil society have been additional impediments to the UN’s interactions with actors in civil society in an effort to influence peace negotiations.

Interviews with civil society members have clearly highlighted that the leaders on both sides have overlooked their role in preparing the ground for a solution in Cyprus.

The UN Missions should work in partnership with the two sides to devise a Track II process that could be activated when negotiations resume so that the voice of civil society on both sides is better heard. New consultations could be undertaken to improve the functioning of the technical committees and/or to create new ones, such as a committee on Cypriot diasporas, as one interlocutor suggested. Some interlocutors have pointed out the limited funding at the disposal of the UN to strengthen civil society. In addition, the UN Missions in Cyprus could take the lead in suggesting the building of a new “Home for Cooperation” and helping NGOs find the necessary funding for these in Pyla and Varosha/Maraş. These cities can be considered places of cooperation leading a process of rapprochement between the two communities.

## **Women, Peace and Security (WPS)**

UNFICYP has often been highlighted as a champion of WPS among peacekeeping missions, in large part due to the high levels of women’s representation across the Mission. Notably,



UNFICYP has had the only three women that have served as Force Commanders of any UN peacekeeping mission in its more than 70-year history. Furthermore, women represent 43.2% of the police component, which is higher than in any other current peacekeeping mission. However, this progress around women's participation in the peacekeeping mission has meant that there has been a lack of attention to other challenges and areas of progress by different stakeholders when highlighting the Mission's efforts to progress WPS.

Cypriot civil society has had a central role in efforts to progress WPS on the island on both sides, although their efforts continue to be marginalised. Efforts by the UN to increase women's participation in the peace process have made minimal progress due to a lack of willingness by the two leaders and political elite to include women in the peace process meaningfully. Diplomatic missions and the Security Council should continue to put pressure on the leaders to increase women's representation and engagement substantially in any formal peace negotiations.

The frozen conflict has meant that women's security needs have not been prioritised. For women on the island, there are high levels of structural violence, including domestic violence and human trafficking. However, there are no provisions in the peacekeeping mandate for UNFICYP to address institutional issues related to sexual and gender-based violence. The delay in finding a settlement to the Cyprus problem also has an impact on the economic livelihoods of women across the island, even though finding a solution to resolving the problem could uplift women and their communities economically. The Security Council should acknowledge the broad spectrum of issues that contribute to women's insecurity on the island and explore mechanisms to protect them (e.g. in response to sexual and gender-based violence). Furthermore, the Council should encourage the UNFICYP and the Good Offices to share information about the economic benefits of reunification—particularly for women in terms of gender equality—as part of their strategic communications with local communities.

## **Coordination and Partnerships**

The presence of two UN Missions in Cyprus does not help with the overall visibility of the UN on the island. Often, the presence of the Special Adviser has attracted the most attention; in their absence, the SRSG has focused attention. Interlocutors have talked about “fuzziness” in the Missions' activities, and at times, there has been some rivalry over who takes credit for success in the technical committees or elsewhere. However, in the past few years, integration has greatly improved between the two UN Missions and among UNFICYP's three main components. Still, there is a need for more joint work between the two Missions, drawing on various expertise, and for them to strategise together. Taking advantage of the dimensions of the Mission, the political-military integration should be further strengthened, and internal sharing of information should be improved. UNFICYP leadership and staff have pointed to the absence of a Mission Planning Unit or Mission Planning Officer as a crucial deficit. EPON considers

that such an asset should be granted to UNFICYP, as with other ongoing peace operations where one is not present.

## Impact and Constraints over Effectiveness of the UN Presence in Cyprus

A peacekeeping operation can be effective in various ways, but it cannot enforce a solution on a country. If the UN Mission has an impact on the ground in preventing a recurrence of the conflict, the impact has been limited by several factors and constraints that need to be taken into account. As one ambassador in Nicosia explains: “It is hard for the UN to overcome all this unwillingness,” and at the same time, “it is the task of the Secretary-General or of the UN more generally to never give up.”

### **Strategic Impact of the UN Presence in Cyprus**

The majority of EPON interlocutors believe that the UN has prevented more bloodshed from happening since it was deployed in 1964. Opinions vary according to which side of the island people are on. Cypriots in the South tend to find UNFICYP a necessary evil acting as a buffer between them and the Turkish army. Cypriots in the North tend to think that the Mission is part of the problem and is biased because it was legitimated in 1964 by a government without Turkish Cypriot representation.

On the political front, the mere presence of the UN has sustained the dialogue between the two sides. The UN has prepared the ground for a future settlement by facilitating dialogue between the two sides and observing the ceasefire line, even if major constraints have prevented a comprehensive settlement. The UN presence has kept the idea of reunification alive, even if facts on the ground have moved the island towards division.

UNFICYP has been very effective in preventing a relapse in the conflict (except in 1974, as no peacekeeping operation can ever engage in fighting at the strategic level against a military intervention of the State). At very low cost, it has kept the security situation stable and prevented any significant loss of life or legitimated flare-ups. It has ensured that the situation around the “Green Line” does not negatively impact higher-level negotiations between the sides.

However, this success on the peacekeeping side has become part of the problem in peacemaking by creating a comfortable status quo that is not conducive to conflict resolution. This status quo has become normalised, “an imperfect reality” in which the parties refrain from seeking change, and which becomes synonymous with risk and uncertainty. In the long run, this situation has become a trap for the Cypriots and the UN.

## Constraints on the UN Missions in Achieving their Mandate

In implementing their mandates, UN missions evolve under political restrictions with constraints that, over time, limit or undermine their actions or activities, something that their partners and outside commentators tend to overlook. Despite all its achievements, the UN has stepped on three main stumbling blocks: the issue over recognition, the (un)willingness of the parties to make compromises and to reach a solution, and the lack of inclusivity in the peace negotiations that have, over time, disconnected them from Cypriot society.

On the first issue (recognition), EPON is of the view that the Greek Cypriot authorities need to depart from an excessive emphasis on recognition and allow space for the Turkish Cypriots, whom they should consider as partners, to break the vicious circle of mistrust and to set the peace negotiations on a new, healthier footing. Such an attitude would also curb the increasing reliance of the Turkish Cypriots on their patron. Recognising the existence of the people living on the other side does not mean allowing their political recognition as a state. The Security Council should encourage, or even put pressure on, the authorities of the RoC to work on the idea of “engagement without recognition” to resume negotiations on a sounder basis and to have them move forward. The advice of Jean Monnet, who said that in order to solve intractable problems, it is sometimes necessary to change the context, may be helpful here. The Security Council should think of a change in attitude as a prerequisite for negotiations to resume.

On the second issue (consent), the starting point for the parties to a conflict, and in particular the host state, is often to consider that the UN should first and foremost support the policies and positions of the government in place. Cyprus is no exception to this trend that can flourish when the Security Council is divided or does not invest political capital in driving the parties towards a resolution. In such a context, the only protection of the UN is its impartiality and its ability to ensure that its initiatives are balancing acts between preserving the legitimacy of the RoC and engaging the Turkish Cypriot community on equitable terms. This policy can be interpreted as too timid. A number of interlocutors have questioned why the UN has not been more vocal or forceful after the failure of successive negotiations and more hands-on in a number of initiatives. They have also expressed a wish for more engaged action from the UN. However, the consent of the parties and their unwillingness to move forward on the peace process has often been a constraint for the UN. Moreover, the UN on the ground in Nicosia has certainly been limited in its boldness by the apathy of the Security Council in New York. Nevertheless, devising benchmarks and an accountability mechanism attached to the negotiations could be a way for the Security Council to exit the comfortable status quo.

# The Way Forward for the UN Presence in Cyprus: Recommendations to Move From Keeping the Peace to Building it

During EPON's more than 80 interviews, a number of interlocutors have highlighted the contradictions of the different UN mandates in Cyprus and the missing element: keeping the peace, making the peace, but forgetting to build peace. The interlocutors consider that the status quo is not static and, in fact, generates instability. The Cyprus frozen conflict is considered one of the ten security challenges for the UN in 2021-2022 by the International Crisis Group.

After almost 60 years on the island, the time has come to reconfigure the UN presence in Cyprus. EPON considers that UNFICYP could at least change its name to the UN Observation or Monitoring Mission in Cyprus (UNOMIC or UNMMIC), a name that would better reflect the civilian nature of its leadership. The Mission of Good Offices could close and transfer its political advisers to the "new" UN mission. Such restructuring would strengthen elements that are viewed as important by interlocutors within and outside the current Missions: monitoring and political analysis. In parallel, the Security Council should put more pressure on the Greek Cypriot side, in particular, to establish a military commission around the UNFICYP Force Commander representative of all parties, including the Guarantors, as it has called for in past resolutions. Such a commission would help defuse daily tensions and build a military-to-military relationship between stakeholders that do not currently know one another.

Beyond the restructuring of the two UN Missions, the Secretary-General, Security Council, and Peacebuilding Commission could initiate a reflection on how to help the Cypriots build a culture of peace and work towards reconciliation. A review of the "peacebuilding pillar" present in Cyprus could be envisaged to rationalise the various activities already undertaken in that field, enhancing their visibility and emphasising their structural dimension to elevate the Cypriot peace process.

The UN has been a stabilising element in a divided, militarised and polarised island. Stability has been the main achievement of the UN presence acknowledged by the majority of EPON's interlocutors. However, in order not to waste those gains and avoid a comfortable status quo slowly transforming into an unstable regional dispute, as well as having a UN mission operating a line of effective permanent partition, the various stakeholders of the "Cyprus problem" should now look at it more seriously compared to the past few decades. Cypriots on both sides are still hopeful: 85.5% of Greek Cypriots and 67% of Turkish Cypriots wish to end the Cyprus problem in a way that assures political equality for Turkish Cypriots and security for Greek Cypriots from Turkish influence. In order to meet these hopes, the UN has to move towards a more structural approach to (re)solving the conflict through peacebuilding and sustaining peace



through which the relationship and ties between the two communities would improve and past disputes can be settled.

There is a need to create dependency on peace, and not on the comfortable conflict, to develop trade rapprochement that eases the relationship, devise transformative initiatives, bring the negotiations back to Nicosia, be more transparent, and create a Track II that includes civil society, and give a more dynamic turn to renewed negotiations. For this to work, there needs to be willingness to move forward and for the parties to view each other as partners. The alternative could only be a hard border in the middle of an island too small to be divided.



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“The conditions in Cyprus today and the situation of UNFICYP there tend strongly to underscore the maxim that peace-keeping is a means and not an end. Peace-keeping, if successful, as it surely has been in Cyprus, can provide an atmosphere of quiet and can buy a reasonable time for peace-making, for resolving the differences which give rise to the conflict. It is, however, and can only be, a first step toward pacific settlement.”

Secretary-General U. Thant  
(Report of 10 June 1966, para. 172)

# 1. Introduction

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When studying UN peacekeeping operations, scholars and practitioners have mostly studied the multidimensional operations, often neglecting the lessons that could be drawn from the missions mandated before the end of the Cold War. Five of the 12 current UN peacekeeping operations were created during this period: the operations in Kashmir (UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP)); Jerusalem (UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO)); the Golan Heights (UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF)); South Lebanon (UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL)); and Cyprus (UNFICYP).<sup>1</sup> These missions are not “traditional” as they are often called but belong to a particular period (bipolarity) when peacekeeping was about being a third party intervening in an interstate conflict and deploying to monitor ceasefire lines: the “line of control” in the case of Kashmir; the “green line” in Jerusalem and Cyprus; the “blue line” in South Lebanon; and the “purple line” in the Golan Heights. However, the missions in Cyprus and South Lebanon have de facto intervened in a country and a conflict that is also internal.

These missions have also remained deployed during periods of high-intensity conflict and ethnic violence that have become protracted or frozen conflicts. Some of these missions have been accompanied by a series of failed negotiating, mediation or political processes. Cyprus is one of the few cases where a peacekeeping mission evolves alongside a special adviser (as in the Western Sahara where a Personal Envoy evolves alongside the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), and in Jerusalem where the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East

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<sup>1</sup> MINURSO belongs to this category, although it was created in the post-Cold war period to organise a referendum that has never been held. Since 1991, MINURSO has monitored the ceasefire along the wall or berm between the Moroccan and Polisario forces. See <https://minurso.unmissions.org/mandate>.



Peace Process operates alongside UNTSO).<sup>2</sup> The position of a mediator in the form of a Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus (SASG), also known as the Mission of Good Offices, was created by the same resolution as the peacekeeping mission in 1964. The last common feature among several of these operations is that most of them are led by a force commander or head of the military component (UNTSO, UNMOGIP, UNDOF, or UNIFIL). In these missions, the military component is predominant, as the main objective of these operations is to monitor a ceasefire line or buffer zone. The civilian components have expanded over time but remain minimal. UNFICYP is the eighth peacekeeping mission created since 1948.

Cyprus owes its name to the presence of copper, mined in Roman times. Due to its strategic location in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, Cyprus has been influenced by many cultures, from Ancient Greece to Roman, Frankish, Venetian, Byzantine, Ottoman (the origin of the Turkish Cypriot population since 1571), and British. According to Prof. Birol Yeşilada, “a typical Cypriot is an ethnically mixed descendant of these peoples regardless of their mother tongue.”<sup>3</sup> In 1878, the Sultan leased the island to the British Empire interested in this land close to the Suez Canal (opened in 1869) on the “new road” from the Indies to Malta. The two Cypriot communities, Christians and Muslims, lived side by side in a peaceful manner for more than four centuries. In the 20th century, a fracture occurred and the history of the two communities took a tragic turn.

Today, Cyprus (the third-largest island in the Mediterranean, after the Italian islands of Sicily and Sardinia) is often considered by the general public as an island for tourism and vacation, not one of frozen conflict. Tourists that arrive at the airport of Larnaca can spend their vacation ignorant of the tensions still present. For them, the conflict is invisible. Before Covid-19, Cyprus welcomed more than four million tourists each year (mainly from the UK, Russia, Israel, Germany, and Greece), which is remarkable for an island with a population of around 1.2 million people. The tourism industry represented more than 10% of the national GDP in 2019.<sup>4</sup> This is may be why UNFICYP is often called (even in UN circles) a “beach-keeping” mission. However, the conflict persists, although apparently dormant, and the island remains divided. It is cut in two by a buffer zone of 180km across and 3m to 7km wide, a buffer zone that represents 3% of the territory of the island. Tourists rarely see the approximately 800 peacekeepers who monitor the buffer zone, except maybe along the separation line that exists in the capital city, Nicosia. That line is known as the “Green Line”, since it was drawn on a map with a green pencil by Major General Peter Young, the British military officer leading the British forces deployed to appease intercommunal clashes in December 1963.<sup>5</sup>

2 There are the special cases of Lebanon where UNIFIL, based in Naqura, evolves alongside a Special Coordinator for Lebanon based in Beirut; the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where a regional envoy was appointed as Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region; Yemen, where a special envoy operates alongside the non-armed observation mission to support the Hodeida Agreement.

3 Birol Yeşilada, “Quo Vadis Cyprus?” Turkish Area Studies Review, Autumn 2020, p. 29. This has seemingly been confirmed by genetic testing presented in a 2017 research article available at <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0179474>

4 See <https://www.cyprusprofile.com/sectors/tourism>

5 Rodrigo Bueno-Lacy and Henk van Houtum, “The Glocal Green Line: The Imperial Cartopolitical Puppeteering of Cyprus,” *Geopolitics*, 2019, 24(3), pp. 1-39. See also Anke Strüver, “Europeanization in Cypriot Borderscapes:

The protagonists, parties to the conflict, or “the sides”, as they are often referred to locally, know each other better than they know themselves sometimes. In other conflict settings, the parties have often changed, adding rebel groups or militias to the initial stakeholders. In Cyprus, however, the sides have remained in the same face-off for more than 60 years. This adds to the complexity in finding a solution to the “Cyprus question”, as the Security Council has referred to it since 1964. On the contrary, the parties are settled in their certainties, rhetoric, and nostalgia, and in their management of the status quo, fears about the changes induced by any solution, and “constructive ambiguities”. The Cyprus frozen conflict is still, six decades after its inception, considered one of the ten security challenges for the UN in 2021-2022 by the International Crisis Group.<sup>6</sup>

Cyprus is a unique case in international relations in many ways. The capital city is the only remaining divided capital in Europe and in the world.

Cyprus is a unique case in international relations in many ways. The capital city is the only remaining divided capital in Europe and in the world. The country is the only case in Europe where part of its territory is occupied by an army (the Turkish army, considered by the Turkish Cypriots as their main protector) that belongs to a military alliance to which most European States are members, and where two members (Turkey and Greece) of the military alliance are at odds with each other. UNFICYP is one of the two remaining UN peace missions in Europe (with the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK)) and the only one in a country that is a member of the European Union (EU). The Office of the SASG is also the only peacemaking office based in Europe, apart from the UN Representative to the Geneva International Discussions (UNRGID) in Georgia.<sup>7</sup> Cyprus is the only country in the world to have “Guarantors” with a right to intervene and station troops on a permanent basis. Cyprus is the site of an invisible conflict, where “the Cyprus problem’ does not equate to a ‘Cyprus conflict’”, which is “accordingly physically harmless and only at times psychologically disturbing.”<sup>8</sup> Finally, Cyprus is the only place where the UN has broken a few of its policies in terms of peacemaking and departed from its guidelines for mediators, by facilitating a process in which civil society is almost absent.

*Experiencing the Green Line in Everyday Life*,” *Geopolitics*, 2020, 25(3), pp. 609-632.

6 International Crisis Group, “Ten Challenges for the UN in 2021-2022,” *Special Briefing 6, Multilateral Diplomacy*. 13 September 2021.

7 The creation of that position followed the non-extension of the mandate of the UN Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) in June 2009. The UN Representative to the Geneva International Discussions serves as the UN Co-Chair of the Discussions and works in consultation with the other Co-Chairs (OSCE and EU) to prepare and facilitate the sessions of the Geneva International Discussions.

8 Emel Akçali, “A New Vision of Good Neighborliness,” in James Ker-Lindsay (ed.), *Resolving Cyprus – New Approaches to Conflict Resolution*, 2016, London: I.B. Tauris & Co, p. 17.

This EPON study has taken place in a peculiar period affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. The research had to adapt to the context, with an approach that involved remote engagement to prepare a draft report, verified by in-person meetings in the field during the second research stage. It is within this context that the EPON study has produced a comprehensive analysis of UNFICYP and the Good Office Mission's overall performance and impact. To that end, and drawing on EPON's analytical framework (see section 2), we look back at the history, the many episodes in the Missions' efforts, and a detailed analysis of the nature, actors and drivers of the conflict (section 3). This allows us to delve into the current mandates, objectives, and activities (section 4) of the UN Missions in Cyprus, before analysing the six key generic dimensions of contemporary peace operations (section 5). We conclude with a number of strategic constraints at the heart of both Missions' mandates and some recommendations to increase the effectiveness of possible future negotiations and to evolve the posture of the UN Missions in Cyprus (section 6).

### Box 1. Chronology of key geopolitical events

1878	Britain assumes administrative control of Cyprus from the Ottoman Empire.
1923	Turkey recognises British annexation of Cyprus through the Treaty of Lausanne.
1946	Britain announces plans to liberalise the colonial administration of Cyprus and to allow Cypriots to form a Consultative Assembly in order to form a new constitution.
Jan. 1950	A referendum is organised by the Orthodox Church, with 96% in favour of Enosis (union with Greece).
1 Apr. 1955	A series of bombs explode at administrative buildings around the island, marking the beginning of the National Organization of Cypriot Fighters' (EOKA) uprising.
1 Aug. 1958	In response to the EOKA fight for Enosis, the Turkish Resistance Organization (TMT) is established in Cyprus to ensure Taksim (partition).
16 Aug. 1960	Cyprus gains independence from Britain.
20 Sept. 1960	The Republic of Cyprus becomes a member of the UN.
30 Nov. 1963	Archbishop Makarios' 13 points to amend the Constitution is rejected by Turkish Cypriots who consider it an attempt to undermine their political rights.
21 Dec. 1963	Serious violence erupts in Nicosia and then throughout the island after Greek Cypriot police officers kill two Turkish Cypriots on the edge of the Turkish quarter.
30 Dec. 1963	A ceasefire line is established between the two communities, known as the "Green Line".
4 Mar. 1964	The Security Council unanimously adopts Resolution 186, which creates UNFICYP and recommends the appointment of a mediator to the Secretary-General.
27 Mar. 1964	Operational readiness of UNFICYP.
21 Apr. 1967	The Greek government is overthrown in a military coup in Athens.



15 Jul. 1974	Operation Aphroditis, aimed at unifying Cyprus with Greece, is launched to overthrow President Makarios, who manages to flee to London and appeal to the Security Council for help.
20 Jul. 1974	Turkish Operation Attila. Turkish troops land on the northern coast of Cyprus.
16 Aug. 1974	The ceasefire called for by the Security Council is de facto accepted by Turkey.
13 Feb. 1975	Rauf Denktaş proclaims a "Federated Turkish State" in the occupied Northern part of the island.
12 Feb. 1977	Makarios and Denktaş accept the idea of Cyprus as an independent, non-aligned, bicommunal and federal State.
3 Aug. 1977	Death of Archbishop Makarios III.
Apr. 1981	The Committee on Missing Persons (CMP) in Cyprus is established.
15 Nov. 1983	The Turkish Republic of North Cyprus (TNRC) is proclaimed. It is recognised only by Turkey.
4 Jul. 1990	The Cypriot government under President George Vassiliou formally applies for membership in the EU.
25 Jun. 1994	EU Member States officially confirm that Cyprus will take part in the next wave of enlargement discussions.
13 Dec. 1997	The European Council accepts the candidacy of Cyprus to the EU.
20 Jun. 1999	G8 Declaration on the resolution of the question of Cyprus.
14 Dec. 1999	EU Copenhagen summit decides to examine the Turkish candidacy under conditions.
11 Nov. 2002	The first UN blueprint for a comprehensive settlement is tabled by Secretary-General Kofi Annan.
14 Jan. 2003	Important demonstrations take place in the north demanding reunification before the February UN deadline and calling for EU membership.
23 Apr. 2003	Opening of the first crossing point across the Green Line.
24 Apr. 2004	Holding of two referenda, one in the south (which rejects the Annan Plan by 75.83%) and one in the north (which approves it by 64.91%).
1 May 2004	EU Treaty of Enlargement comes into effect, and the Republic of Cyprus becomes a full member of the EU, with the EU acquis suspended in the north.
3 Apr. 2008	Opening of Ledra Street/Lokmaci crossing point.
17 Jul. 2008	The UN Secretary-General appoints Alexander Downer as special adviser on Cyprus after a four-year interval.
Dec. 2011	Beginning of the dispute over hydrocarbons.
2008-2012	Series of negotiations and tripartite meetings with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.
24 Feb. 2013	Election of Nikos Anastasiades as Greek Cypriot leader and president of the RoC.

26 Apr. 2015	Election of Mustafa Akinci as Turkish Cypriot leader and president of the TRNC.
9 Jan. 2017	Negotiations in Geneva. Anastasiades and Akinci present each other with their preferred maps of the internal administrative boundaries.
7 Jul. 2017	Inconclusive end to the Conference on Cyprus in Crans Montana, Switzerland.
25 Nov. 2019	Informal trilateral meeting held in Berlin.
8 Oct. 2020	Opening of a small part of the fenced-off area of Varosha/Maraş to the public.
18 Oct. 2020	Election of Ersin Tatar as new Turkish Cypriot leader.
27-29 Apr. 2021	Holding of an informal meeting including the 5+1 countries (China, France, Russia, the UK, and the US, plus Germany) on the Cyprus issue in Geneva.

# 2. Analytical Framework and Research Methods

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EPON has decided that the effectiveness of these long-term legacy missions warrants further analysis, as with multidimensional peacekeeping operations. In the case of Cyprus, the assessment should concern both aspects of the UN presence on the ground, the peacekeeping and the peacemaking elements, and whether they complement each other. A number of interlocutors suggested that the effectiveness of the peacekeeping element is due to the success of the parallel political negotiations on the future of the island. But as the latter so far did not result in any settlement, interlocutors have concluded (sometimes hastily in our view) that UNFICYP has been ineffective. Is it fair to link these two elements in this simple fashion? Can one element be entirely isolated from the fate of the other? These are some of the questions we examine in this report, as well as analysing the drivers of one of the most intractable, longest-lasting conflicts on the planet and the oldest in Europe.

This is not a report on the Cyprus problem per se or on the contents of the negotiations but on the effectiveness of UN peacekeeping and peacemaking in Cyprus, the influence of the UN missions in finding a solution, their action on the ground to stabilise the situation, and their mediating and facilitating role. The aim of EPON is to analyse the effectiveness of contemporary peace operations, especially a mission’s strategic-level effects on the political process and armed conflict dynamics in the host country. The network thus developed an overarching methodological framework to assess effectiveness against the mandated tasks and the broader impact a mission is having on the political and security dynamics in the conflict system.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Theoretical and Methodological Framework for EPON Studies (unpublished document, EPON, May 2018). Available on request from the EPON Secretariat.

To undertake this research, the EPON team interviewed a variety of stakeholders, including:

- Members of the peace missions, the Good Offices Mission (or OSASG-Cyprus) and the UNFICYP, including senior leadership and staff of the three components;
- Some national authorities;
- External multilateral and bilateral partners of the two Missions;
- Some representatives of members of the UN Security Council;
- Local and international civil society organisations; and
- Researchers and academics with special knowledge and expertise on the region, the country and the conflict.

The team studied relevant primary and secondary sources and conducted remote semi-structured interviews with persons in Nicosia/Lefkoşa, Famagusta, New York and elsewhere. Focus group discussions were also organised remotely with civil society representatives, NGOs and researchers. Interviews were carried out with the explicit consent of the subjects on a not-for-attribution basis to encourage frank discussion and meet relevant ethical guidelines. The opinions reflected in this report are those of the various persons interviewed and have to be taken as such. However, the purpose of the EPON team has been to gather diverse opinions for analysis. About 80 interviews were conducted remotely between April 2020 and March 2021 and are complemented by a field visit from 9-22 June 2021.

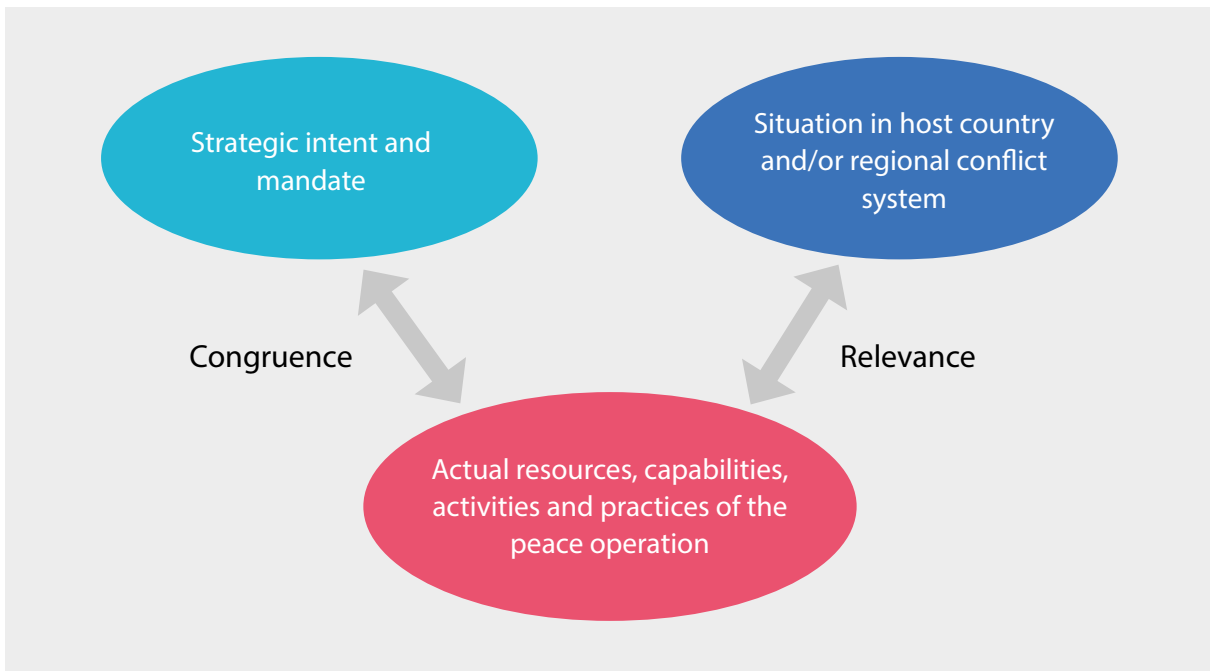
This is not a report on the Cyprus problem per se or on the contents of the negotiations but on the effectiveness of UN peacekeeping and peacemaking in Cyprus, the influence of the UN missions in finding a solution, their action on the ground to stabilise the situation, and their mediating and facilitating role.

The field visit by the author took place in a challenging moment for Cyprus, about one month after the failure of the informal 5+1 discussion in Geneva (27-29 April 2021). It seems the prospect for a bizonal bicomunal federation (BBF) has become more elusive than ever, and the trust between the sides is at its lowest point. In his latest report on his Mission of Good Offices, the Secretary-General noted that “interested parties need to recognize that, without decisive action now, continuing dynamics in and around Cyprus could render future efforts to reach a

mutually agreeable settlement to the Cyprus issue unattainable.”<sup>10</sup> The visit also took place a few days after the reopening of the crossing points closed during the pandemic and during the week, UNFICYP resumed a number of in-person meetings.

We approached this research with discretion, acknowledging the in-depth reflections that policy makers, researchers, members of civil society, and almost all Cypriots living on or off the island have made for at least three decades since the division of the island. EPON also acknowledges the number of proposals put forward by various stakeholders and negotiating formulas tested over the years. The discussion about the reunification of the island and the “Cyprus problem” is a constant feature of life in Cyprus, and is very much present in the daily conversations of Cypriots.

**Figure 1. EPON Analytical Framework**



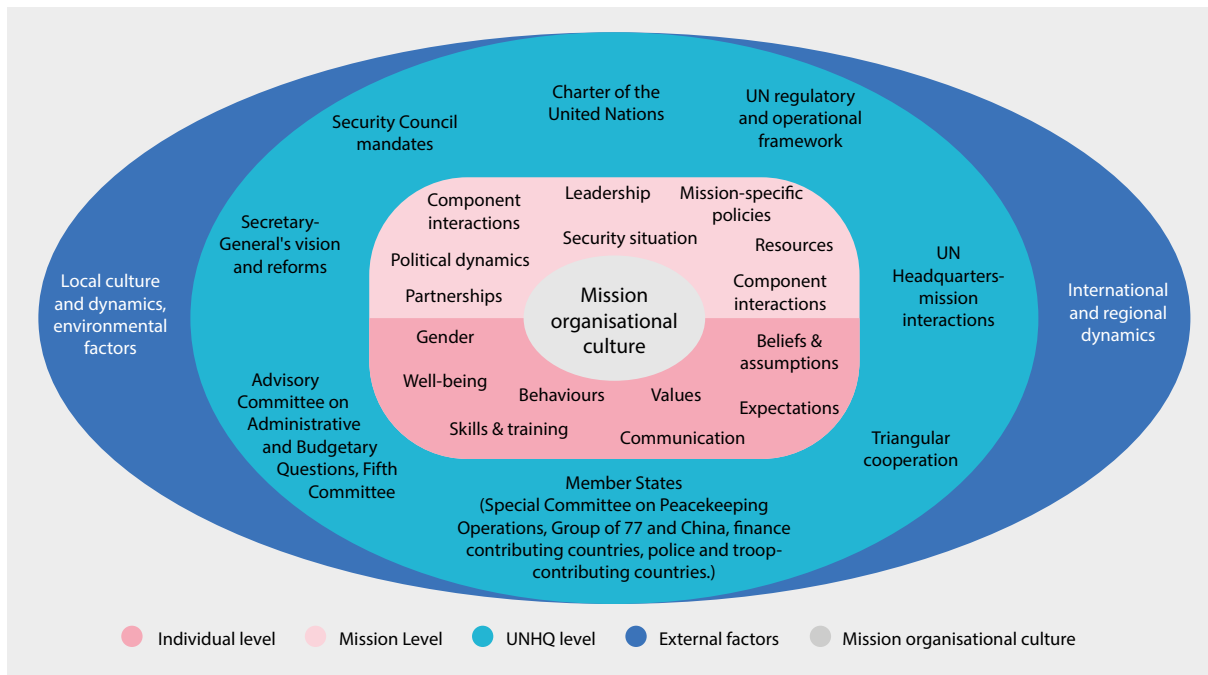
As illustrated in figure 1, the EPON analytical framework focuses on understanding two related issues:

1. How much congruence is there between a mission’s capabilities and activities and its mandated tasks? This involves examining the actual measures, capabilities and practices of UNFICYP and the work of the Mission of Good Offices across various substantive dimensions (e.g. facilitating dialogue). It also involves analysing the extent to which they match the ambitions and objectives expressed in the Mission’s strategic documents (and those of the authorising organisation(s)).

<sup>10</sup> S/2021/634, 9 July 2021, “Report of the Secretary-General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus,” para. 52.

2. How relevant are the missions’ mandate and activities for influencing the situation on the ground, especially for the people most affected by the crisis? In the case of Cyprus, this involves analysing the impact of the missions’ activities on the political and security situation in Cyprus. The aim is to enhance understanding of a peace operation’s ability to enable local actors to achieve and sustain stability, as well as its influence on critical conflict drivers, and to look at parameters influencing a peace operation’s effectiveness. In other words, the EPON approach is close to the “standard of peacekeeping success” used by Nicholas Sambanis 20 years ago when looking at UNFICYP, i.e. “the degree of mandate implementation, given the peacekeepers’ constraints” as a way of looking beyond mandate performance, facilitation of conflict resolution, limitation of conflict, and limitation of casualties.<sup>11</sup>

**Figure 2. Elements that generate various constraints and organisational culture in UN peace operations**



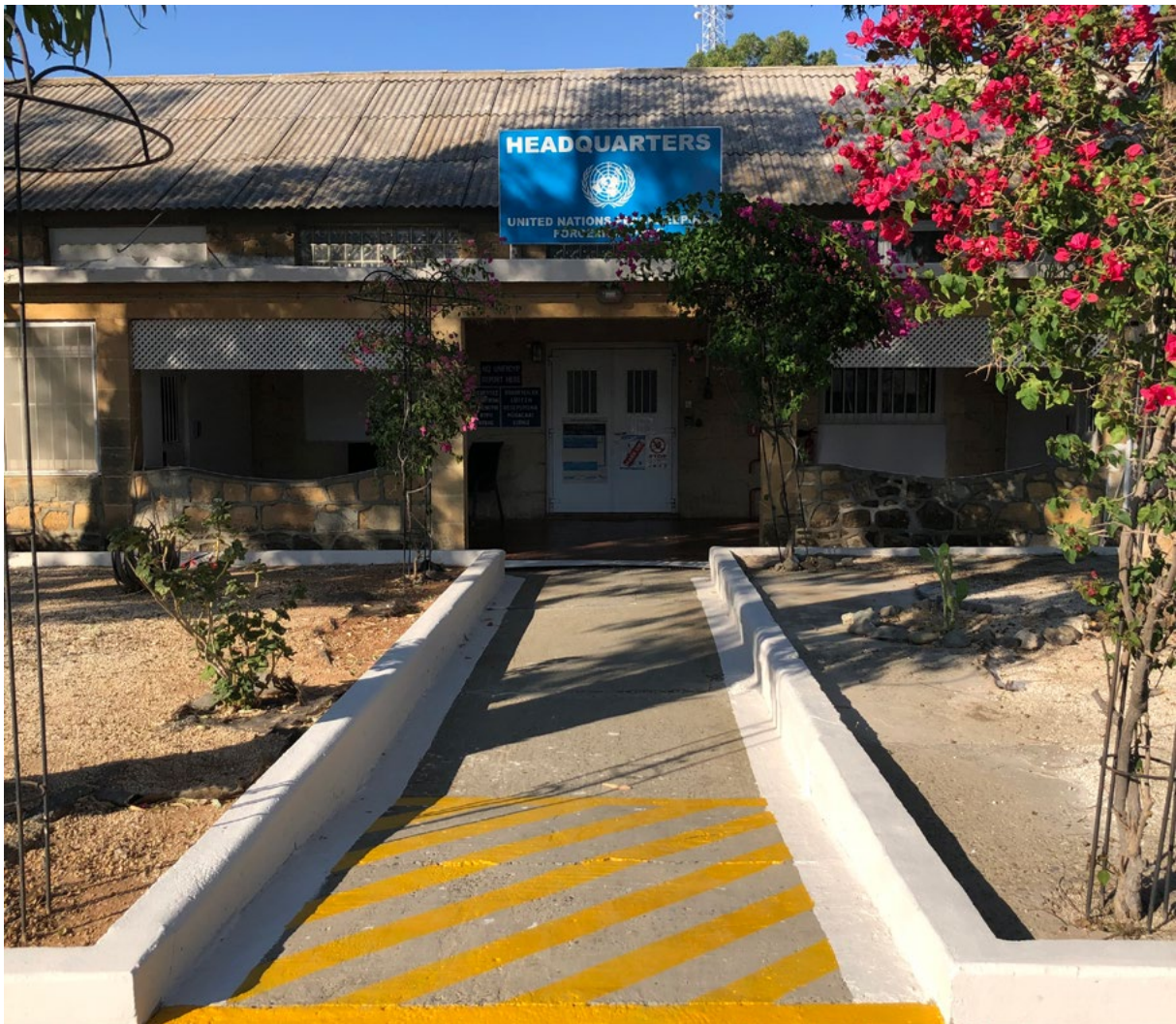
Source: A/75/803, 8 March 2021, Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), “Evaluation of the organizational culture in peacekeeping operations”.

The six dimensions through which the EPON team has analysed effectiveness have helped to reveal the missions’ impact and constraints. This has been done by also taking into account the general environment of a mission, including those elements generating political and bureaucratic constraints, as well as the specific organisational culture at play, as reflected in figure 2 and the related OIOS study. These are more or less permanent features that constitute constraints

11 Nicholas Sambanis, “The United Nations operation in Cyprus: A new look at the peacekeeping-peacemaking relationship,” *International Peacekeeping*, 1999, 6(1), pp. 79-108.



(mandates, resources, and political or regional dynamics) or potential drivers of change (gender and values) for any UN mission. This has been analysed, keeping in mind the local context. The longer a mission remains in a country, the more likely it will become an actor in the political landscape, if not, as a number of interlocutors stated, one in the conflict itself. The UN has had a central role in the Cypriot society in monitoring the conflict and attempting to resolve it. One has to acknowledge that crisis management in general and peacekeeping, in particular, cannot be quick fixes and must be long-term endeavours to succeed. When to end them has been a key question in this context, although the answer is elusive: “Is there a law of diminishing returns?” as one researcher rightly asked.<sup>12</sup>



*@ Alexandra Novosseloff, 2021*

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12 Interview, researcher, e-meeting, New York, 01 September 2021.







### 3. Historical and Contextual Analysis: History, Nature, Actors and Drivers of the Conflict

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For Turkish Cypriots, the history starts with the inter-ethnic violence of 1963-1964, and they cannot forget the violence and humiliation they suffered during these “events”. For Greek Cypriots, the history begins in July 1974, with the trauma of the Turkish intervention and the flight which followed. This difference in perceiving when the conflict started is one of the obstacles in the path of its settlement and has contributed to two different attitudes on each side of the dividing line: the Greek Cypriots “ignore the presence of the conflict”, while the Turkish Cypriots “maintain it as part of the people’s identity.”<sup>13</sup>

On 21 December 1963, intercommunal clashes broke out in Cyprus between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities. The trigger was an incident – a police patrol that resulted in the killing of two Turkish Cypriots – between the two communities in Nicosia, which provoked violence across the island. This event created a serious rupture between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. Six days later, on 27 December, during a late evening session, the Security Council first included “the situation in Cyprus” as part of its agenda.<sup>14</sup> The UK, the former colonial power, sent 2,500 soldiers to separate the parties, but on 15 February 1964, the UK and RoC requested urgent action by the Security Council. The provisions of Resolution 186 were discussed

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13 Constantinos Adamides, “A Comfortable and Routine Conflict,” in James Ker-Lindsay (ed.), *Resolving Cyprus, op. cit.*, p. 9.

14 This agenda item was first named “the complaint by the Government of Cyprus”, as the latter seized the Council after aircrafts from Turkey had flown over Cyprus, “made low circles over the town of Nicosia”, and that the Government of Cyprus felt it was “under the threat of an invasion.” See S/PV.1085, 27 December 1964, para. 6-10. The “Complaint” agenda item was initially the official agenda item until it was changed to “The situation in Cyprus” on 13 December 1974. Currently, the Security Council webpage mentions “The Cyprus question” when it lists the resolutions, which was never an official name used by the Council. See Sam Daws and Loraine Sievers, *The Procedure of the UN Security Council*, 2014 (4th edition), Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 223.

during nine public Security Council meetings before being unanimously adopted on 4 March 1964, “noting” that the situation in Cyprus was “likely to threaten international peace and security.” Blue Helmets were deployed throughout the island (Nicosia, Larnaca, Paphos, Limassol, and Famagusta) to form the UNFICYP, “with an initial strength of 7,000”, including a contingent of 3,500 British soldiers.<sup>15</sup>

For Turkish Cypriots, the history starts with the inter-ethnic violence of 1963-1964. For Greek Cypriots, the history begins in July 1974.

The security situation was stabilised between 1965 and 1974, but tension remained between the two communities, as Turkish Cypriots were mostly forced to live in enclaves (see sections below and map 1). Intercommunal talks occurred without success. In the summer of 1974, “developments in Cyprus changed dramatically in a way that would affect the scope and task of the entire peacekeeping venture.”<sup>16</sup> On 15 July 1974, the Greek Cypriot National Guard, under orders from the Greek Military junta in Athens, carried out a coup against President Makarios, who had worked for a non-aligned and independent Cyprus. On 20 July, Turkey launched a major military operation, landing military forces from Kyrenia on the northern part of Nicosia that it has been occupied since then.

The events of 1963-64 resulted in a number of refugees and displaced persons, as well as damaged and lost property among the Turkish Cypriot community. The damage during the 1974 events was borne mainly by the Greek community. Although the war did not last long, the human cost was immense: 900 Greek Cypriots died, 1,510 Greek Cypriots (including 700 civilians) went missing; 492 mainland Turkish soldiers, 75 Turkish Cypriot fighters and 270 Turkish Cypriot civilians were killed; and 492 Turkish Cypriots disappeared.<sup>17</sup> About 160,000 Greek Cypriots were forced to flee south and about 50,000 Turkish Cypriots in the other direction. By the end of 1975, fewer than 400 Turkish Cypriots remained in the south; by 1978, fewer than 2,000 Greek Cypriots remained in the north (compared to 15,900 in October 1975).

15 S/5593, 12 March 1964, “Report by the Secretary-General on the organization and operation of the UN Peace-keeping Force in Cyprus.”

16 Jan Asmussen, “UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP),” in Joachim A. Koops, Norrie MacQueen, Thierry Tardy, and Paul D. Williams (eds), *Oxford Handbook on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations*, 2015, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 202.

17 Numbers given by the CMP at <https://www.cmp-cyprus.org>

## 3.1. Origins of the Conflict: The Birth of a Nation Without Unity, and the Difficulty in Implementing the 1960 Constitution

### 3.1.1. A Long Path to Independence

Britain took control of the island from the Ottoman Empire in 1878. After World War I, the fall of the Austro-Hungarian and the Ottoman empires, and the reshaping of many European borders,<sup>18</sup> the UK (which annexed Cyprus during the war) proclaimed it a Crown Colony in 1925, despite “the policy of the Greek State, which emerged in 1828, to include all of the Greek-speaking Christian Orthodox parts of the Byzantine Empire within the national borders of modern Greece.”<sup>19</sup> Unlike other colonies in the British Empire, Cyprus was not given a representative regime (as in Malta), and the power rested mainly in the hands of the High Commissioner.<sup>20</sup> In the beginning, the de facto attachment of Cyprus to the British Empire was welcomed by most inhabitants of the island because they thus escaped the Ottoman neglect.<sup>21</sup> The Greek Cypriots, in particular, accepted British rule because they thought it would be temporary, hoping that the island would be united with Greece, as the Ionian islands were in 1864. However, in 1923, under the terms of the Treaty of Lausanne, the new Republic of Turkey “formally relinquished its claims to the island and called on Turkish Cypriots to leave the island and settle in Turkey”<sup>22</sup> and many did leave.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the relations between the two communities were unproblematic. In 1891, 50% of the villages were mixed (Christian and Muslim). Nevertheless, the rural exodus reduced this proportion: 36% of villages were still mixed in 1931 and 18% in 1960.<sup>23</sup> This does not mean, however, that the communities were living in isolation from each other and did not have relationships. In the villages, Christians were invited to Muslim religious celebrations and vice versa. According to one historian, there was, however, very few mixed marriages: only four between 1878 and 1960.<sup>24</sup> In the towns, there were often Muslim and Christian neigh-

18 With the treaty of Lausanne (24 July 1923), Turkey definitively waived all its rights on Cyprus, without internal reluctance. However, it remains vigilant over what happens near its borders.

19 Niyazi Kizilyürek, “Modernity, Nationalism and the Perspectives of a Cypriot Union,” *CEMOTI – Cahiers d’études sur la Méditerranée orientale et le monde turco-iranien*, 2002, n°34, p. 218. The Sultan was the formal sovereign over Cyprus until 1914 when the Ottoman Empire joined World War II. In 1915, the UK insincerely considered ceding the island to Greece, an offer that the King of Greece, Constantine I, had to reject because he did not want to declare war on Kaiser Willem II, his brother-in-law (a decision that was opposed by his prime minister, Eleftherios Venizelos).

20 Since 1882, Cyprus had an elected parliament, the Legislative Council, with very limited powers, which was abolished after the 1931 uprising.

21 Jean-François Drevet, *Chypre en Europe*, 2000, Paris: L’Harmattan, p. 44.

22 James Ker-Lindsay, *The Cyprus Problem*, 2011, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 16.

23 See Michael Attalides, *Cyprus. Nationalism and International Politics*, 1979, Edinburgh: Q Press Ltd. See also Niyazi Kizilyürek, “Modernity, Nationalism and the Perspectives of a Cypriot Union,” *loc. cit.*

24 Interview, researcher, 19 August 2021.



bourhoods. As the Turkish Cypriots were not nostalgic over the domination of the Sultan, the Greek community was organised around the Orthodox Church. Armenians, Latins (essentially Catholics), and Maronites have been present on the island for centuries.

After World War II, in the context of the decolonisation movement, a long and gradual path began towards the affirmation by Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots of their differences, qualified as “nationalism” by some (but an external one, as it was then not related to Cyprus, but either Greece or Turkey), and as “communitarianism” by others wherein the belonging to a community shapes people’s behaviour. In 1931, the first popular uprising occurred among Greek Cypriots demanding union (*Enosis*)<sup>25</sup> with Greece and increased representation in colonial institutions of the island. In 1946, the British government suggested a constitutional reform in the form of a semi-autonomous status for the island (the Winster Constitution) as a path towards self-government. Greek Cypriots were then increasingly divided between pro-communist and secular forces and the Orthodox Church, which wanted to retain its power over the majority, but all were united on the *Enosis*. In 1950, a referendum was organised by the Orthodox Church: 95.7% voted in favour of *Enosis*. The seeds that produced trouble are thus the power of the Church, the lack of democracy, and the predominance of the rule of the community.

The movement towards independence started to gain strength, as Greece urged the UK to bring the matter to the UN.

The movement towards independence started to gain strength, as Greece urged the UK to bring the matter to the UN. The “internationalisation” of the Cyprus problem was thus under way.<sup>26</sup> After the EOKA (a paramilitary anti-communist and pro-Greek organisation) led by Georgios Grivas, a Greek officer born in Cyprus, launched a series of attacks against British positions on the island in April 1955, London called for the organisation of an international conference on “political and defense issues in Eastern Mediterranean, including Cyprus.” It invited Greece, but also Turkey, as Britain had been supporting the Turkish Cypriot minority since the increase of Greek Cypriot activism, according to a divide-and-rule policy. This London Conference on the future of Cyprus was held in August 1955 without the Cypriots themselves. All the main actors in the “Cyprus question” were from that time in place and have remained on the scene thereafter, and all constituted, to some degree, constraining or blocking factors for the future of the island. As Jean-François Drevet put it: “The first negative effect of internationalization for

25 *Enosis* is the union under a single state of all Hellenic territories, and is part of “a wider political movement that sought to liberate and unify all Greeks living under Ottoman rule” (James Ker-Lindsay, *The Cyprus Problem, op. cit.*, p. 14). There is a similar movement currently led by Turkey developing a strong link with all populations formerly under Ottoman rule.

26 See Hubert Faustmann, “The UN and the Internationalization of the Cyprus conflict (1949-1958),” in Oliver P. Richmond and James Ker-Lindsay (eds), *The Work of the UN in Cyprus – Promoting Peace and Development*, 2001, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 3-45.

Cypriots was that they were not allowed to directly discuss their own destiny.”<sup>27</sup> This pattern repeated itself several times thereafter.

The first negative effect of internationalization for Cypriots was that they were not allowed to directly discuss their own destiny.” This pattern repeated itself several times thereafter.

From 1955 and 1959, events occurred called “the Cyprus Emergency”, during which violence became widespread, and a number of attacks by EOKA occurred parallel to a negotiation process between the Colonial Office and Makarios. Governor Harding made the mistake of deporting Makarios to the Seychelles (before releasing him one year later but into exile in Athens), which raised his popularity and gave way to the extremists led by Grivas. In 1957, some 36,000 British soldiers were stationed in Cyprus. Greek Cypriot nationalism and irredentism sparked Turkish Cypriot nationalism as the Turkish Cypriot minority felt increasingly threatened by the British departure. In August 1958, Turkish Cypriots created the TMT with the support of Ankara. As the Greeks Cypriots had chosen *Enosis*, the Turkish Cypriots also began to shift tactics and aim towards a policy of separation or partition (*Taksim*) from their neighbours in 1956. In the end, “the insistence on separate national orientations left no room for the emergence of a united Cypriot society but created a prison of identities.”<sup>28</sup> The conflict was set between two nationalist movements that were not unanimously supported by the population but which claimed to represent their respective communities.<sup>29</sup>

### 3.1.2. The 1960 Constitution’s Divisive Provisions

After two years of discussions between Turkey and Greece, an agreement was reached on 11 February 1959 in Zürich, Switzerland, on the principle of independence and 27 articles about the political regime in Cyprus. The British and Cypriots in London joined the discussion thereafter. What was finally agreed upon was a text that served to write a Constitution; a treaty of guarantee between Cyprus, the UK, Greece and Turkey; and a treaty of alliance between Cyprus, Greece and Turkey. The Greek Cypriots felt they signed this agreement under pressure, a *diktat* that they questioned later, and by repeating that “they had no choice, the Greek Cypriot leaders undermined the bases of the 1959 consensus among the population.”<sup>30</sup> At the time, the majority of Greek Cypriots sought union with Greece. Therefore, they saw independence as a

27 *Ibid*, p. 70.

28 Niyazi Kizilyürek, “Modernity, Nationalism and the Perspectives of a Cypriot Union,” *loc. cit.*, p. 225.

29 In fact, both communities were divided. The Canadian geopolitologist Richard Patrick noted in his PhD that from the late 1950s to 1974, intra-community violence (between nationalists and communists in particular) outnumbered inter-community violence (between Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities). Richard A. Patrick, *Political Geography and The Cyprus Conflict: 1963-1971*, 1976, Waterloo (Ontario, Canada): University of Waterloo.

30 Jean-François Drevet, *Chypre en Europe*, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

solution imposed from outside: “No part of society had asked for it, no ideology of the time supported it, no official discourse provided legitimacy for it. In Cyprus, your ethnic origin, your religion, your community has always linked people together much more than the legal definition of the area where you live.”<sup>31</sup> That attitude changed over time.

## | The RoC became a member of the UN on 20 September 1960.

A legal team (without any British experts) was set up to write a Constitution. Its work lasted one year, in the context of rampant insecurity on the island and increasing division among the Greek Cypriot community. Presidential elections were held in December 1959, and Makarios was elected with 66.8% of the votes. He declared: “For the first time in eight centuries, the government of the island is in Greek hands.” The British departure was effective (while retaining their two sovereign bases), and the independence of Cyprus was proclaimed on 16 August 1960. The RoC became a member of the UN on 20 September 1960. That year three elements were put in place that deepened the divide between communities and contributed to increased instability on the island:

- The designation of three “guarantor powers” (see section 3.2.3.);
- The provisions of a Constitution that established a complex and rigid legal framework that did not sufficiently reflect the reality on the ground, was negotiated by foreign powers, and not adopted by any national constituent assembly; and
- The accepted membership of a disunited nation to the UN that would later complicate the talks on the future of the island.

Through the London-Zürich Treaty, the UK (which retained its military bases, representing 3% of Cypriot territory), as well as Turkey and Greece, became the “guarantor powers” of the constitutional settlement. A treaty of guarantee gave them, in particular, the right to (militarily) take action under certain conditions to re-establish constitutional order if violated. Some authors have qualified this situation as a “false independence,” as Cyprus’ sovereignty was subject to external oversight and effective supervision, which Greek Cypriots “regarded as a bitter defeat.”<sup>32</sup>

In 1960, the composition of the Cypriot population was the following: 77% Greek Orthodox, 18.3% Muslim Turks, and 4.7% of Christian communities (Maronites, Armenians and Latins). The Constitution guaranteed the Turkish Cypriot minority considerable political influence, with 30% of the jobs in the civil service and 40% in the army. If these numbers reflected a certain reality since the Ottoman rule and sought to compensate for the predominance of Greek Cypriots in the private sector, they were perceived at the time of independence as disproportionate power

31 Stavros Tombazos, “Chypre et ses nationalismes,” *Contretemps*, n°7, May 2003, pp. 144-157.

32 James Ker-Lindsay, *The Cyprus Problem*, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

given to the Turkish Cypriot community. The executive power had to be shared between the president (Greek Cypriot) and vice-president (Turkish Cypriot), both elected by their respective communities. However, the appointment of ministers and senior officials, the promulgation of laws and decisions of the Council of Ministers had to be jointly agreed upon. The Turkish Cypriot community was, therefore, granted veto right in parliamentary and presidential decisions. The drafters of the Constitution made its revision almost impossible by accepting amendments based solely on a two-thirds majority in each community.

Through the London-Zürich Treaty, the UK, as well as Turkey and Greece, became the “guarantor powers” of the constitutional settlement.

The provisions of the 1960 Constitution created a complex political system which further aggravated division between the two communities, but that also failed to work because of a lack of goodwill.<sup>33</sup> It continued the political arrangements from the Ottoman and British periods based on ethnic representation, creating ethnic compartments and preventing any ideological or transversal alliances: “a constitution where ethnic considerations dominate to the detriment of national unity and constitutional balance.”<sup>34</sup> Moreover, this complex governmental structure could not work efficiently and effectively as “there simply was not the trust and willingness to cooperate that were necessary for the new institutions to succeed.”<sup>35</sup> During the first debate in the Security Council over the Cyprus question on 27 December 1963, the permanent representative of the RoC spoke of “the effect of the divisive provisions of the Constitution,” a “Constitution which was agreed upon hurriedly in an atmosphere of friction, at a time of friction and strife and killings on both sides, provides for a division of the towns.”<sup>36</sup> Others, including Turkish Cypriots, perceived the constitution “as a transitional step towards a more functional state” and considered the majority of Greek Cypriots as overly focused on “functionality”.<sup>37</sup> Greek Cypriots perceived the provisions of the Constitution as unfair and sought all opportunities to later change what had been agreed upon. For the Turkish Cypriot community and the Turks, “without these safeguards and without the basic articles of the Constitution the independence of Cyprus would have been unthinkable.”<sup>38</sup>

To summarise, Cyprus became a “reluctant republic,” born in the midst of inter-communal violence and against the real wishes of the Cypriots. Cyprus was perhaps the only postcolonial country “forced” into independence, representing a compromise between the Greek Cypriot

33 In 1965, the first UN mediator on Cyprus, Dr Galo Plaza, described the 1960 Constitution as “a constitutional oddity”. Report to the UN Secretary-General, March 1965, para. 163.

34 Philippe Achilleas, *Chypre – L’UNFICYP*, Paris: Montchrestien, CEDIN-Paris I, 2000, p. 23.

35 James Ker-Lindsay, *The Cyprus Problem, op. cit.*, p. 30.

36 S/PV.1085, 27 December 1963, para. 20 and 25.

37 Interview, researcher, e-meeting, 21 July 2021.

38 See S/PV.1095, 18 February 1964, para. 192.

demand for union with Greece and the Turkish Cypriot counter-demand for partition between the two communities.<sup>39</sup>

Cyprus became a “reluctant republic,” born in the midst of inter-communal violence and against the real wishes of the Cypriots.

Between 1960 and 1963, relations between the two communities slowly deteriorated, as “successive constitutional crises eventually spilled over into inter-communal fighting.”<sup>40</sup> Within three years, the institutional blockage was obvious. Without consulting the Turkish Cypriots, which they perceived as “an offensive move”,<sup>41</sup> President Makarios suggested amendments to the 1960 Constitution. His “Thirteen Points” of 30 November 1963 included, in particular, the abolition of the Turkish Cypriot Vice-President’s veto right and a division of government posts according to the demographic balance. These new provisions were not about an equal partnership but a balance safeguarding minority rights in a unitary state dominated by the Greek Cypriot majority. Makarios’ initiative led to widespread intercommunal fighting, as the Turkish Cypriot Vice-President Dr Fazıl Küçük, Turkish Cypriot ministers, parliamentarians, and civil servants were pushed out of the government, and the bicomunal RoC effectively ceased to exist. As the Turkish Cypriots established the “Provisional Turkish Cypriot Administration”, the co-existence of separate and parallel Greek and Turkish Cypriot institutions of governance were later cemented by the division of the island in 1974.<sup>42</sup> Then, both communities, influenced by their respective extremists, began to prepare for open conflict.

### 3.1.3. 1964 to 1974: The Impossible Co-existence, from Inter-ethnic Violence to a Turkish Intervention

The two communities never disarmed, despite the provisions of the London–Zürich Treaty, and their paramilitary groups were supported by Greece and Turkey. Each community prepared a plan to act in case the other launched an attack. The death of two Turkish Cypriots on the evening of 21 December 1963 during a (Greek) police patrol in the Turkish quarter of Nicosia triggered violence in the old town of Nicosia, in both the Turkish and Greek quarters. The “bloody Christmas” in December and its aftermath led to the deaths of 364 Turkish Cypriots and 174 Greek Cypriots (209 Turkish Cypriots and 41 Greek Cypriots were also reported missing). A contingent of Turkish soldiers left its base to protect the Turkish Cypriots in Nicosia but

39 Muzaffer Ercan Yılmaz, “Analyzing and Resolving the Cyprus Conflict,” *Journal of Cyprus Studies*, 2010, n°39, p. 82.

40 *Ibid*, p. 83.

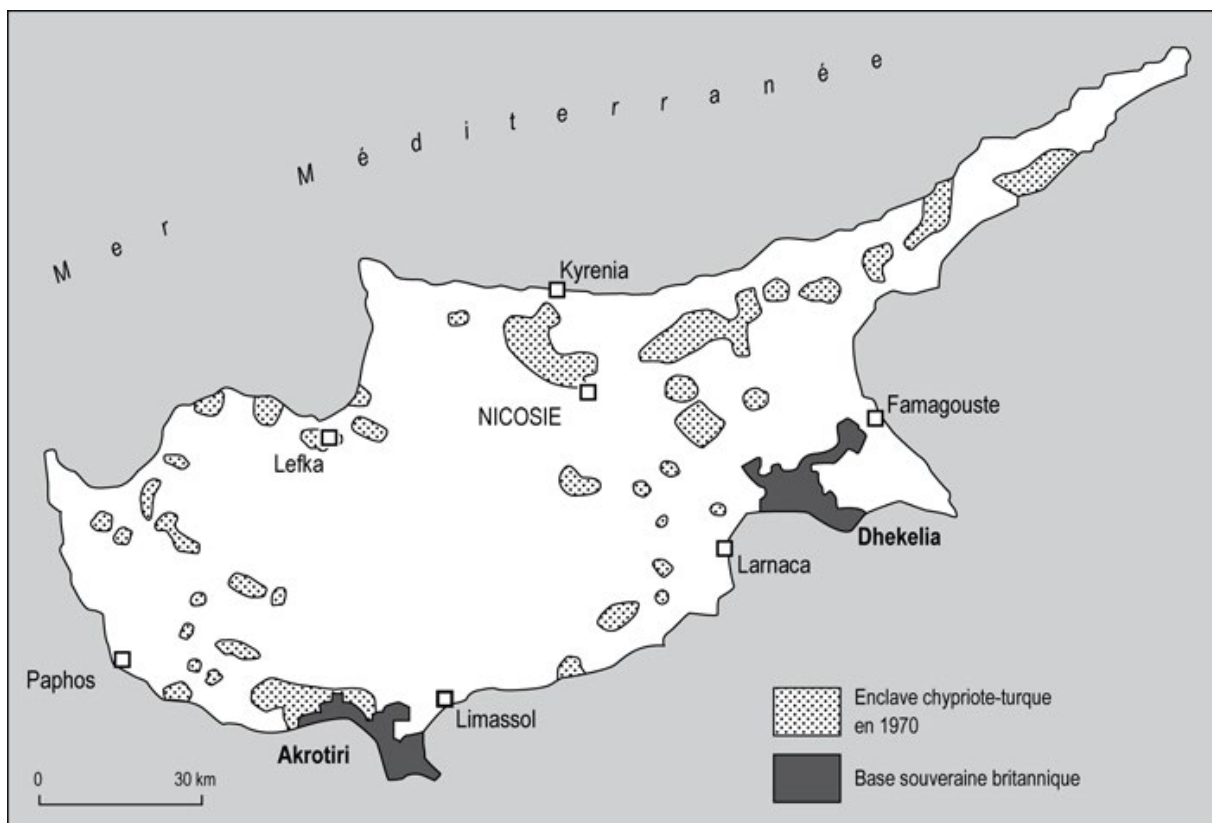
41 Interview, scholar, e-meeting, 04 August 2021.

42 For a thorough account of Cyprus’ political system, see Hubert Faustmann and James Ker-Lindsay, *The Government and Politics of Cyprus*, 2008, Oxford: Peter Lang, p. 13.



without getting involved in the fighting. In the Security Council in New York, the permanent representative of Turkey to the UN accused the Greek Cypriots of “the massacre and annihilation of the Turkish community of the island,” having launched “a campaign which lasted more than two years and which was designed to belittle the rights of the Turkish community in Cyprus, to violate them and render them ineffective.”<sup>43</sup> Discussions were led under the aegis of the Commander of the British forces on the island, and a ceasefire was signed on 30 December 1963. The British army was requested to intervene where necessary, in particular in a neutral zone created along the ceasefire line in Nicosia.<sup>44</sup> The separation consolidated itself also in the form of about 45 enclaves of Turkish Cypriots, including all major towns for a population of about 100,000 men and women (see map 1). During these 1963-64 events, 25,000 Turkish Cypriots were displaced from their homes, as well as 1,700 Greek Cypriots and Armenians.

**Map 1. The Turkish Cypriot enclaves in 1964-1974**



Source: André-Louis Sanguin, “Nettoyage ethnique, partition et réunification à Chypre,” *Revue géographique de l’Est*, 2005, 45(1), para. 8.

The UK did not want to maintain the permanent contingent of 2,500 soldiers on the island outside its sovereign bases. The Joint Truce Force it created with Greek and Turkish contingents

43 S/PV.1085, 27 December 1963, para. 36.

44 UN, *The Blue Helmets: A Review of United Nations Peace-keeping*, 1986, New York: Department of Public Information, p. 263.

under the 1960 Treaty of Guarantee left Britain to act on its own.<sup>45</sup> The UK first looked to NATO (an option rejected by the Greek Cypriots, who felt it would favour Turkey) and then turned to the UN to set up an international force to help it maintain peace and security (see section 3.5). Resolution 186 (4 March 1964), which created UNFICYP, confirmed who would be the interlocutors of the Security Council for a solution in Cyprus:

- Resolution 186 acknowledged “the positions taken by the parties in relation to the treaties signed at Nicosia on 16 August 1960” by referring to them. As such, it recognised the system of Guarantors, in particular, but with a caveat that contradicts it when referring to Article 2 para. 4 of the UN Charter, which invites Member States to “refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State.”
- The resolution referred to “the sovereign Republic of Cyprus” (as the UN recognises States but not governments), “ask[ed] the Government of Cyprus to take all additional measures necessary to stop violence and bloodshed in Cyprus,” even though the government could not function properly after Turkish ministers resigned (in December 1963), but which still theoretically had a Turkish Cypriot as vice-president. UNFICYP was then established “with the consent” of a Government of Cyprus, from which the Turkish Cypriot ministers were absent. These decisions have been interpreted as recognising the Greek Cypriot government as a legitimate one, thus rejecting the Turkish Cypriot argument about its illegality.<sup>46</sup>

During Security Council debates between 17 February and 13 March 1964, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the RoC, Spyros Kyprianou, presented the views of his country (i.e. the Greek Cypriot majority), while the views of the Turkish Cypriot community were conveyed by Turkey.<sup>47</sup> This is something that the Turkish Cypriot community has viewed as a flaw in the work of the UN, as “having done the wrong diagnosis from the beginning.”<sup>48</sup> For them, having a purely Greek Cypriot government as a unique interlocutor constitutes “a violation of the equilibrium achieved by the 1960 Constitution” that provided for political equality between the two communities on the island,<sup>49</sup> and is like having “a government trying to fly with one wing.”<sup>50</sup> The Turkish Cypriots have been absent from the government since 1964, and 15 out of the 24 Turkish Cypriot seats in the House of Representatives have thus remained vacant.<sup>51</sup>

45 Incidentally, this Force was Britain’s first attempt at peacekeeping. Evidence suggests that its Force Commander, General Peter Young, tried to adopt the principles put in place by the UN Emergency Force in the Sinai (UNEF). For more details on this, see James Ker-Lindsay, *Britain and the Cyprus Crisis (1963–1964)*, 2004, Mannheim: Harrassowitz, 143 pages.

46 One interlocutor confirmed that “the UN recognized one side as a legitimate state and the other as a community. That has haunted us throughout the years.” Interview, former UN senior official, e-meeting, 03 February 2021.

47 See S/PV.1095, 18 February 1964.

48 Interview, TRNC official, e-meeting, 30 June 2021.

49 Interview with Ergün Olgun, Turkish Cypriot negotiator, e-meeting, Lefkoşa, 14 February 2021.

50 Interview, TRNC official, e-meeting, Lefkoşa, 10 December 2020.

51 The initial ratio was 35 Greek Cypriot seats and 15 Turkish Cypriot seats. After an amendment took place, it became 56-24.

UNFICYP declared itself operational on 27 March 1964 and slowly replaced the British soldiers. In May–June 1964, Greece decided to send around 5,000 troops to reinforce the “Cypriot National Guard” created in February. At this point, the Turkish forces numbered around 10,000. The overall security situation was hard to stabilise. Between March 1964 and November 1967, Turkish Cypriots were restricted to their enclaves without freedom of movement, subjected to Greek Cypriot police controls at checkpoints. The intercommunal clashes diminished between 1964 and 1974 with two exceptions: the battle of Tillyria (August 1964) and the incident in the Turkish enclave of Kophinou (November 1967).<sup>52</sup> With the latter incident (which saw the deployment of a Greek battalion led by Grivas), Turkey threatened an invasion only prevented by the shuttle diplomacy of the US Undersecretary of State Cyrus Vance. Overall, “the UN’s primary role was to avoid bloodshed and prevent conflict between the two communities,” as acknowledged by a former Turkish Cypriot negotiator, which has been, in fact, the case throughout the Mission’s history.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, through their interposition, blue helmets prevented a number of incidents from escalating, although they could not protect the population throughout the territory. The UN presence “certainly prevented a civil war from happening,”<sup>54</sup> even though some experts consider that at times its passivity was not properly investigated.<sup>55</sup> Ten years of cold war between the communities followed until the attempted coup in July 1974.

Overall, “the UN’s primary role was to avoid bloodshed and prevent conflict between the two communities,” as acknowledged by a former Turkish Cypriot negotiator, which has been, in fact, the case throughout the Mission’s history.

The coup in Athens on 21 April 1967 changed the balance of force with Turkey and diplomatically isolated Greece. It increased the division between Cyprus and Greece, between a “leftist” and a “right-wing” government, up to the point that the colonels in Athens wished for the physical elimination of Makarios, who did not favour *Enosis* anymore<sup>56</sup> and was accused of sheltering the Greek dictatorship’s opponents. Makarios was, however, supported by the vast majority of Greek Cypriots, having won the 1968 presidential elections by 96.26% of the votes. On 15 July 1974, the national guard and militia supported by the Greek military junta launched Operation Aphroditis and bombed Nicosia’s presidential palace to overthrow Makarios. A new “president”, Nikos Sampson, took the presidential oath on the same day. Makarios managed to escape to Paphos, where he was given sanctuary at the local UNFICYP headquarters until he was flown out of Cyprus from Akrotiri. Finally, the Cypriots felt betrayed by their “Hellenic brothers”

52 See the details about the “Kophinou crisis” at <https://unficyp.unmissions.org/1967-crisis>.

53 Interview, e-meeting, Lefkoşa, 02 December 2020.

54 Interview, e-meeting, Brussels, 15 February 2021.

55 Interview, researcher, Nicosia, 25 June 2021.

56 Initially, Makarios was convinced that *Enosis* was not going to be achieved militarily. Makarios favoured a non-alignment policy, and was therefore perceived by the US as too close to Moscow.

from Greece, with a heavy silence of Washington<sup>57</sup> and London. The Greek colonels seemed to have been naïve enough to think that they could have changed the situation in Cyprus without provoking a Turkish reaction.

On 20 July 1974, around 7,000 Turkish soldiers landed near the port of Kyrenia to protect the interests of the Turkish community and “prevent Greece from dominating this region”<sup>58</sup>. Operation Attila, code-named after General Attila Sav, who commanded the intervening force, had begun.<sup>59</sup> The “Turkish Guarantor” occupied the region around Kyrenia in two days, despite some resistance from the National Guard. The Security Council met on 20 July and passed Resolution 353, which imposed a ceasefire and urged the withdrawal of all foreign militaries. Greece, Turkey, and the UK were called upon to enter negotiations on the restoration of peace and constitutional government in Cyprus, but the talks held in Geneva had no results. The Geneva Declaration simply took account of the Turkish occupation, set no end date for it, and recognised the existence of two separate administrations in Cyprus. In Greece, the military junta collapsed in the confusion and simultaneously brought down the regime in Nicosia. 50,000 Turkish Cypriots moved north, and 160,000 Greek Cypriots moved to the south of the island. 39% of the total population of Greek Cypriots and 50% of the Turkish Cypriot population thus became “refugees.”<sup>60</sup>

After initially taking control of 5% of the territory, the Turkish army, profiting from a poorly organised defence by the Greek Cypriots, took control of Famagusta and Morphou. As James Ker-Lindsay summarised, “while the first invasion [in response to the Greek military coup] was legitimate, the second invasion was wholly contrary to international law,” as it was clearly “designed to pave the way for a radically different settlement” rather than returning to the situation created in 1960.<sup>61</sup> According to French scholars, Turkey could nevertheless defend its second offensive as attacks against Turkish Cypriot civilians continued, despite the nominal restoration of the legitimate government.<sup>62</sup> Ankara unilaterally declared a ceasefire on 16 August along the 35th parallel, which became the line of division of the island, creating a “*de facto tak-sim*,”<sup>63</sup> and led to 18% of the population (the Turkish Cypriots) living on 36% of the island. The

57 These events took place at the height of the Watergate scandal in Washington. In November 1999, Clinton publicly expressed his regret for US support to the Greek junta of 1967.

58 Gilles Bertrand, *Le conflit helléno-turc*, *op. cit.*, para. 22.

59 Jean-François Drevet, “Chypre entre partition et réunification,” *Politique étrangère*, 2010/4 (Winter), pp. 767-781.

60 The displaced persons in Cyprus have been called “refugees”, even if strictly speaking a refugee is someone who has crossed an international border.

61 James Ker-Lindsay, *The Cyprus Problem*, *op. cit.*, p. 44. For Andreas Theophanous and Odysseas Christou, “had Turkey stopped its military operations on July 23, 1974, and had contributed to the reestablishment of the constitutional order based on the 1960 constitution very few people would have questioned its stated reasons for ‘intervening’” (“The Cyprus Question and the Role of the UN: An Overall Assessment,” *Journal of Modern Hellenism*, n°30, p. 78).

62 Etienne Copeaux, Claire Mauss-Copeaux, *Taksim ! Chypre divisée*, 2005, Lyon: éditions Ædelsa, 235 pages.

63 Rebecca Bryant and Mete Hatay explained that “over the first decade of division, the ‘border’ with the island’s south gradually went from relatively porous to impassible. By the 1980s, crossing from south to north would require permissions that often were not granted.” *Sovereignty Suspended – Building the So-called State*, 2020, Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, p. 72.

leader of the House of Representatives, Glafcos Clerides, became the interim President before the return of Makarios in December 1974.<sup>64</sup>

### 3.1.4. 1974–2000: The Division of the Island and the Isolation of the North

The Turkish military intervention of July 1974 created a *fait accompli* along a ceasefire line. That division and the occupation made “Northern Cyprus” unrecognised and unrecognisable by any member state of the “international community,” except Turkey. On 13 February 1975, a self-proclaimed “Federated Turkish State” was proclaimed by Rauf Denктаş. It became, on 15 November 1983, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), choosing to become a separate “state” over a guerrilla movement that could have fought for a return to the 1960 situation. With Resolution 541 (18 November 1983), the Security Council “consider[ed]” this declaration “as legally invalid and call[ed] for its withdrawal,” and “call[ed] upon all States not to recognize any Cypriot State other than the Republic of Cyprus.” As a result, the Turkish Cypriots became secessionists in the eyes of the “international community,” and have been treated as such thereafter, even if the Council “affirmed that this decision does not prejudge the final political settlement of the problem of Cyprus” (Resolution 367, 12 March 1975). There was no other option for the UN as an organisation of recognised sovereign states. Thereafter, this unrecognised “state” became a “pseudo-republic” for the RoC, which in turn was described as an unrecognised “*rum* authority”<sup>65</sup> and referred to as the “Greek Cypriot Administration” by Turkey. According to a researcher, the TRNC’s declaration of independence was agreed between the Turkish military junta and Rauf Denктаş a few days before Turgut Özal became prime minister and was aiming at reopening negotiations on Cyprus, in a gesture of openness towards the European Community: “Denктаş’ aim was to push the Greek Cypriots to intransigence to prevent the resumption of negotiations.”<sup>66</sup> In the end, Turkey “won a battle but lost the peace”, as a former UN staff member said.<sup>67</sup>

Cyprus then slowly settled itself in a complete separation and *de facto* partition between a legally and internationally recognised country (except for Turkey), the RoC, and an illegal entity (“the north” or “Northern Cyprus,” called “occupied areas” by the RoC), a breakaway entity that could only communicate with Turkey, having adopted its currency, telephone and postal codes, and where “on-the-ground ‘dehellenization’ was also a *de facto* ‘Turkification’.”<sup>68</sup> The names of the towns and of their streets were changed; some Greek Orthodox churches were converted into mosques. As the 1960 Constitution still governed the RoC (with a few amendments), a new

64 Makarios died in August 1977 from a heart attack a few days before his 64th birthday, and was buried in the Kykkos Monastery in the Troodos mountains, where it all started for him.

65 In Turkish, the name or the description *rum* signifies Orthodox believers speaking Greek, who are not citizens of Greece.

66 Interview, researcher, e-meeting 19 August 2021.

67 Quoted by Jean-François Drevet, *Chypre entre l’Europe et la Turquie*, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

68 Rebecca Bryant, Mete Hatay, *Sovereignty Suspended*, *op. cit.*, p. 64.



Constitution was adopted in the north by a referendum organised in May 1985. The objective was to establish a “state” that the Turkish Cypriot “authorities” “wanted to be a strong component of a federal state.”<sup>69</sup> However, both parts of Cyprus developed separately from each other – economically, politically and culturally – and neither community really existed for the other for a long time.

Both parts of Cyprus developed separately from each other – economically, politically and culturally – and neither community really existed for the other for a long time.

The shock of the Turkish intervention was overcome, and the Greek Cypriot economy resumed the progression started since independence, with an average growth of 4% to 5% per annum. The growth in the north was not as dynamic as in the south, and the economic disparity between the two parts of the island increased as a consequence of the international isolation and embargoes imposed on the Turkish Cypriot community. As Jean-François Drevet noted, “the prosperity of the south as well as the slump of the north contributed to the political blockage. By making the Greek Cypriots strong enough not to have to recognise the *fait accompli* and the Turkish Cypriots too weak to withstand the shock of reunification, economic developments put them both in a position to make demands unacceptable to each other.”<sup>70</sup>

By the end of the 1980s, the idea of applying to the EU provided the island with a new deal, and created some hope in finding a solution to the reunification of the island. The formal application was made in 1990, and formal negotiations started in 1998, after the 1995 compromise (the opening of these negotiations in exchange for the customs union with Turkey).<sup>71</sup> In 1995, 79% of Greek Cypriots were in favour of joining the EU.<sup>72</sup> Rauf Denktaş considered this process in contradiction to the provisions of the 1960 Constitution and saw it as an interference in Cypriot internal affairs. He refused the proposal of the RoC to have Turkish Cypriot representatives in the Cypriot delegation that negotiated the membership. Nevertheless, in 1999, 75% of the public in Northern Cyprus was in favour of EU membership.<sup>73</sup>

69 *Ibid*, p. 132.

70 Jean-François Drevet, *Chypre en Europe, op. cit.*, pp. 243-244.

71 On this whole process, see Nathalie Tocci, *EU Accession Dynamics and Conflict Resolution: Catalyzing Peace or Consolidating Partition in Cyprus?* 2004, Burlington: Ashgate, 205 pages.

72 *Ibid*, p. 261.

73 *Ibid*, pp. 263-264.



### 3.1.5. 2000-2004: A Reunification Fallen Short

The prospects of the EU membership gave a new dynamic toward resolving the Cyprus problem, especially after the election of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan at the helm of Turkey, who announced that “his overarching goal was to get Turkey into the EU: he didn’t know much about the Cyprus problem and saw it as an obstacle to that goal.”<sup>74</sup> That same month, in November 2002, the UN Secretariat began drafting “The Comprehensive Settlement of the Cyprus Problem” or “Annan Plan.” Five versions were drafted, the fifth version reaching 10,000 pages, which was changed until the day before the referendum after a negotiation that has been “the most serious efforts ever led by the two leaders,”<sup>75</sup> and “the closest the international community came to reaching a settlement.”<sup>76</sup> The hope was to reach a deal by 1 May 2004 when Cyprus would be formally invited to join the EU: the “UN’s efforts were in a race to complete the process of negotiations before the process of EU enlargement.”<sup>77</sup> But despite the time pressure and leverage, the two leaders remained overall opposed to the Annan Plan.<sup>78</sup> In January 2003, a third of the population in the North conducted demonstrations in favour of ending its isolation and Turkey’s interferences, but Rauf Denktaş remained intransigent and took any opportunity to delay the process.<sup>79</sup> In the South, “the Annan Plan was sold as a pro-Turkey solution, and a number of Greek Cypriots were made to believe that the UN then didn’t act in a neutral way.”<sup>80</sup>

On 23 April 2003, the “authorities” of Northern Cyprus unexpectedly opened the first crossing point across the Green Line at Ledra Palace Hotel in Nicosia, a few days after the RoC signed the treaty of accession to the EU in Athens. This decision, presented as a “confidence-building measure,” was the only change to the status quo that had taken place along the buffer zone since 1974 and ended the 30-year isolation of the Turkish Cypriots. It was also for the Turkish Cypriot “authorities” an economic choice, as their economy was collapsing. Over ten days, 200,000 people crossed from one side to the other without incident. Those who were curious enough to cross the Green Line once seldom did so a second time. Only half of the Cypriots living in the south have visited the north since 2003. This opening up of the “border” near the Ledra Palace was the first of a series of eight more crossing points opened between 2003 and 2011 (see the list on map 2). In 2010, UNFICYP still recorded more than 750,000 crossings through the buffer zone, of which approximately 200,000 occurred at the Ledra Street/Lokmaçı crossing point.

74 Interview, former UN Special adviser, e-meeting, 03 February 2021.

75 Interview, UN staff, e-meeting, Nicosia, 17 December 2020.

76 James Ker-Lindsay (ed.), *Resolving Cyprus*, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

77 Interview, former UN Special adviser, e-meeting, 03 February 2021. However, the Helsinki European Council Summit in December 1999 stated that “if no [political] settlement has been reached by the completion of accession negotiations, the Council’s decision on accession will be made without the above being a precondition.” See Point 9(b) of the presidency conclusions at [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/hel1\\_en.htm](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/hel1_en.htm).

78 For a detailed account of the talks during this period, see the chapter “The chest master: Alvaro de Soto in Cyprus” in Harriet Martin, *Kings of Peace Pawns of War: The Untold Story of Peacemaking*, 2006, New York: Continuum, pp. 29-64.

79 James Ker-Lindsay, *The Cyprus Problem*, *op. cit.*, pp. 60-61. Interview, former UN Special adviser, e-meeting, 03 February 2021.

80 Interview, researcher, e-meeting, 15 April 2020. Among other reports, the Secretary-General’s report on his Mission of Good Offices of 28 May 2004 (S/2004/437) described the public misinformation campaign on the Greek Cypriot side, para. 40, 71 and 84.



**Table 1. Results of the 24 April 2004 referendum on the future of the island**

%	Votes cast	Valid votes	Did not vote	Yes	No
South	89.25	86.15	10.74	24.16	75.83
North	84.35	83.27	15.64	64.91	35.08

Source: Claire Palley, *An International Relations Debacle: The UN Secretary-General's Mission of Good Offices in Cyprus (1999–2004)*, 2005, Oxford: Hart Publishing, p. 217.

75.83% of the Greek Cypriot population rejected the plan, while 64.91% of the Turkish Cypriot population approved it (see detailed results in table 1). The “no” vote on the Greek Cypriot side came largely from the youth, those living far from the Green Line, and those who had not lived through the events of 30 years ago. In the north, youths mainly voted for the Annan Plan, as they saw in it the end of the “self-isolation” inflicted on them by their authorities since 1974. On the Greek Cypriot side, “the way the Annan Plan was presented was confusing and allowed opponents to convince [them] it was not in their interests.”<sup>83</sup> Moreover, it seemed that people did not have a clear idea of what a “United Republic of Cyprus” would be like, and “those who had read the draft of Constitution presented by the UN thought that this new republic would not work, just like the one created by the 1960 Constitution.”<sup>84</sup> Kofi Annan was the last Secretary-General to put his name on a proposal concerning Cyprus. None of his successors displayed significant interest in the Cyprus problem.

As summarised by a researcher: “With Denktaş, the Turkish Cypriots were always the ones saying no; after his departure and the failure of the referendum, that role was taken by the Greek Cypriots”.<sup>85</sup> Other interlocutors added that “the party who said ‘no’ in 2004 was able to continue as nothing had happened,” and “life hasn’t changed much in the South since then”.<sup>86</sup> The fact is that the affiliation and affinities of the two leaders never really aligned (see table 2) or not for long enough (an example of this is the tandem Talat-Christofias in 2008–2010) to create an atmosphere of trust conducive to reaching a settlement. Each time, the newly elected leader joining negotiations was starting all over again. As a result, the UN mediation in Cyprus “has often been hostage to local politics within each community, with the UN able to make progress when political moderates are ascendant, but not when hardliners are in place.”<sup>87</sup> Different

83 Interview, researcher, Athens, 15 November 2018.

84 Jean-François Drevet, *Chypre entre l’Europe et la Turquie*, *op. cit.*, p. 130. The full text of the Annan Plan can be found at [http://www.hri.org/docs/annan/Annan\\_Plan\\_Text.html](http://www.hri.org/docs/annan/Annan_Plan_Text.html).

85 Interview, researcher, e-meeting, 18 May 2020. As Jean-François Drevet explained, Denktaş blocked every single negotiation he was involved in, to the point that some considered that his true objective was: “no solution is a solution.” *Chypre entre l’Europe et la Turquie*, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

86 Interviews, policy-maker, e-meeting, 01 December 2020, and former UN staff, e-meeting, 03 February 2021.

87 John McGarry and Neophytos Loizides, “The UN in 21st Century Cyprus: Meditration, Mediation-Lite and Beyond,” *International Negotiation*, 2022 (forthcoming), 27(1).

talks on the future of the island took the shape of a series of missed opportunities to reach a settlement.

**Table 2. Political colours of leaders on the two sides of Cyprus**

Date	President of the Republic of Cyprus	Political Party	"President" RTCN	Political Party	Date
Since 28 Feb. 2013	Nikos Anastasiades	DISY (liberal-conservative)	Ersin Tatar	National Unity Party (UBP)	Since 23 Oct. 2020
			Mustafa Akıncı	Independent	23 Oct. 2020 30 Apr. 2015
28 Feb. 2013 28 Feb. 2008	Demetris Christofias	AKEL (communist political party)	Derviş Eroğlu	UBP	30 Apr. 2015 23 Apr. 2010
8 Feb. 2008 28 Feb. 2003	Tassos Papadopoulos	DIKO (nationalist, centrist political party)	Mehmet Ali Talat	Republican Turkish Party	23 Apr. 2010 24 Apr. 2005
28 Feb. 2003 28 Feb. 1993	Glaucos Clerides	DISY (liberal-conservative)	Rauf Denktaş	UBP	24 Apr. 2005 15 Nov. 1983
28 Feb. 1993 28 Feb. 1988	George Vassiliou	Independent, supported by AKEL			
28 Feb. 1988 3 Aug. 1977	Spyros Kyprianou	DIKO (nationalist, centrist political party)			
3 Aug. 1977 7 Dec. 1974	Archbishop Makarios III (restored)	Independent	Since 1983: Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) 1975-1983: Federated Turkish State 1967-1975: Turkish Cypriot Provisional Administration		
7 Dec. 1974 23 July 1974	Glaucos Clerides	Eniaion (right-wing political party)			
15-23 July 1974	Nikos Sampson (de facto president)				
15 July 1974 (deposed)-16 Aug. 1960	Archbishop Makarios III	Independent			
	More against reunification			More in favour of reunification	

Created by Alexandra Novosseloff.

As a result, the RoC was admitted as the only member of the EU that has a frozen conflict on its soil. The island of Cyprus was accepted into the EU as a whole. However, EU legislation is suspended in Northern Cyprus until a final solution to the Cyprus problem is reached, and Cyprus does not belong to the Schengen area. The EU and the rest of the “international community” lost the leverage needed to convince the Greek Cypriots to accept a solution. As a result, four rounds of negotiations failed again between 2008 and 2017 (see section 3.5.2).

## 3.2. The Nature of the Conflict

In 1963-1964, the Cyprus conflict was made up of intercommunal clashes and, therefore, considered an internal conflict, close to a civil war (but not on the same scale as the one in the Congo, a conflict that the Council had in mind when working on Cyprus as a counter-example to what should be done and with great reluctance to intervene in this internal strife). In its Resolution 186, the Security Council seems to consider that the conflict is caused by those who oppose a legitimate and sovereign government and who undertake a form of rebellion when they ask “the Government of Cyprus, which has the responsibility for the maintenance and restoration of law and order, to take all additional measures necessary to stop violence and bloodshed in Cyprus.” However, in the following operative paragraph, the Council also called “upon the communities in Cyprus and their leaders to act with the utmost restraint.” With this wording, the Council considered that the situation in Cyprus is an internal conflict with a breach in law and order, and that this conflict is an interethnic or identity-based one.<sup>88</sup> As described by James Ker-Lindsay, the Cypriot conflict is “a relatively straightforward dispute between two ethnic groups over power and geography,”<sup>89</sup> a dispute that was on the “verge of civil war” before the blue helmets arrived, as a number of our interlocutors described. The Security Council considered that the situation in Cyprus was not just internal strife, but indeed “likely to threaten international peace and security,” as it stated in the preambular paragraph of Resolution 186.

This conflict has an international dimension that, in a way, supersedes the internal one.

As the conflict was of a somewhat mixed nature, its protagonists were not identified in a clear-cut way. In fact, “there was no specific attempt on the part of the Security Council to identify in any formal sense the parties to the conflict.”<sup>90</sup> This was considered a sign that the conflict and its actors were more than just internal ones, and this is implied in the first operative paragraph of Resolution 186, which “calls upon all Member States to refrain from any action or threat

88 Gilles Bertrand, “Chypre: laboratoire d’expérimentation pour l’ONU?” *Cahiers balkaniques*, 2020, n°46, pp. 183-207.

89 James Ker-Lindsay, *The Cyprus Problem*, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

90 Esref Aksu, “The UN in the Cyprus conflict: UNFICYP,” in *The United Nations, Intra-state Peacekeeping and Normative Change*, 2003, UK: Manchester University Press, p. 136.



of action likely to worsen the situation in the sovereign Republic of Cyprus, or to endanger international peace.” This conflict has an international dimension that, in a way, supersedes the internal one. By repeatedly calling, in most of its resolutions, for “the respect of the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and non-alignment of the Republic of Cyprus,” the Council underlines the external threat that may fuel the conflict that was then also considered a proxy war between Greece and Turkey.

The 1974 Turkish intervention not only confirmed the international dimension of the conflict, but also changed the nature of the conflict in Cyprus in another way. It created a separation between the two communities that froze the situation. The conflict was then given many names: middle-class conflict, comfortable conflict, invisible conflict, civilised conflict, a country without a war, “a post-violent conflict or a ‘cold peace’ (with hostility, but no violence)”<sup>91</sup> rooted in past mutual traumas.<sup>92</sup> These terms summarise the subtype of international conflict known as a “frozen conflict,” which is defined “as a protracted, post-war conflict process, characterized by the absence of stable peace between the opposing sides,” a “situation in which war ended yet stable peace did not materialize.” A frozen conflict is characterised by four main criteria: it is an (a) international and (b) protracted post-war, has (c) core unresolved issues, and (d) lacks stable peace. In addition, a frozen conflict “also remains highly salient in the domestic discourses of both policy makers and the general population.”<sup>93</sup> Indeed, as Constantinos Adamides and Michalis Kontos describe, the Cypriot case “religiously sustains all the characteristics that define such conflicts; characteristics such as the seemingly irreconcilable and zero-sum positions and the perceived existentiality of the issues, the fact that the conflict is ‘central’ to the society – meaning that elite, media and public are constantly pre-occupied with it – and, more importantly, the ‘need’ of key actors and large parts of the society to see the problem remain unresolved.”<sup>94</sup>

The conflict does not have victims anymore, it has become a “problem,” the “Cyprus problem,” a “byword for an intractable international conflict.”

As the conflict does not have victims anymore, it has become a “problem,” the “Cyprus problem,” a “byword for an intractable international conflict,” as also described by James Ker-Lindsay. It is often said that the Cyprus issue entails a conflict between 50,000 Turkish soldiers in the North and 50,000 Greek Cypriot lawyers in the South. This old joke depicts the transition of

91 Constantinos Adamides and Costas M. Constantinou, “Comfortable Conflict and (Il)liberal Peace in Cyprus,” in Oliver P. Richmond and Audra Mitchell (eds.), *Hybrid Forms of Peace: From Everyday Agency to Post-Liberalism*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, pp. 242-259.

92 Muzaffer Ercan Yılmaz, “Analyzing and Resolving the Cyprus Conflict,” *loc. cit.*, p. 103.

93 Michal Smetana and Jan Ludvik, “Between war and peace: A dynamic reconceptualization of ‘frozen conflicts,’” *Asia Europe Journal*, March 2019.

94 Constantinos Adamides and Michalis Kontos, “Re-engaging the United Nations? Third Parties and the Cyprus Conflict,” in Michális Michael and Vural Yucel (eds.), *Cyprus Roadmap for Peace: A Critical Interrogation of the Conflict*, Northampton MA: Edward Elgar Publishing (forthcoming), p. 5.

the conflict from warfare to ‘lawfare’, and the fact that this conflict has been one of the most judicialised disputes in the world,<sup>95</sup> a way of handling things that “Turkish Cypriots have also begun to utilise in their struggle to get back at Greek Cypriots since 2004.”<sup>96</sup>



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### 3.3. The Five Actors of the Conflict

Until British colonial times, the inhabitants of the island were mostly identified as Christians (Orthodox) or Muslims. At the beginning of the 20th century, both communities tended “to identify themselves with the larger Greek and Turkish nations,” which ultimately “had the impact of perpetuating separate self-views and inhibiting any disposition to Cypriot national identity”.<sup>97</sup> Until 1974, the communities referred to each other as Greeks or Turks. They were the Greeks in Cyprus and the Turks in Cyprus. After 1974, these names became adjectives: these communities became the Greek Cypriots and the Turkish Cypriots. After independence, Greek Cypriots progressively abandoned the idea of *Enosis* and Turkish Cypriots, due to their undefined status, never abandoned the idea of *Taksim*. Over the years, as is the case in many protracted conflicts, the two sides have had their own development: “each society has been trying to do the best it can but it is hard to see where they can meet.”<sup>98</sup>

95 Nikos Skoutaris, “A Constitutional Law Perspective,” in James Ker-Lindsay (ed.), *Resolving Cyprus, op. cit.*, p. 235.

96 Interview, researcher, Nicosia, 28 June 2021.

97 Muzaffer Ercan Yılmaz, “Analyzing and Resolving the Cyprus Conflict,” *loc. cit.*, p. 79.

98 Interview, Greek Cypriot researcher, Nicosia, 16 June 2021.

**Table 3. Territories and populations**

	Area		Population	
	km2	%	1960 *	2021 **
Northern Cyprus	3,254	35.2	103,822 Turkish Cypriots	Around 150,000 Turkish Cypriots out of 400,000 inhabitants, including 80,000 foreign university students
Republic of Cyprus (South)	5,497	59.4	441,568 Greek Cypriots (78%)	840,407 inhabitants of which 710,00 are RoC citizens, including naturalised citizens (estimated at 60,000)
Buffer Zone (UNFICYP)	246	2.7	-	Around 10,000 people
British Sovereign Bases	255	2.8	N/A	About 18,195 people (11,000 Cypriots and 7,195 UK nationals)

\* The numbers in 1960 concern two communities spread throughout the island. The estimated population of Cyprus in 1965 was 582,000, according to the UN World Population Prospects (1990).

\*\* The numbers in 2021 concern the population inhabiting the two different parts of the island.

Source: The last census in the South was organised in 2011. See [http://www.cyprus.gov.cy/portal/portal.nsf/AdvancedSearch\\_en?OpenForm&q=&p=1&w=&t=&s=population&L=E&E=&i=1&access=0&print=0&lang=en](http://www.cyprus.gov.cy/portal/portal.nsf/AdvancedSearch_en?OpenForm&q=&p=1&w=&t=&s=population&L=E&E=&i=1&access=0&print=0&lang=en). The head of the TRNC Statistics Department, Türel Öksüzoglu, calculated the 2019 population at 382,230. See <https://haberkibris.com/oksuzoglu-2019dakikkt-nufusu382-bin-230-1330-2021-01-06.html>

### 3.3.1. The Greek Cypriots: A Search for the Respect of Majority Rule and Independence

At the start of their uprisings against the British colonial power, the Greek Cypriots did not reach out to their Turkish neighbours for a common future, regarding them “as remains of foreign conquerors.”<sup>99</sup> The Greek Cypriots felt that the Turkish Cypriots had to obey the rule of the majority and agree with any form of government suggested in the end by them, or that they would have to leave, just as other minorities, whether Turkish or Greek, did elsewhere at the end of the Ottoman Empire. As explained by Niyazi Kizilyürek, Greek Cypriots considered their process of independence as the “self-determination of the Cypriot people in the Hellenic ethnic sense. They were not prepared and willing to tackle the problem from the aspect of a political nation that would secure the civil rights of its citizens both Greek and Turkish Cypriots.”<sup>100</sup>

99 Yiannis Papadakis, “Chronicle of a Failure Foretold?” in James Ker-Lindsay (ed.), *Resolving Cyprus*, op. cit., p. 223.

100 Niyazi Kizilyürek, “Modernity, Nationalism and the Perspectives of a Cypriot Union,” loc. cit., p. 220.

Jean-François Drevet qualified this attitude “as a major error”, considering the good relations between the two communities.<sup>101</sup> The Greeks were surprised when the TMT organised the first attacks in 1958. From the very beginning, “the Greek Cypriots have seen themselves as the ‘strong part’ of the island and don’t want to change that.”<sup>102</sup> A Greek Cypriot lawyer explained: “the prospect of sharing power with the Turkish Cypriots doesn’t [sit] well with the majority of the Greek Cypriots”, and “they have been running the show for so long.” He added: “They consider themselves as the rightful owner of the Cypriot state.”<sup>103</sup> Greek Cypriots would not be running their own affairs anymore in a federal state.<sup>104</sup>

Greek Cypriots see themselves as different from Greeks but part of the same Hellenic heritage and culture. They have their own Hellenic dialect (as the Turkish Cypriots speak a Turkish dialect). Under British colonial rule (as previously under Ottoman rule), the Greek Cypriots were predominant in trade and, more generally, in the private sector. The Orthodox Church, which has a strong role in Cypriot society, tends to be anti-Turkish and anti-solution.<sup>105</sup> Cyprus is a very patriarchal society where the politicians make the decisions, and people follow those decisions. These “political leaders ended up locked in their own narratives set up in the 1970s.”<sup>106</sup> However, some recent research shows there is more willingness to compromise among the general public than among politicians, for whom a compromise is always negative and suggests betrayal.<sup>107</sup>

Greek Cypriots mainly consider Turkish Cypriots as puppets in the hands of Turkey who have “overstayed their welcome by almost 500 years,” and are deeply anxious about the Turkish army stationed on the other side of the Green Line.<sup>108</sup> They “ignore the Turkish Cypriots as separate agents from Turkey,”<sup>109</sup> and fear that the Turkish Cypriots could be the “Trojan horses” of Turkey in a reunified Cyprus.<sup>110</sup> As a result, they also feel as though they are a minority in a region dominated by Turkey, which has been overall supported for economic and geostrategic reasons by Greek allies, the former colonial power, the British, and even by the Americans. Furthermore, “many Greek Cypriots remain deeply distrustful of Turkey and do not believe that it will be willing to uphold its side of any agreement.”<sup>111</sup> Entry into the EU has made the Greek Cypriots noticeably more secure, but they are still very suspicious of what the “great powers” or “the big hand” may force them to do one day when an agreement is made.<sup>112</sup>

101 Jean-François Drevet, *Chypre en Europe*, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

102 Interview, Greek Cypriot, e-meeting, Nicosia, 01 December 2020.

103 Interview, lawyer, e-meeting, Nicosia, 02 December 2020.

104 Interview, former UN staff, e-meeting, 16 March 2021.

105 Interview, e-meeting, 25 November 2020.

106 Interview, researcher, Nicosia, 14 June 2021.

107 See the work of Charis Psaltis from the University of Cyprus (with Daniela Donno and Omer Zarpli), “[Extended inter-group contact in frozen conflicts: Experimental evidence from Cyprus](#),” *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, June 2021, pp. 1-23.

108 Birol Yeşilada, “Quo Vadis Cyprus?” *loc. cit.*, p. 29.

109 Interview, researcher, e-meeting, 22 January 2021.

110 Interview, researcher, Nicosia, 26 June 2021.

111 James Ker-Lindsay, *The Cyprus Problem*, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

112 Expression heard many times in casual conversations on the island.

### 3.3.2. The Turkish Cypriots: A Search for Respect and Autonomy

The history of minorities in the first half of the 20th century indicated to Turkish Cypriots that the survival of their community would not go well with a “Greek power” at the helm of the country.<sup>113</sup> The Turkish Cypriots considered themselves first (before the independence) a minority with a different language and religion compared to the majority,<sup>114</sup> then as a community with certain advantages (between 1960 and 1974), and finally as a “nation” by proclaiming their own “state” over their “own” territory with the objective of controlling a federal state (even if partially) or even an independent state. They thought about a separation (*Taksim*) for a long time with the proclamation of a Turkish Cypriot Government, already present in a document of September 1963.<sup>115</sup> A researcher described the Turkish Cypriot search for separation as “a political objective of autonomy that gained the patronage of Turkey.”<sup>116</sup> They consider that in 1960, the Greek Cypriots hijacked the state on the island for the purpose of uniting the island with Greece and that they did not want to share sovereignty from the start. The Turkish Cypriots’ objective is to be as autonomous as possible, but increasingly they claim “the right to be a state.”<sup>117</sup> Since 1983, they also live “de facto lives,” “always on the threshold between acknowledgment and recognition, between certainty and uncertainty.”<sup>118</sup>

Turkish Cypriots do not want to be considered “a secessionist minority” by Greek Cypriots.<sup>119</sup> They want to be treated as equal citizens and “real partners” by their Southern neighbours. Turkish Cypriots want the principle of political equality,<sup>120</sup> embedded in the 1960 Constitution and in the context of the negotiations, to be respected. One interlocutor stated, “The Greek Cypriots act as if they were the sole owner of the island: where are we in their picture?”<sup>121</sup> They don’t want to find themselves “diluted” in a reunified state. Turkish Cypriots are seeking political recognition, detached from Turkey and fully part of the EU, one way or another. They do not want to live in an unrecognised state anymore. They see Turkey as the only power which supported them over the years and provided them with access to the rest of the world, but they do not like its domination: “The Turkish Cypriots don’t want to be governed by Turkey but they

113 According to Etienne Copeaux and Claire Mauss-Copeaux, there is among Turkish Cypriots “the fear of suffering the fate of the Muslim population of Crete, entirely expelled from the island between 1897 and 1923” (“*Que veulent les Chypriotes turcs?*” *Oltre-terre*, 2005/1, n°10, p. 466).

114 Even if, according to Gilles Bertrand, “the ‘Muslim community’ of Cyprus began to call itself ‘Turkish Cypriot’ in the 1930s, under the influence of Kemalist ideas” (*Le conflit helléno-turc*, *op. cit.*, para. 33).

115 Jean-François Drevet, *Chypre en Europe*, *op. cit.*, pp. 132-133. See also Niyazi Kizilyürek, “Modernity, Nationalism and the Perspectives of a Cypriot Union,” *loc. cit.*, pp. 221-224.

116 Interview, researcher, e-meeting, Paris, 18 January 2021.

117 Interview, TRNC official, e-meeting, Lefkoşa, 10 December 2020.

118 Rebecca Bryant and Mete Hatay, *Sovereignty Suspended*, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

119 Interview, TRNC official, e-meeting, Lefkoşa, 30 June 2021.

120 This political equality does not equate to arithmetical equality, but one which allows Turkish Cypriots effective participation in decision-making. In his latest report, the Secretary-General refers to “shared effective participation in the political and economic life of the island. S/2021/634, 9 July 2021, “Report of the Secretary-General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus,” para. 40.

121 Interview, former TRNC “negotiator,” e-meeting, Lefkoşa, 03 December 2020.



want to be protected. So, Turkey is both a big threat and a big support.”<sup>122</sup> Ultimately, they consider Turkish forces are *the* deterrent element on the island.

Under Ottoman rule, the Turks of Cyprus held jobs in the police and the administration. They are traditionally secular Kemalists with Alevi roots, even if Turkey has been extending its cultural and religious influence in the past few years.<sup>123</sup> Most feel they are Europeans, and many have a European RoC passport.<sup>124</sup> However, they think of themselves as “Europeans without rights,” as none of their representatives sit in the European Parliament (where two out of six Cypriot seats are in principle reserved for them but were never filled).<sup>125</sup> The Turkish Cypriots are no longer the only inhabitants of the north, however.

In 2011 (the year of the latest census), out of a total TRNC citizen population of 215,000 (of which 150,000 are Turkish Cypriots), 60,000 of them were born in Turkey or born in Cyprus to Turkish parents. Although called “settlers,” the Turkish citizens resettled during 1975–79 were an important part of the Turkish Cypriot state-building project (intended to ‘fill this place up’ and protect the principle of bizonality), and in contrast to later migrants, were given citizenship and land. They were also considered an important labour force needed to kick-start the local economy and build a “state.” Moreover, while one of the main aims of bringing persons from Turkey was to “Turkify” the island’s north, ironically, many of those resettled during this period were not ethnically Turks but rather Kurds, Arabs, and Greek-speaking people from the Black Sea region.<sup>126</sup> In addition to these citizens, there have been around 155,000 other residents at any given time (including around 80,000 foreign students), of which 105,000 were Turkish nationals.<sup>127</sup> Today “many of the children of the original settlers brought to the island are now approaching middle age and have children of their own who were born and raised on the island: Cyprus, not Turkey, is their home.”<sup>128</sup> Over the past 15 years, the migration issue has become increasingly important in Cyprus (see box 2 below). Over the years, the north has become a more diverse society (in people and in opinions).<sup>129</sup>

122 Interview, researcher, e-meeting, Famagusta, 17 December 2020.

123 See Birol Yeşilada, “Islam and the Turkish Cypriots,” *Social Compass*, 2009, 56(1), pp. 49–59.

124 According to Rebecca Bryant, “after the RoC became an EU member in 2004, reportedly more than 100,000 Turkish Cypriots acquired RoC identity cards, which allow them to travel freely within Europe. An estimated half of those individuals have also acquired EU passports.” “Living with Liminality: De Facto States on the Threshold of the Global,” *Brown Journal of World Affairs*, Spring/Summer 2014, 20(2), pp. 131–132.

125 In the 2019 European Parliament elections, Mr Niyazi Kizilyurek, a Turkish Cypriot, former professor of Turkish studies, was elected a Member of the European Parliament (MEP) after the leftist-socialist party AKEL in the south nominated him as a candidate. See [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/197415/NIYAZI\\_KIZILYUREK/home](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/197415/NIYAZI_KIZILYUREK/home). The Turkish Cypriots who wish to vote in the European elections have to do so in the south.

126 Helge Jensehaugen, “Filling the void’: Turkish settlement in Northern Cyprus (1974–1980),” *Settler Colonial Studies*, 2017, 7(3), pp. 354–371. See also the thorough analysis by Rebecca Bryant and Mete Hatay in their book *Sovereignty Suspended*, *op. cit.*, pp. 86–96.

127 See Mete Hatay, *Population and Politics in north Cyprus: An overview of the ethno-demography of north Cyprus in the light of the 2011 census*, 2017, PRIO Cyprus Centre and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Nicosia, p. 32.

128 James Ker-Lindsay, *The Cyprus Problem*, *op. cit.*, p. 87. See also Mathieu Petithomme, “Changements identitaires à Chypre du Nord: les Chypriotes turcs face à l’immigration turque,” *Critique internationale*, 2015/2, n°67, pp. 143–164.

129 Sertaç Sonan, Ebru Küçükşener, and Enis Porat, “Politics and Society in North Cyprus – A Survey Study,” *FES Report*, 2020, 44 pages.

## Box 2. Migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in Cyprus: An arrival at a dead end

20% of the population in Cyprus is of foreign origin. After being a country of emigration, Cyprus has become a country of immigration in the past decade. Prior to 2004, Cyprus' asylum system was underdeveloped, with only 454 persons having received refugee status. After the EU accession, the country experienced a sharp rise in the number of applications to almost 10,000 persons per year for the first few years, although Cyprus was not much affected by the 2015 "refugee crisis". However, from 2017 onwards, the number of asylum applications almost doubled each year, and 2019 was marked by an unprecedented number of asylum applications being submitted: 13,200.

Nationals from Syria represent the largest contingent of refugees in Cyprus, according to Eurostat. But the profile of asylum seekers has also changed over the last few years. There are now many applications from Cameroonians, Nigerians and Sudanese.

Overall, the applications are divided between those who enter the RoC from the TRNC (this group is estimated to make up about 60% of the applications) and those who enter the RoC with an official permit (student, worker or other visitor visa). Beyond the arrivals by sea, it is common for migrants from the Middle East or Africa to travel by commercial flights to Turkey. From there, they pay a smuggler to travel either by boat (mostly the case for Syrians) or they fly directly to Northern Cyprus and arrive at Ercan International Airport (the most common route for African asylum seekers). They are generally accompanied by the smugglers to the European side and left in unpopulated areas. According to Greek Cypriot officials, 3,000 migrants crossed the porous Green Line in 2019 to seek asylum in the south, compared to 138 in 2017. When refugees arrive in the RoC, the Schengen border still separates them from most European countries, however, giving them the feeling that they have been duped. Nicosia regularly accuses the TRNC of turning a blind eye to these crossings and Turkey of being responsible for this situation.

The large number of arrivals has strained reception capacity in the south, which has resulted in a sharp increase in human trafficking on the island (exploitation, prostitution in exchange for a job, etc.) and homelessness among asylum seekers. At the end of 2019, the number of asylum-seekers awaiting the outcome of their applications reached 18,731. Cyprus thus remained the EU country with the highest number of asylum applications per capita for the third consecutive year. During the first three months of 2020, the number of asylum applications continued to increase, with 2,999 new applications submitted to RoC authorities.

Since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Republic of Cyprus suspended access to asylum procedures and imposed limitations on the crossing points, leading to a significant reduction in the number of asylum applications. At the same time, it resulted in a significant increase in unchecked crossings through the buffer zone, which likely accounted for most of the new asylum applications. Between July and October 2020, 2,452 persons lodged an asylum application, compared to 4,247 during the same period in 2019.

*Source: Nicos Trimikliniotis, "Cyprus as a New Refugee 'Hotspot' in Europe? Challenges for a Divided Country," FES Briefing, 2020. January 2020 and July 2020 reports of the Secretary-General on the UN operation in Cyprus. Benjamin Bathke, "UK military base to stop smugglers as more migrants reach EU via northern Cyprus," Info Migrants, 7 July 2021.*

These numbers show that the proportion of Turkish Cypriots has constantly diminished over the years among the inhabitants of the northern part of Cyprus to the point that some Turkish Cypriots feel they are under "an existential threat," as Turkey extends its influence over the

north.<sup>130</sup> They are considered by a majority of interlocutors “the real losers” in the situation, especially as the “Anatolian Turks” are emerging as a dominant political force. One Turkish Cypriot interlocutor even said: “Now, Turkey is eating us.”<sup>131</sup> The presence of so many Turkish citizens on the island has raised questions about the long-term identity of the Turkish Cypriot community, about the possible “turkification” that is, in fact, an “islamization” of Northern Cyprus (some even talk about an “AKP-isation” of the Turkish community): “In truth, it is hard to speak of a common Cypriot identity these days”. Some interlocutors have spoken of fears of the “Hong Kong model” being applied to Northern Cyprus, as “the platform for doing politics in the north has been narrowing down.”<sup>132</sup> As Turkey increases its influence, the sense of a shared heritage will no longer exist.<sup>133</sup> One interlocutor added: “With the passage of time, the real development on the ground is that Northern Cyprus will become more of a province of Turkey.”<sup>134</sup> And because this process happens gradually, “Turkification has failed to create a moment of truth or a deadline which could create enough pressure to make Greek Cypriots ‘desperate’ for change.”<sup>135</sup> It is becoming increasingly difficult for the Turkish Cypriot “to get out of the black hole they are in.”<sup>136</sup>

The fundamental problem is that, from the beginning, neither of the communities has been free to negotiate on the future of the island without interference. They did not even write their own Constitution.

### 3.3.3. The “Guarantors” (the UK, Turkey, and Greece)

The fundamental problem is that, from the beginning, neither of the communities has been free to negotiate on the future of the island without interference. They did not even write their own Constitution. The Guarantor powers have always interfered in the island’s internal affairs and, through the 1960 Treaty of Guarantees, have established a balance among themselves. The Cyprus conflict is the only one in the world with such a system of “Guarantors” attached to it, with the consequence of “having too many cooks in the Cypriot kitchen,” as a scholar underlined.<sup>137</sup> The UK as a former colonial power, Turkey as a neighbouring country, and Greece as the heritage of the majority of the people of the island all bear some responsibility for protracting the conflict. Some interlocutors consider the Guarantors, no less than the parties themselves, as not wanting to solve the Cyprus problem. This system is now considered by the Greek Cypriots and the UN as a system of the past.

130 James Ker-Lindsay, *The Cyprus Problem in An Era of Uncertainty: Establishing a Culture of Engagement*, PRIO, 2019, p. 19.

131 Interview, scholar, Lefkoşa, 21 June 2021.

132 Interview, member of civil society, Lefkoşa, 21 June 2021.

133 James Ker-Lindsay, *The Cyprus Problem in An Era of Uncertainty*, *op. cit.*, p. 18. See also the op-ed of Ozay Mehmet, “Last tango in Cyprus,” *Cyprus Mail*, 2 September 2018.

134 Interview, formal TRNC official, Lefkoşa, 21 June 2021.

135 Hubert Faustmann, “Hydrocarbons Can Fuel a Settlement,” in James Ker-Lindsay (ed.), *Resolving Cyprus*, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

136 Interview, former UN staff, e-meeting, 03 February 2021.

137 Interview, scholar, e-meeting, 04 August 2021.

The UK as a former colonial power, Turkey as a neighbouring country, and Greece as the heritage of the majority of the people of the island all bear some responsibility for protracting the conflict.

### *The United Kingdom*

From the beginning, the UK had a very ambiguous role. As it was discussing the future of the island with the Greek Cypriot community, it brought Turkey into the picture (therefore reactivating the rivalry with Greece) and gave the Turkish Cypriot community a blocking minority, an advantage that was disproportionate compared to its demographic weight. The UK clearly did not want *Enosis* and introduced Turkey to prevent this from happening. The British then played the referee in what was presented as a Greek-Turkish dispute.

Since independence, the main British interest on the island is in keeping its Sovereign Base Areas (255km<sup>2</sup>): Akrotiri (Royal Air Force, the largest British military base outside the UK) and Dhekelia (British Army), which can only be used for military purposes. The radar station in the Troodos mountains is also a key asset for the UK and NATO allies. The UK has recurrently been suspicious towards the Greek Cypriots wanting to review the status of the bases once a reunification of the island is underway.

### *Turkey*

As explained earlier, Turkey was brought back to Cyprus by Britain in 1954-1955, in a post-World War II context where Turkey felt very isolated, especially after the Dodecanese islands belonging to Italy were given to Greece, making the Aegean Sea “a Greek lake.”<sup>138</sup> According to Jean-François Drevet, “the discomfort of Turkey generated by the annexation of the Dodecanese was later projected onto Cyprus.”<sup>139</sup> Turkey did not want the end of the British presence in Cyprus to allow Greece to close the circle it held in the Western and Southern parts of the Mediterranean Sea. That concern was partially solved at the time by Turkey’s membership with NATO in 1952 (along with Greece) and its strong alliance with London and Washington. The existence of Northern Cyprus also allowed Turkey to keep its military base on the tip of the island and maintain a permanent presence opposite the coast of Cilicia. This allowed Turkey to keep control of the island’s northern territorial waters, whose location, at the gateway to the Middle East, is a means of maintaining pressure in the negotiations on the future of the island and towards the EU. Therefore, whatever the context, “the geopolitical location of Cyprus will continue to compel Turkey to maintain a military presence over parts of the island.”<sup>140</sup>

The geostrategic position of Cyprus is obviously important for Turkey in the Mediterranean Sea. The “Cyprus problem” has always been a critical issue for the Turkish military due to the number

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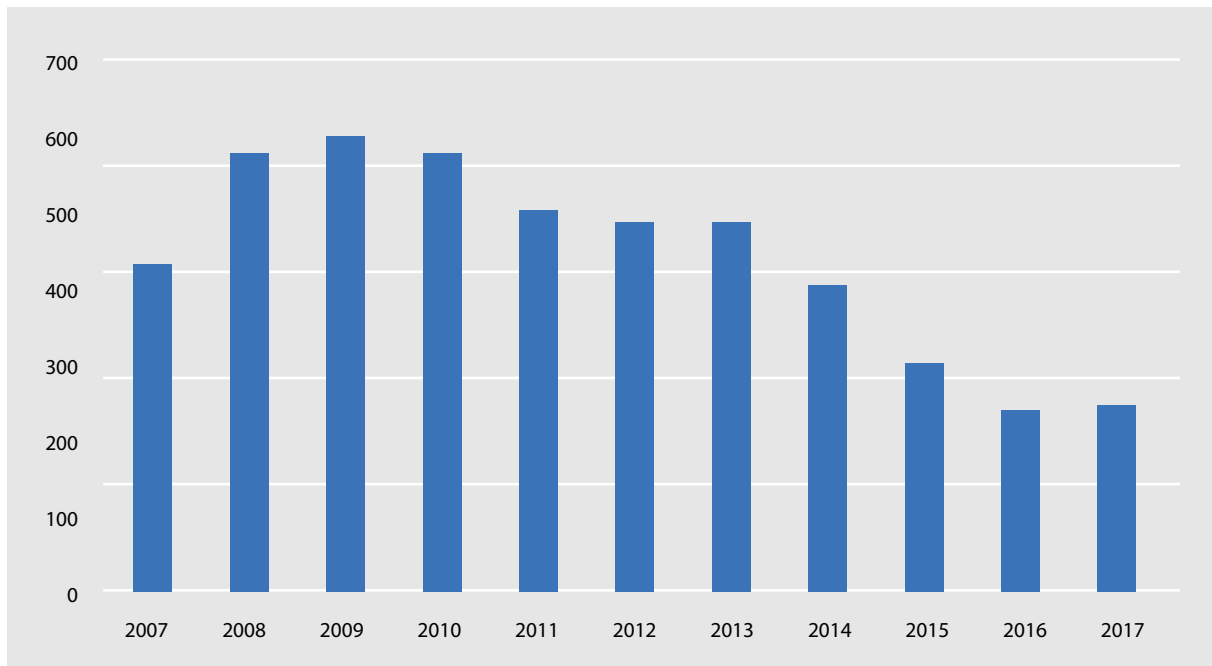
138 These islands became Italian after the Italian-Turkish war of 1911-12, but were part of the Ottoman Empire since the 16th century.

139 Jean-François Drevet, *Chypre en Europe*, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

140 Husam Mohamad, “Historical Legacies of the Dispute,” in James Ker-Lindsay (ed.), *Resolving Cyprus*, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

of troops deployed, but less so for the civilians or in terms of public opinion, despite the constant financial help provided to TRNC. According to Hasan Özertem, “Turkey transferred \$4.86 billion to the TRNC between 2007 and 2017, and transfers will amount to \$336.83 million in 2021, within the framework of the Turkey-TRNC Economic and Monetary Cooperation Agreement” (as shown in figure 3).

**Figure 3. Turkey’s transfers to the Turkish Cypriot administration (\$ million)**



Source: Figure reproduced from Hasan Özertem, “Back to ‘the Tradition’: Turkey’s Changing Position from a Federal to a Two-State Solution to the Cyprus Conflict”, *Notes de l’Ifri*, July 2021, p. 12. From Tuğba Sin, “TRNC Economic Indicators Report, Republic of Turkey”, Embassy of Nicosia – Development and Cooperation Office, July 2018. See also Abdullah Yasin Guler and Muhammet Ikbâl Arslan, “Turkey, Turkish Cyprus sign financial cooperation pact,” *aa.com.tr*, 4 March 2021.

Until recently, with the election of Ersin Tatar and contrary to the Denktaş era, there was no direct connection between President Erdoğan and the Turkish Cypriot administration: “The Turkish Cypriots did not have their entrance everywhere in Ankara; they only had connections.”<sup>141</sup> Erdoğan had no particular sympathy towards the Turkish Cypriots until he used them to increase Turkey’s influence in the region, and “after years of relative disinterest”, there is a “strategic reinvestment of the Cypriot dossier by the Justice and Development Party (AKP)” since the failure of the Annan Plan.<sup>142</sup> Indeed, a number of observers have noticed that Turkey has more recently strengthened its grip on the Turkish elements present on the island with, according to the journalist Esra Aygin, “more pressure to give citizenship to people of Turkish origin, more attempts to interfere in the way Turkish Cypriot youth are educated, more threats

141 Interview, researcher, e-meeting, Paris, 18 January 2021.

142 Dorothee Schmid and Yasmina Dahech, “La méthode turque en Méditerranée: l’emprise sur Chypre-Nord,” *Briefings de l’Ifri*, 21 July 2021, p. 1.



against freedom of expression, more efforts to change its laws, the construction of larger mosques all over the island and more Quran courses mushrooming illegally without acquiring the necessary permissions from Turkish Cypriot authorities.”<sup>143</sup>

There have even been accusations of massive interference by Turkey in the latest Turkish Cypriot elections that saw the election of the nationalist leader Ersin Tatar,<sup>144</sup> hence “Turkey sending the message that it can get anyone elected.”<sup>145</sup> Turkey also used “scaring tactics” on the issue of Varosha, a very sensitive issue for the Greek Cypriots (see box 11).<sup>146</sup>

Turkey has made a complete change in its position on the “Cyprus problem”, from defending a bicomunal, federal solution for Cyprus in 2002-2004 to supporting a two-state solution in 2020-2021: “Never-ending negotiations, blurred prospects of EU membership for Turkey, the discovery of hydrocarbon resources in the vicinity of the island, and changing dynamics in the Eastern Mediterranean have all been significant factors in shifting Turkey’s position.”<sup>147</sup> Since 2017, Turkey has questioned a number of its partnerships (EU, NATO), “while maintaining ambiguity about its future intentions: cooperation or confrontation?”<sup>148</sup> The Cyprus issue has, therefore, been “the symbol of the transformation of the Turkish foreign policy under AKP, and a revealer of European-Turkish relationships”<sup>149</sup> in a context in which “Turkey has pursued a strategy of power projection in a wider geography” and one that leverages its position in the Eastern Mediterranean.<sup>150</sup>

## Greece

In the 1960s, Athens tried without much success to create a link of subordination between the Greek Cypriots and Greece in the name of Hellenism.<sup>151</sup> Greece was never able to control the Cypriots, in particular Makarios, who led his country in an increasingly independent way from all Guarantors and in pursuit of a “non-alignment” policy. Makarios did not consult the government in Athens before promulgating his “13 Amendments”, for example. About 60,000 to 70,000 Greeks are currently living in Cyprus. Greece maintains a presence of about 1,000 troops, and a Greek general is at the helm of the RoC’s National Guard. Despite a common heritage, Greece looks at its relationship with Cyprus in terms of how it can avoid harming its relationship with Turkey, which is one of its main trading partners, and Greece keeps its

143 Esra Aygün, “Cyprus may never be reunified again,” 2 September 2020.

144 “Northern Cyprus: Right-wing nationalist Ersin Tatar elected president,” *BBC World*, 19 October 2020; “Turkish intelligence threatened Northern Cyprus presidential candidates, report says,” *Abval*, 11 June 2021.

145 Interview, scholar, Lefkoşa, 21 June 2021.

146 Expression used by a Turkish Cypriot scholar, 18 June 2021.

147 Hasan Özertem, “Back to ‘the Tradition’: Turkey’s Changing Position from a Federal to a Two-State Solution to the Cyprus Conflict”, Notes de l’Ifri, July 2021, p. 17.

148 Dorothee Schmid, Yasmina Dahech, “La méthode turque en Méditerranée,” *loc. cit.*, p. 10. See also Günter Seufert, “Erdoğan the Builder in Northern Cyprus,” *SWP Comment*, August 2021, n°47.

149 Interview, researcher, e-meeting, Paris, 11 March 2021.

150 Hasan Özertem, “Back to ‘the Tradition,’” *loc. cit.*, pp. 20-21.

151 Jean-François Drevet, *Chypre en Europe, op. cit.*, pp. 160-161.

diplomatic discussions on the Mediterranean Sea issues ongoing despite tensions.<sup>152</sup> 30,000 Turks requested asylum in Greece after the failed coup of July 2016 in Ankara.

Geography is a key factor in the international dynamics, the regional drivers of this frozen conflict, and its impossible resolution.

One interlocutor said that “Greece would be ready to abandon the system of guarantors,” to withdraw their troops and to have a progressive (five-to-six-year) withdrawal of Turkish troops.<sup>153</sup> As Jean-François Drevet put it, “on the national issue, Cyprus decides, and Greece follows; it is the reverse in the north.”<sup>154</sup> However, some interlocutors have considered that “the extent of Greek engagement is greater than what they claim,”<sup>155</sup> as indeed Greece and Cyprus are two separate countries despite their special relationship. Nevertheless, “unlike Ankara, Athens is not in a position to shape the negotiation position of the Greek Cypriots,” and it appears that “the Greek government is content to let Cyprus fight its own battles.”<sup>156</sup> Despite cultural and social affinity, Cyprus does not have the same strategic value for Greece as it has for Turkey. Thus, “Greece will neither be influential nor be a spoiler.”<sup>157</sup>

### 3.4. International, Regional and Local Drivers of a Frozen Conflict

The roots of Cyprus’ frozen conflict and the attitudes of the actors in it are linked to several factors: the break-up of the Ottoman Empire, the memory of the many population movements of Greeks and Turks<sup>158</sup>, the existence of a community identity based on religion on the Greek Cypriot side, and a problem of political representation and power-sharing which turned into a struggle for political equality. In this region, “history really matters,”<sup>159</sup> and “different perceptions of history contribute to the prevention of a durable solution.”<sup>160</sup> As underlined previously, geography is a key factor in the international dynamics, the regional drivers of this frozen conflict, and its impossible resolution.

152 “Athènes et Ankara s’emploient à désamorcer leur dispute,” *Le Figaro*, 15 March 2021.

153 Interviews, Athens, 15 November 2018.

154 Jean-François Drevet, *Chypre entre l’Europe et la Turquie*, 2011, Paris: Karthala, p. 99.

155 Interview, UN staff, e-meeting, New York, 15 April 2020.

156 James Ker-Lindsay, *The Cyprus Problem*, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

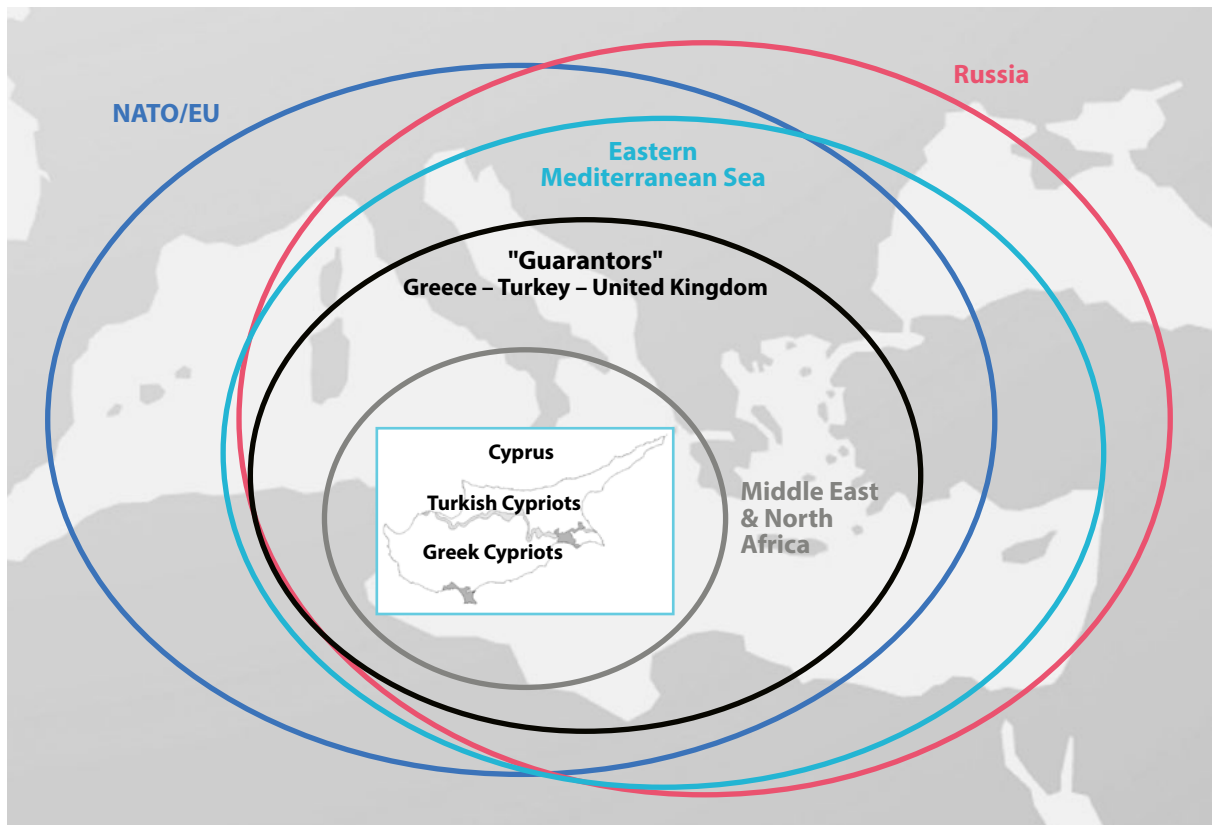
157 Interview, researcher, Athens, 15 November 2018.

158 From 1910 to 1935, 1.3 million Greeks and 500,000 Turks left their birthplace to go to their respective countries.

159 Interview, former UN staff, e-meeting, 16 March 2021.

160 Jan Asmussen, “Escaping the Tyranny of History,” in James Ker-Lindsay (ed.), *Resolving Cyprus*, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

### Map 3. Cyprus' strategic environment



*Created by Alexandra Novosseloff.*

The island's strategic position near Anatolia, closer to the Middle East than to Europe but belonging to the Hellenistic world dated back to Alexander the Great and to the orthodox world, forms a geopolitical bridge between the East and the West of the Mediterranean Sea. From a geographical point of view, Turkey is the closest external actor to the Cyprus problem as its coasts lie about 50 miles (80km) north of the island. If Cyprus could be considered Europe's last remaining conflict, it is geographically very close to a region that has many conflicts. Cyprus is indeed at the strategic crossroads of many developments: the relationship between Israel and the Arab world, the conflict between Israel and Palestine, the relations between Europe, the Arab world and Turkey, and the tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea. In the past, the UK only realised the importance of the island of Cyprus after losing the Suez Canal in 1956. During the Cold War, Cyprus was often referred to as "the island of spies" due to its closeness to Egypt and Israel. The British bases played a major role during the first Gulf war and during the post-9/11 war against Afghanistan and Iraq. The Troodos mountains harbour a major radar system covering the whole region. Recently, in 2019, Turkey has established a drone base in the local airstrip of Geçitkale (40km east of Ercan Airport).<sup>161</sup>

<sup>161</sup> "Turkish drones in northern Cyprus heighten regional unease," *I Kathimerini*, 25 August 2021.

The island is currently of great strategic importance for NATO. According to a Greek Cypriot interlocutor, what is happening on the island “is a frozen conflict that has a ‘short fuse’ where any ignition would bring in Turkey, Greece, the EU, NATO, and Israel.”<sup>162</sup> Moreover, the latest tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea have had a much greater link to the Cyprus problem and the bilateral Greek-Turkey issues, with the Turkish temptation to bring them into the negotiations over the settlement. The tensions in the region cannot be addressed in isolation from broader issues, such as Turkey’s involvement in Libya, its regional isolation, and the overlapping claims on the Aegean Sea.<sup>163</sup>

The region has an impact on the way the two Cypriot communities see their strategic environment. Hence, some analysts describe the Cyprus problem as “a double minority problem: the Greek Cypriots feel they are a minority in the region; the Turkish Cypriots feel as a minority on the island vis-à-vis the Greek Cypriot.”<sup>164</sup> Both communities suffer, therefore, from the insecurity of a minority and both are, or perceive themselves to be, the victims of greater strategic plans. Throughout their history, the changes have been induced by external actors with interests in the island and rarely by Cypriots themselves. It seems that Cypriots have struggled to prevent or exclude any external involvement in the island.

Despite the opening of the crossing points in 2003, which has changed perceptions on both sides, Greek and Turkish Cypriots do not mingle enough to make a change.

One of the internal drivers of the conflict has been the enforcement on the Cypriots of a Constitution written by foreigners, which was difficult to implement from the start (see section 3.1.2). The Constitution emphasised the distinct existence of the two communities to the detriment of the search for national unity, and it requires a permanent agreement between the two communities sanctioned by the right of veto available to the president (Greek Cypriot) and the vice-president (Turkish Cypriot). Very few Greek Cypriots view the Constitution as legitimate, and they consider it an “imposed constitution” by foreign powers discriminating against them and favouring the Turkish minority.<sup>165</sup> The Turkish Cypriots saw the Constitution as a basis for their rightful representation and as a text that could be later improved.

A frozen conflict is often characterised by entrenched positions from the parties in their discussions. A researcher from the University of Central Lancashire (Cyprus campus based in Pyla) underlined that one of the characteristics of “the perpetuation of the frozen conflict is that it

162 Interview, lawyer, e-meeting, Nicosia, 01 December 2020.

163 Sinan Ülgen and Asli Aydinbasbas, “[A Conflict Could Be Brewing in the Eastern Mediterranean. Here’s How to Stop It](#),” *The Washington Post*, 17 September 2020.

164 Interview, lawyer, e-meeting, Nicosia, 01 December 2020.

165 Muzaffer Ercan Yilmaz, “Analyzing and Resolving the Cyprus Conflict,” *loc. cit.*, p. 82.

has normalized nationalist speech and policies.”<sup>166</sup> In one of his regular reports to the Security Council, the Secretary-General already pointed out in June 1965, “the continuing tendency of both sides to adhere to entrenched positions and to attach more and more conditions, thus widening the ramifications of problems which would be susceptible of solution if kept within narrower limits.” He added that “this tendency, in the face of the obvious advantages for the people of both communities of a full return to normal conditions, carries the implication that the Cypriot people, Greek and Turkish, are hostages of the intransigent positions taken in their behalf, they are victims of a lack resolve to find that mutual accommodation.”<sup>167</sup> This is, in part at least, due to the absence of a common discourse on the origin of the conflict and the two diagnostics of the two sides on the origin of the problem, and the impossibility or the lack of willingness to depart from them. As explained by James Ker-Lindsay, “as the years pass, the very different stories of the past become ever more entrenched. In the absence of sustained contacts between the Greek and Turkish Cypriots, the official histories have taken root. There is very little understanding of the perspective of the other side, let alone any real appreciation of the suffering and hardships experienced by members of the other community.”<sup>168</sup> But for a Turkish Cypriot interlocutor, “if the conflict hasn’t been resolved, it has evolved. It was interesting to see, before Covid-19, the north being constantly full of Greek Cypriot cars, as people finally decided that the money they could save thanks to the exchange rate was more important than ideology.”<sup>169</sup> A great number of interlocutors still feel that despite the opening of the crossing points in 2003, which has changed perceptions on both sides, Greek and Turkish Cypriots do not mingle enough to make a change (as box 3 shows as far as young people are concerned).



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166 Presentation of Dr Nasia Hadjigeorgiou, “The Invisible Impact of Frozen Conflicts: A Case Study of Foreign Domestic Workers in Cyprus,” *LSE Hellenic Observatory*, 16 February 2021.

167 S/7350, 10 June 1965, “Report by the Secretary-General on the UN Operation in Cyprus,” para. 174.

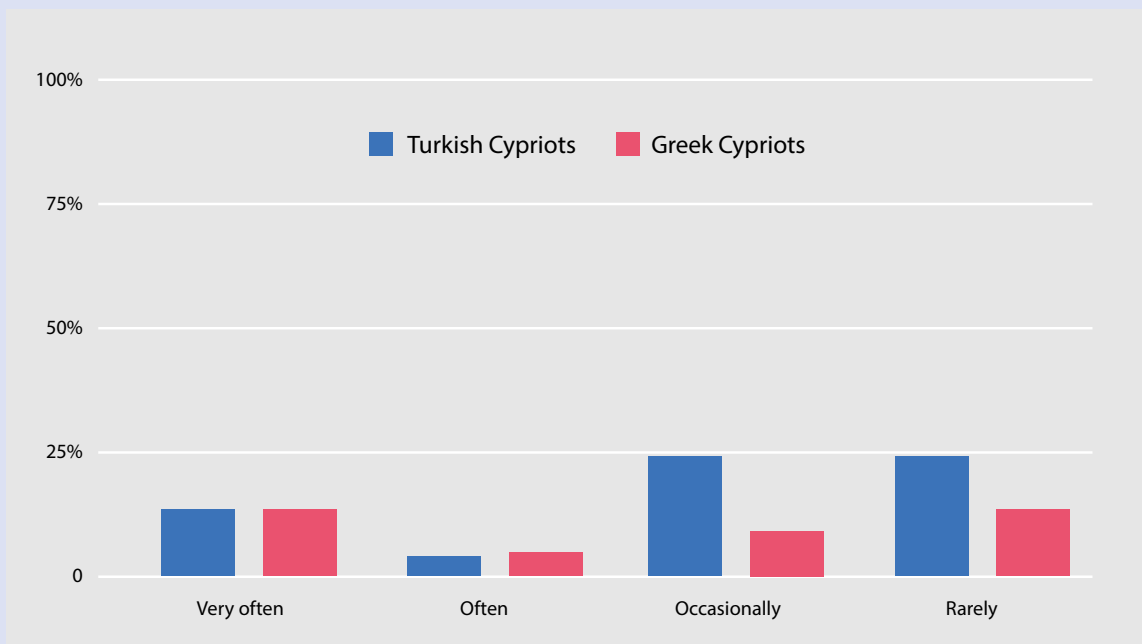
168 James Ker-Lindsay, *The Cyprus Problem in An Era of Uncertainty*, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

169 Interview, researcher, e-meeting, 21 July 2021.

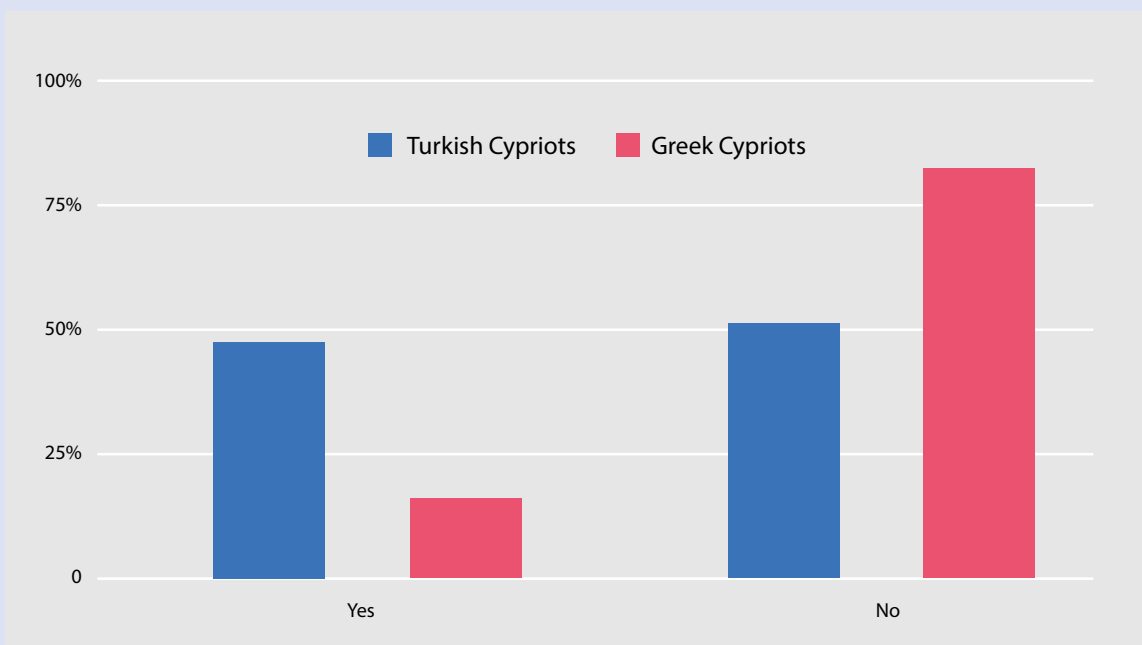


### Box 3. The reality of the lack of contact between the young generations on both sides of the Green Line

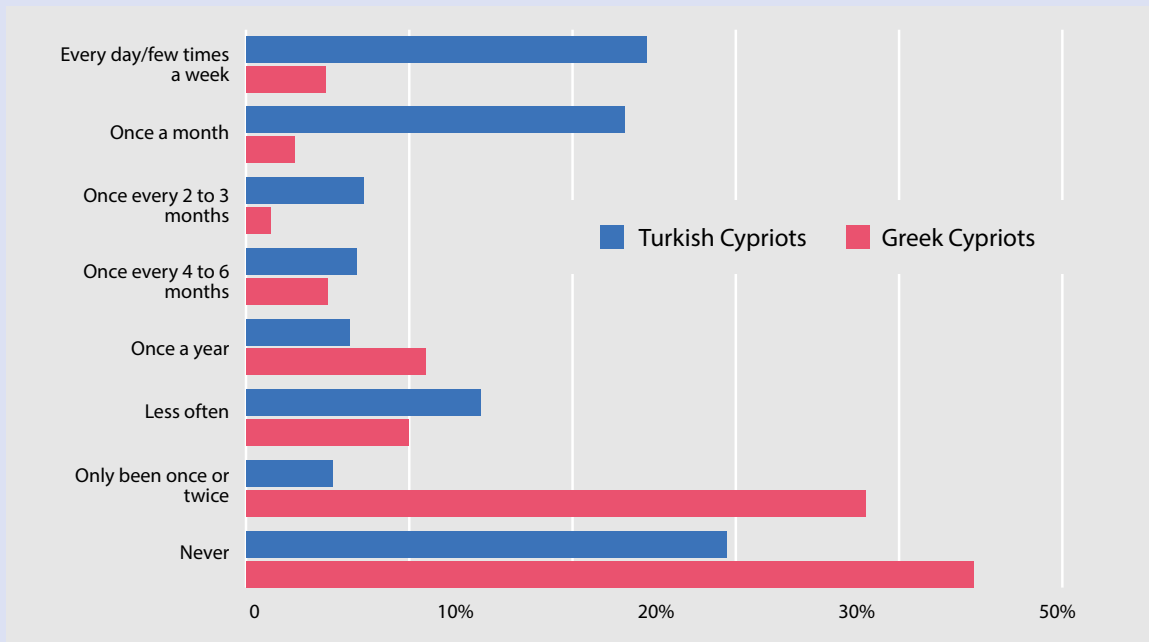
*Frequency of contact with other community*



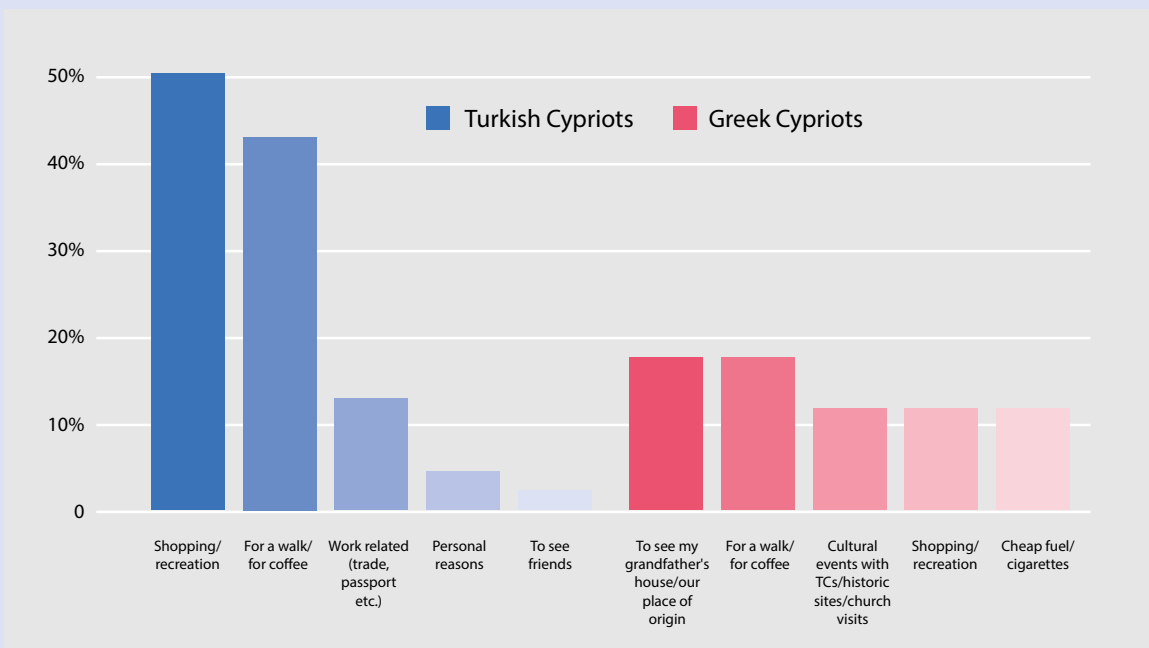
*Having friends from the other community*

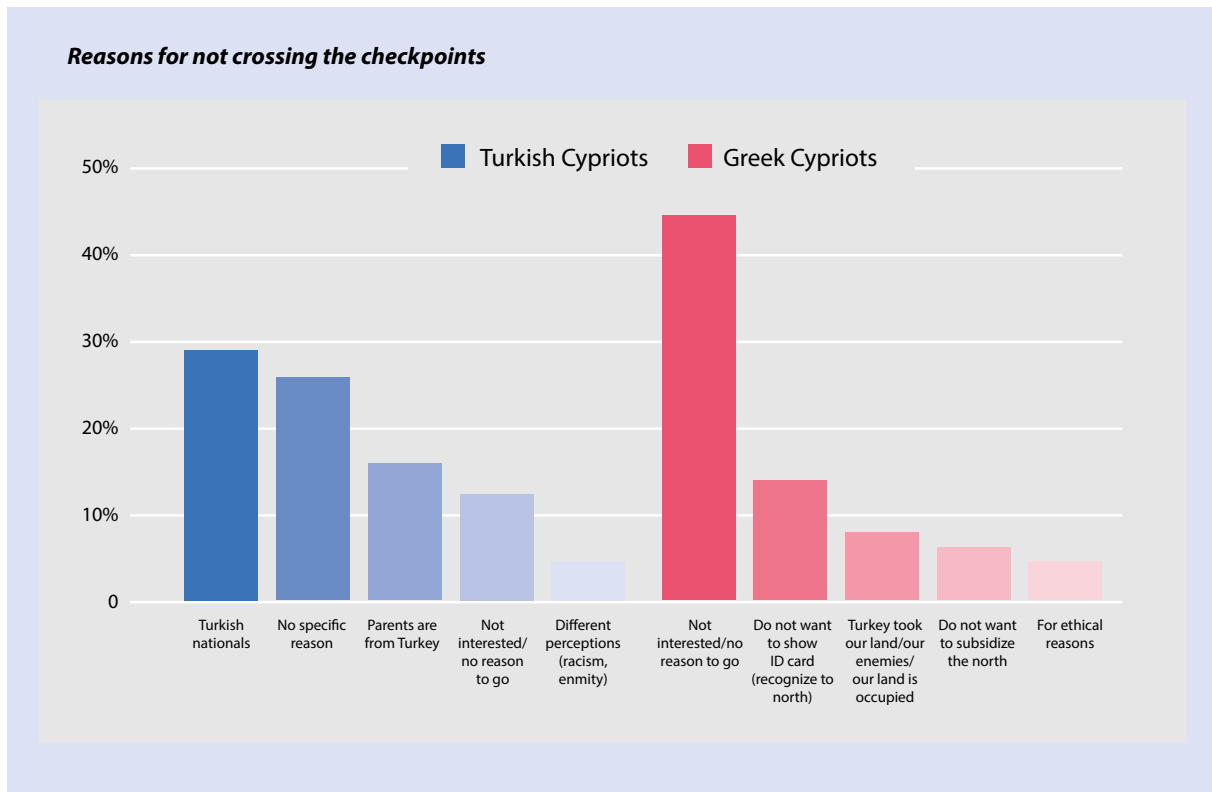


**Frequency of crossing to the other side**



**Reasons for crossing the checkpoints**





Source: Cihan Dizdaroğlu, “Peace and Inter-Communal Contacts,” *FES Report*, 2020, p. 15.

A number of interlocutors have emphasised the issue of the education system in Cyprus and the absence of attempts to devise a common history as one of the elements in the perpetuation of the conflict.<sup>170</sup> In July 2018, the Secretary-General pointed out that “divergent school curricula and rhetoric in the media have reinforced parallel narratives across generations, making it particularly difficult for some Cypriots to envisage a common and mutually beneficial future,” which remains “a serious obstacle to reconciliation and peaceful coexistence on the island.”<sup>171</sup> One analyst considers that “in Cyprus, education has been a main vehicle of transferring inter-communal hostility, as well as separate identities, from generation to generation. (...) The general emphasis of formal education on Cyprus allows Greek and Turkish Cypriot narrative to focus more on the past, rather than the future, on the causes and who is to ‘blame’, rather than on solutions and ways forward.”<sup>172</sup> As acknowledged by a Greek Cypriot university professor, “the educational system doesn’t teach in a critical way, and the Turkish Cypriots are totally invisible in it.”<sup>173</sup> A Greek Cypriot activist explained, “we keep your generations enslaved in the rhetoric of the past, but we won’t feel safe as long as hatred persists.”<sup>174</sup> “The education system is promoting hate,” and “the young generation has been brainwashed at school and

170 See Ahmet An, “‘Cypriotism’ and the path to reunification,” in James Ker-Lindsay (ed.), *Resolving Cyprus*, *op. cit.*, pp. 24-30.

171 S/2018/676, 11 July 2018, “Report of the Secretary-General on the UN Operation in Cyprus,” para. 57.

172 Muzaffer Ercan Yılmaz, “Analyzing and Resolving the Cyprus Conflict,” *loc. cit.*, p. 101.

173 Interview, e-meeting, Larnaca, 14 December 2020.

174 Interview, Greek Cypriot activist, e-meeting, Nicosia, 14 December 2020.

during their service in the national guard.”<sup>175</sup> Young people should have a better understanding of the other side: “we have to differentiate peace and politics.”<sup>176</sup> A young Turkish Cypriot told the EPON team: “Our history books have been rewritten, so we don’t know the truth,”<sup>177</sup> and a young Greek Cypriot said: “in our school, peace is not taught, only segregation.”<sup>178</sup>

This situation has fuelled nationalistic rhetoric on both sides and has indeed prevented them from trying to find a path to reconciliation.

As a result, each side has its own story and trauma, is trapped in its “victimization story” “fueled by nationalist history of both communities taught in schools.”<sup>179</sup> In a number of his reports, the Secretary-General refers to the importance of peace education. In one of his latest reports, he recalled that “the Security Council has repeatedly called on the leaders to refrain from using rhetoric that might deepen the mistrust between the communities, insisting on the importance of improving the public atmosphere and on preparing the communities for a settlement, while also highlighting the importance of peace education. Forty-five years after the ceasefire and de facto division of Cyprus, most of these pillars of reconciliation, unfortunately, remain to be built.”<sup>180</sup> An even more recent report suggested some ongoing changes while confirming those features: “Education in the recent years started playing a more positive role by avoiding negative indoctrination towards the other community but has at the same time not actively pursued a reconciliation and reunification agenda,” the reason for which can be explained by “the continuing ethnocentric character of education in both communities and the internalised feeling of one sided victimisation, which still holds for many of the youth, cultivated mainly through history teaching, that is unreflective of mistakes committed by their own community in the past.”<sup>181</sup> Therefore, Muzaffer Ercan Yılmaz advocated for the revision of “formal curricula and textbooks (...) so that they better meet the realities on the island and encourage inter-communal friendship. (...) If the hostile attitudes and perceptions of one generation are not passed on to the next, then the younger generation may be able to deal with inter-ethnic problems in a more constructive atmosphere”.<sup>182</sup>

175 Interview, Focus group on WPS, e-meeting, 25 February 2021.

176 Interview, Focus Group on Youth, e-meeting, 10 March 2021.

177 Interview, urbanist, e-meeting, Famagusta, 17 December 2020.

178 Interview, Focus Group on Youth, e-meeting, 10 March 2021.

179 Interview, Focus group on WPS, e-meeting, 25 February 2021. Interview, scholar, e-meeting, 04 August 2021.

180 S/2020/23, 7 January 2020, “Report of the Secretary-General on UN operation in Cyprus,” para. 59.

181 “Youth and Politics in Protracted Conflicts: A comparative approach on hope for a settlement and return of IDPs”, Report by the Hellenic Observatory of the London School of Economics, April 2021, p. 9.

182 Muzaffer Ercan Yılmaz, “Analyzing and Resolving the Cyprus Conflict,” *loc. cit.*, p. 102. Some interlocutors have pointed to the project called “Imagine”, which brings school classes from both sides to meet one another. See <https://www.ahdr.info/peace-education/58-education-for-a-culture-of-peace-imagine>.

This situation has fuelled nationalistic rhetoric on both sides and has indeed prevented them from trying to find a path to reconciliation. A specific nationalism referring to the origin of the culture of the Cypriot (Greek or Turkish) but not to their country, as symbolised by the constant presence of the Greek flag attached to the RoC's flag and of the Turkish flag to the TRNC's one, remains. Some interlocutors have considered that the lack of national identity could explain this impossible reunification. As a Greek Cypriot youth said: "If one Greek Cypriot got to know one Turkish Cypriot, the Cyprus problem would be solved; Greek Cypriots should learn to love all of their country, not just half. After all these years, have they just remained stuck in their mono-communal lives."<sup>183</sup> A number of interlocutors and analysts point to the absence of work on reconciliation despite the numerous bicomunal activities organised over the years. They consider that Cyprus would need "a bicomunal truth and reconciliation commission", as both "sides claim to be a victim", "none of them recognize its responsibility",<sup>184</sup> and there are always stories about "them" and "us."<sup>185</sup> As one interlocutor explained, "all grievances are not being processed other than looking at the past and being nostalgic."<sup>186</sup> In Cyprus, there has never been a healing process after what happened in 1963 and 1974, no self-analysis of what went wrong. There has never been any "incentive for people for reconciliation which is a painful process."<sup>187</sup> Such a process of reconciliation could have helped address one of the main blockages to move forward in the negotiations in particular: the lack of trust and the deep crisis of confidence between the two communities. The need to create a climate of confidence "is so absolute that it is rather doubtful whether a solution could be reached in the absence of it."<sup>188</sup> A number of interlocutors regretted that "the negotiations have nothing to do with reconciliation, nor even with solving the Cyprus problem."<sup>189</sup> Some interlocutors were of the view that the UN should point out to the leadership that there needs to be work done on reconciliation and adopt that agenda.

The combination of entrenched positions on the origin of the conflict, the absence of work on a common history, nationalistic rhetoric with an absence of national identity, and a lack of reconciliation process is often at the heart of frozen conflicts and is prone to cement the status quo, a status quo with which people on both sides have become accustomed. With time, they see any change to the status quo as a risk and as a cost (see section 6.2.2).

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183 Social network conversation, April 2021.

184 Interview, researcher, e-meeting, Nicosia, 17 December 2020.

185 Interview, Focus group on WPS, e-meeting, 25 February 2021.

186 Interview, foreign journalist, e-meeting, 24 June 2021.

187 Interview, diplomat, e-meeting, 31 March 2021.

188 Muzaffer Ercan Yılmaz, "Analyzing and Resolving the Cyprus Conflict," *loc. cit.*, p. 97.

189 Interview, Focus group on WPS, e-meeting, 25 February 2021.



### 3.5. History of the UN Presence in Cyprus: Key Episodes of UNFICYP and the Secretary-General's Good Offices

#### Box 4. UN Security Council Resolution 186 (4 March 1964) [S/5575]

The Security Council,

Noting that the present situation with regard to Cyprus is likely to threaten international peace and security and may further deteriorate unless additional measures are promptly taken to maintain peace and to seek out a durable solution,

Considering the positions taken by the parties in relation to the treaties signed at Nicosia on 16 August 1960,

Having in mind the relevant provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and, in particular, its Article 2, paragraph 4, which reads:

"All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations";

1. Calls upon all Member States, in conformity with their obligations under the Charter of the United Nations, to refrain from any action or threat of action likely to worsen the situation in the sovereign Republic of Cyprus, or to endanger international peace;
2. Asks the Government of Cyprus, which has the responsibility for the maintenance and restoration of law and order, to take all additional measures necessary to stop violence and bloodshed in Cyprus;
3. Calls upon the communities in Cyprus and their leaders to act with the utmost restraint;
4. *Recommends the creation, with the consent of the Government of Cyprus, of a United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus.* The composition and size of the Force shall be established by the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Governments of Cyprus, Greece, Turkey and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The Commander of the Force shall be appointed by the Secretary-General and report to him. The Secretary-General, who shall keep the Governments providing the Force fully informed, shall report periodically to the Security Council on its operation;
5. *Recommends that the function of the Force should be, in the interest of preserving international peace and security, to use its best efforts to prevent a recurrence of fighting and, as necessary, to contribute to the maintenance and restoration of law and order and a return to normal conditions;*
6. Recommends that the stationing of the Force shall be for a period of three months, all costs pertaining to it being met, in a manner to be agreed upon by them, by the Governments providing the contingents and by the Government of Cyprus. The Secretary-General may also accept voluntary contributions for that purpose;
7. *Recommends further that the Secretary-General designate, in agreement with the Government of Cyprus and the Governments of Greece, Turkey and the United Kingdom, a mediator, who shall use his best*

endeavors with the representatives of the communities and also with the aforesaid four Governments, for the purpose of promoting a peaceful solution and an agreed settlement of the problem confronting Cyprus, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, having in mind the well-being of the people of Cyprus as a whole and the preservation of international peace and security. The mediator shall report periodically to the Secretary-General on his efforts;

8. Requests the Secretary-General to provide, from funds of the United Nations, as appropriate, for the remuneration and expenses of the mediator and his staff.

*Adopted unanimously at the 1102nd meeting*

*(Passages emphasised by the author).*

From the start, the Security Council recommended through Resolution 186 (4 March 1964) both the creation of a peacekeeping force and the appointment by the Secretary-General of a mediator “for the purpose of promoting a peaceful solution and an agreed settlement of the problem confronting Cyprus, (...) having in mind the well-being of the people of Cyprus as a whole and the preservation of international peace and security.” These decisions were made with the consent of the Government of Cyprus and the Guarantors. When the “Cyprus question” arrived on the table of the Council, it was divided over the way to conduct peacekeeping after the failure of the UN Operation in the Congo (ONUC), where the Secretary-General was considered to have had too much leeway.<sup>190</sup> As described in Section 3.1.3, the preferred option for the UK would have been to send NATO troops, but Makarios opposed it and eventually preferred the UN option. As explained by Jan Asmussen, “the British and United States governments had lobbied for a NATO force in order to avoid Soviet involvement through the United Nations. Makarios, who was locally supported by the strong communist party, AKEL, was aiming to remain neutral between the western and eastern powers. As one of the founding members of the non-aligned movement, he insisted on bringing the matter to the UN Security Council.”<sup>191</sup> In March 1964, the Soviet Union explained that it was in principle not in favour of sending any foreign troops, including UN troops, to Cyprus.<sup>192</sup> For the Secretary-General, “the Force was deployed in Cyprus because the Government of Cyprus, the Governments of Greece, Turkey and the UK, and all of the members of the Security Council had reached the conclusion that there had been too much fighting, bloodshed and destruction in Cyprus and it should now come to an end.”<sup>193</sup> UNFICYP became operational in three months with troop contributions from Austria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Ireland and Sweden, along with a contingent of British soldiers who have become the continuous UN presence since then.

190 In this context, it is interesting to note that members of the Council proceeded to a separate vote on paragraph 4 of the Resolution concerning the responsibilities of the Secretary-General on which France, the USSR and Czechoslovakia abstained. This, however, did not prevent Resolution 186 from being unanimously adopted. See S/PV.1102, 4 March 1964, para. 27-28.

191 Jan Asmussen, “UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP),” *op. cit.*, p. 199.

192 S/PV.1102, 4 March 1964, para. 5.

193 S/5671, 29 April 1964, “Report by the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the Operations of the United Nations Peace-Keeping Force in Cyprus,” para. 10.

The mandate of UNFICYP has had three phases:

Between 1964 and 1974, where the tasks of the Force “included the policing of military positions between the Greek Cypriot National Guard and Turkish Cypriot fortified enclaves, the prevention of an upsurge in violence in 1967 turning into all-out war, and the facilitation of inter-communal talks after 1968.”<sup>194</sup>

- Between 1974 and 2003, when UNFICYP was asked to undertake new responsibilities within the existing mandate, such as the monitoring of troop deployments on both sides and the ceasefire, the maintenance of the status quo, humanitarian assistance throughout the island, and support for the Good Offices Mission of the Secretary-General.<sup>195</sup>
- Since 2004, after the failure of the Annan Plan, when various crossing points opened progressively, allowing circulation and cooperation between the two sides.

The peacemaking work accompanied all these phases, but the two Missions evolved differently, according to the desires of the parties.

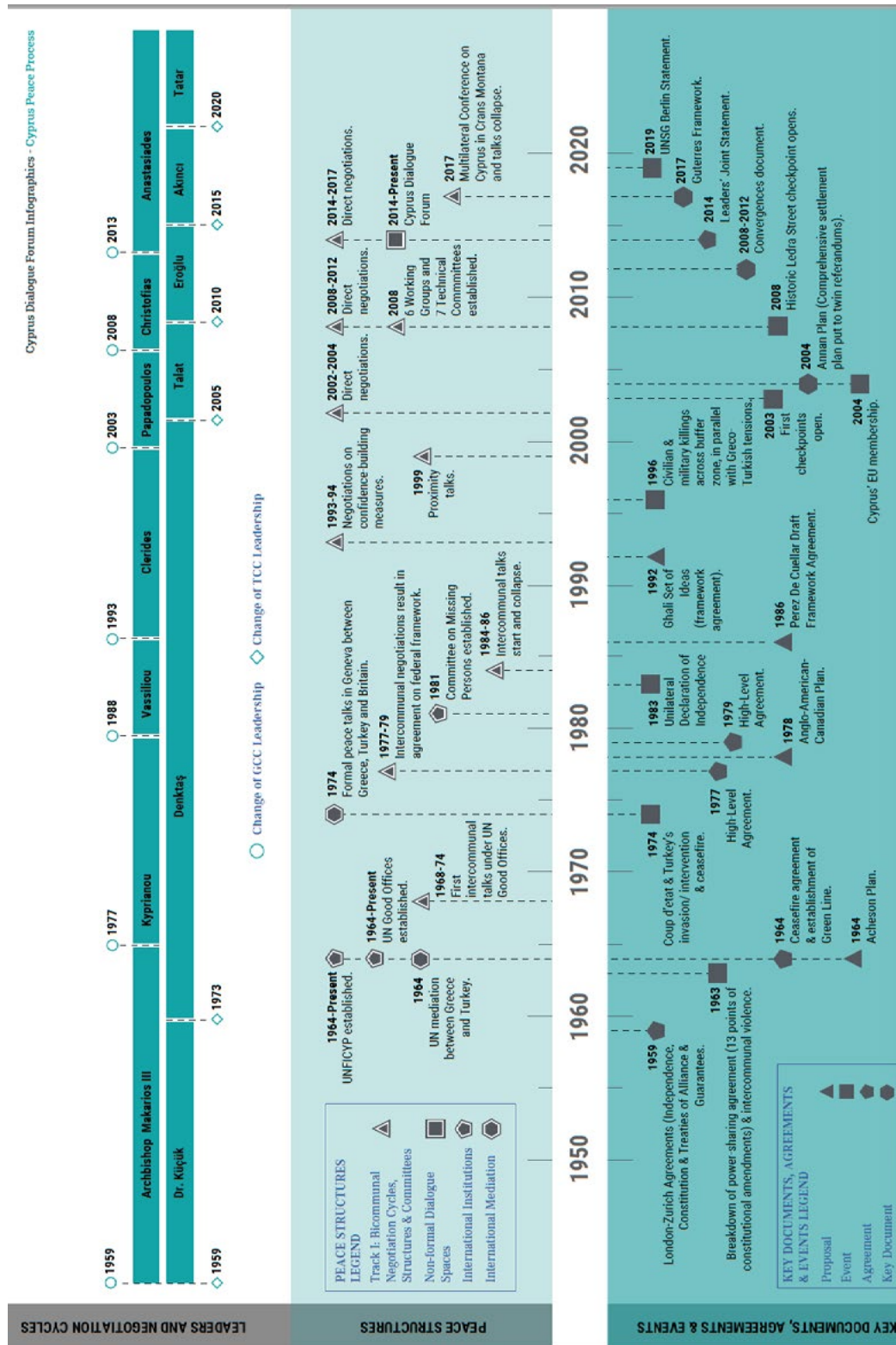


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194 Jan Asmussen, “UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP),” *op. cit.*, p. 197.

195 *Ibid.*

Figure 4. A six-decade timeline of the peace processes in Cyprus



As described in the latest report of the Secretary-General on the Good Offices, “the Cyprus Dialogue Forum launched a digital guide on the Cyprus peace process based on open-source material, in English, Greek and Turkish providing easy access to key documents on the Cyprus peace talks over the decades. The comprehensive guide contains factsheets and infographics that map the core elements of a range of peace proposals submitted to date in order to facilitate a fact-based dialogue across the island” (S/2021/634, 9 July 2021, para. 6).

Source: Cyprus Dialogue Forum, <https://libguides.cydialogue.org/political/process>.



### 3.5.1. 1964-1974: Stabilising an Unstable Situation and Evolving in “an Uneasy Truce”<sup>196</sup>

When operating without a clear ceasefire agreement, most intrastate peacekeeping operations had to force their way through host countries to establish themselves and perform their mandate.<sup>197</sup> It was the case for UNFICYP for the initial few months of its deployment, until August 1964. Then, the Secretary-General has devised about ten different tasks for UNFICYP, from “the achievement of the freedom of movement on all roads,” “the progressive disarming of all civilians,”<sup>198</sup> and “the control of extremists on both sides” to “the normal functioning of the judiciary.”<sup>199</sup> UNFICYP undertook its mandate in a climate of extreme tension, trying to restrain both sides, discourage the recourse to arms, and helping displaced persons. Over the period of time, there have been fewer and fewer intercommunal incidents, but little progress achieved in the field of military de-confrontation.

Map 4. UNFICYP Deployment as of December 1965



Source: UN, *The Blue Helmets: A Review of United Nations Peace-keeping, 1996* (third edition), New York: Department of Public Information, p. 155.

196 Phrase used by the Secretary-General in his June 1967 report (S/7969, para. 176).

197 This was the case in particular for UNIFIL in 1978. See Alexandra Novosseloff, “UNIFIL I,” in Joachim A. Koops, Norrie MacQueen, Thierry Tardy, and Paul D. Williams (eds.), *Oxford Handbook on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations*, *op. cit.*, pp. 248-258.

198 According to the Secretary-General, “there is no question, of course, that the smuggling of arms, whether by Turkish or Greek Cypriots, is illegal and that UNFICYP is entitled to try to check it.” The issue of the militarisation of the island remains a key element today in the stabilisation of Cyprus, but on the island as elsewhere, the task cannot be conducted by the UN and can only be the result of a thorough political process. S/5764, 15 June 1964, para. 120.

199 S/5671, 29 April 1964, “Report by the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the UN Operation in Cyprus,” Annex I.



In September 1964, the Secretary-General wrote that there cannot “be any doubt that had the Force not been deployed in Cyprus over these six months, there would have been far more fighting on that island than there has been, with resultant heavy casualties and devastation.”<sup>200</sup> Moreover, UNFICYP became “the only mechanism by which civilian, administrative, judicial and economic activities in the island can be carried out across communal lines.”<sup>201</sup> In his report of June 1965, the Secretary-General put forward to the Security Council “the idea of a six months’ extension at this time, instead of the usual three.”<sup>202</sup> From then on, the UN Mission established itself in the long term, and overall, between 1964 and 1974, “a time of uneasy quiet disturbed from time to time by incidents,” “the Force has had no small measure of success in preventing a recurrence of fighting and helping to maintain law and order.”<sup>203</sup> The Secretary-General also considered that UNFICYP “represent[ed] an indispensable element in maintaining and further improving the calm atmosphere in the island and in promoting the steps toward normalization, which constitute as before the two major prerequisites for substantive progress in the intercommunal talks.”<sup>204</sup>

Unlike the mandate of the peacekeeping force, that of the mediator does not prescribe any fixed period but was initiated as the force was deploying. The first report of the UN mediator, the Ecuadorian Galo Plaza Lasso, issued in March 1965 considered that the stabilisation of the situation in Cyprus cannot be based on the restoration of the 1960 Constitution, and asserted that Turkish Cypriots should abandon their demands for a federal solution and accept Greek majority rule.<sup>205</sup> With this, he faced the opposition of Turkey and had to resign.<sup>206</sup> Thereafter, the “UN mediator” was in 1966 formally replaced by a Special Representative through whom the Secretary-General extended “his Good Offices” to the parties.<sup>207</sup> The Secretary-General thus started to report on his “Good Offices” within the regular reports on UNFICYP, separately from the single paragraph of “Mediation Efforts” section.<sup>208</sup> In a 1970 report, the Secretary-General explained the difference between the two positions: “There was no intention that the Special Representative should act as a mediator or put forward substantive proposals concerning solutions to the problem.”<sup>209</sup> The role of the UN representative was clearly considered to be one of a facilitator, and this “new” role was later formally endorsed by the Security Council in its Resolution 367 (1975).

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200 S/5950, 10 September 1964, “Report by the Secretary-General on the UN Operation in Cyprus,” para. 216.

201 S/6426, 10 June 1965, “Report of the Secretary-General on the UN Operation in Cyprus,” para. 183.

202 *Ibid.*, para. 184.

203 S/7969, 13 June 1967, “Report of the Secretary-General on the UN Operation in Cyprus,” para. 175.

204 S/9233, 3 June 1969, “Report of the Secretary-General on the UN Operation in Cyprus,” para. 83.

205 James Ker-Lindsay, *The Cyprus Problem, op. cit.*, p. 38. See Galo Plaza’s report S/6253, 26 March 1965.

206 S/7054, 31 December 1965, Exchange of Letters between the UN Mediator on Cyprus and the Secretary-General.

207 *Ibid.*

208 Between 1966 and 1974, that paragraph has remained the same: “The situation regarding a resumption of the mediation function under paragraph 7 of Security Council resolution 186 of 4 March 1964 has remained unchanged since my last report, owing primarily to the widely differing and firmly held views on the matter of the three Governments most directly concerned.”

209 S/10401, 30 November 1971, “Report of the Secretary-General on the UN Operation in Cyprus,” para. 80.

The first negotiations under UN auspices were held in Beirut between 1968 and 1972, where the Turkish Cypriot delegation acknowledged the flaws of the 1960 Constitution and requested “local autonomy” for the Turkish enclaves, as the Greek side pushed towards a unitary state with rights for the Turkish minority. The talks ultimately failed due to increasing international tensions that pulled the parties in different directions despite their goodwill to get to an agreement. During this period of time, the Secretary-General also pushed for the organisation of intercommunal talks (on which he reported in a separate section in his reports, sometimes in combination with his Good Offices), which he considered “the best and most constructive way of carrying out the search for an agreed settlement to the Cyprus problem.”<sup>210</sup> They started in June 1968 under the Secretary-General’s Good Offices through his Special Representative and the establishment of a direct channel of communication between the two communities, reactivated in 1972, but ended in April 1974.

Unlike the mandate of the peacekeeping force, that of the mediator does not prescribe any fixed period but was initiated as the force was deploying.

In his May 1974 report, the Secretary-General underlined “the increase in combat effectiveness of the armed forces of both sides in the island” and was planning to reduce UNFICYP partly to alleviate its financial situation.<sup>211</sup> So he was not very surprised when the tensions went to the extreme. UNFICYP could only be a witness of the Turkish intervention and adopted a position of strict neutrality, as it had “neither the authority nor the capability to prevent major clashes between the opposing forces.” Moreover, “like other United Nations peace-keeping operations, UNFICYP has no enforcement powers and relies mainly on negotiation and on the support and co-operation of the parties for the effective performance of its duties.”<sup>212</sup> The maximum it could do was “arrange local ceasefires to prevent further loss of life and damage to property.”<sup>213</sup> During these events, nine members of UNFICYP died and 65 were wounded. In his report in December 1974 on the July–August events, the Secretary-General acknowledged that “this chain of events confronted UNFICYP with a new situation not covered by its mandate, which was conceived in the context of the conflict between the two communities in Cyprus and not of military intervention by outside forces, or of full-scale hostilities between two national armies.” For more than 10 years, UNFICYP had been “able to maintain, mainly through negotiation, persuasion and interposition, the delicate balance of forces in the island, but this balance was destroyed by the events of July and August.”<sup>214</sup> Another major activity of UNFICYP was thereafter humanitarian relief assistance, coordinated by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees

210 S/11294, 22 May 1974, “Report by the Secretary-General on the UN Operation in Cyprus,” para. 76.

211 *Ibid*, para. 77 and 79.

212 S/11568, 6 December 1974, “Report by the Secretary-General on the UN Operation in Cyprus,” para. 77–78.

213 UN, *The Blue Helmets: A Review of United Nations Peace-keeping*, *op. cit.*, p. 285.

214 S/11568, 6 December 1974, “Report by the Secretary-General on the UN Operation in Cyprus,” para. 76.

(UNHCR), as requested by Resolution 361 (30 August 1974). A special humanitarian and economics branch was set up at UNFICYP headquarters,<sup>215</sup> from which the civilian activities of the Mission later grew.

### 3.5.2. 1975–2018: Monitoring the Division and Looking for a Solution

In his report of June 1975, the Secretary-General reported 3,000 shooting incidents. UNFICYP was required to keep the peace along ceasefire lines, instead of being deployed throughout the island, but was still expected “to prevent the recurrence of fighting.” More precisely, it performed a function of “surveillance over the area between the cease-fire lines” with “an established observation post system which provide[d] observation and reporting of possible cease-fire violations” (at 135 observation locations).<sup>216</sup> The Mission of Good Offices remained as necessary as before. Therefore, its mandate had not changed much; only its *modus operandi* had to. The Secretary-General continued to consider that “UNFICYP has continued to perform its function of maintaining calm and promoting normalisation in the island, a function that is indispensable if the various negotiations are to have a realistic chance of making progress.”<sup>217</sup>

During this period, the buffer zone became the UN Force base, a territory that had to be demilitarised and demined (see section 4.1 and box 7). In the absence of a formal agreement, UNFICYP recorded the military status quo as it appeared on 16 August 1974. Any changes to this were regarded as violations of the ceasefire. Only in 1993 were those violations specified (see box 8). At the time, UNFICYP helped maintain a link between the Greek Cypriots who remained in the north (in the Karpas peninsula near the tip of the island) and the Turkish Cypriots in the south. UNFICYP facilitated family visits between the two communities, provided supplies to them, and gave them access to equal healthcare and education, despite numerous restrictions placed by the respective authorities.

On the political front, after 1974, “the UN resumed its tireless quest for a negotiated settlement, either by organizing bilateral contacts or by circulating compromise texts. These meritorious efforts have led to virtually no results.”<sup>218</sup> Resolution 367 (12 March 1975) requested the Secretary-General “to undertake a new mission of good offices and to that end to convene the parties under new agreed procedures and place himself personally at their disposal, so that the resumption, the intensification and the progress of comprehensive negotiations, carried out in a reciprocal spirit of understanding and of moderation under his personal auspices and with his direction as appropriate, might thereby be facilitated.” A short breakthrough appeared in 1977

215 UN, *The Blue Helmets: A Review of United Nations Peace-keeping*, *op. cit.*, p. 288.

216 S/12342, 7 June 1977, “Report by the Secretary-General on the UN Operation in Cyprus,” para. 14. The report adds that in addition to surveillance from fixed points, UNFICYP conducts frequent mobile patrols along established routes throughout the area between the lines.

217 S/15149, 1 June 1982, “Report by the Secretary-General on the UN Operation in Cyprus,” para. 59.

218 Jean-François Drevet, *Chypre en Europe*, *op. cit.*, p. 273.

when the two leaders, Makarios and Denktaş, reached a “four-point agreement” defining the terms of reunification which constituted the baseline for a subsequent agreement including ten points with Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim as a neutral adviser (see box 5).

### Box 5. 1970s “points agreements”

Four-point agreement signed by Archbishop Makarios and Rauf Denktaş, 12 February 1977

1. We are seeking an independent, non-aligned, bi-communal Federal Republic.
2. The territory under the administration of each community should be discussed in the light of economic viability or productivity and land ownership.
3. Questions of principles like freedom of movement, freedom of settlement, the right of property and other specific matters, are open for discussion, taking into consideration the fundamental basis of a bi-communal federal system and certain practical difficulties which may arise for the Turkish Cypriot community.
4. The powers and functions of the central federal government will be such as to safeguard the unity of the country having regard to the bi-communal character of the State.

Ten-point agreement signed by Spyros Kyprianou and Rauf Denktaş, May 1979

1. It was agreed to resume the intercommunal talks on 15 June 1979.
2. The basis for the talks will be the Makarios-Denktaş guidelines of 12 February 1977 and the UN resolutions relevant to the Cyprus question.
3. There should be respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms of all citizens of the Republic.
4. The talks will deal with all territorial and constitutional aspects.
5. Priority will be given to reaching agreement of the resettlement of Varosha under UN auspices simultaneously with the beginning of the consideration by the interlocutors of the constitutional and territorial aspects of a comprehensive settlement. (...)
6. It was agreed to abstain from any action which might jeopardize the outcome of the talks, and special importance will be given to initial practical measures by both sides to promote goodwill, mutual confidence and the return to normal conditions.
7. The demilitarization of the Republic of Cyprus is envisaged, and matters relating thereto will be discussed.
8. The independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-alignment of the Republic should be adequately guaranteed against union in whole or in part with any other country and against any form of partition or secession.
9. The intercommunal talks will be carried out in a continuing and sustained matter, avoiding any delay.
10. The intercommunal talks will take place in Nicosia.

*Source: S/12323, 30 April 1977, “Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to Paragraph 6 of Security Council Resolution 401,” p. 2; Press and Information Office, Ministry of Interior, RoC, “Agreements – The 10-Point Agreement of 19 May 1979.”*

These agreements formed the basis of all subsequent UN proposals, including the Annan Plan. In 1984-1985, three rounds of “proximity talks” produced an “overall framework for a comprehensive solution aimed at establishing a Federal Republic of Cyprus”.<sup>219</sup> In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the two Secretaries-General Javier Pérez de Cuellar and Boutros Boutros-Ghali worked on a “set of ideas on an overall framework agreement on Cyprus” in the form of a “set guidelines for negotiations.”<sup>220</sup> In order to bridge the gap of trust between the two communities, he also devised a number of confidence-building measures such as, among others, the reopening of the International Nicosia Airport and of Varosha/Maraş, expert cooperation on education, cooperative arrangements on electricity and water, joint cultural and sport events, meetings of political party leaders of both sides, and meetings of the Chambers of Commerce and Industry of both sides.<sup>221</sup> In 1993, the Secretary-General decided to appoint a senior political figure to serve as his Special Representative for Cyprus, but on a non-resident basis.<sup>222</sup>

From January 1999, the Secretary-General resumed his Good Offices in the context of the changing context due to the upcoming membership of Cyprus with the EU. The posture of the UN during the discussions around the Annan Plan departed from the usual position of a facilitator that the UN had adopted since 1977 to a mediator with the power to make proposals. The EU prospect created a new momentum with a deadline, providing some discipline to the process. Unfortunately, this “new” UN role was not accompanied by “a binding threat to prevent parties from bailing out,”<sup>223</sup> and the EU had confirmed years before that a settlement on the “Cyprus problem” was not a precondition for joining it. Between November 2002 and April 2004, the Secretary-General tabled five successive drafts of what came to be known as the “Annan Plan” (see figure 5 for a summary of its main proposals). The suggestion to subject the plan “directly” to a referendum came only later to bypass the fierce opposition of Rauf Denktaş and the use of an “unrecognized parliament.”

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219 UN, *The Blue Helmets: A Review of United Nations Peace-keeping*, *op. cit.*, p. 288.

220 See Annex of S/24772, 21 August 1992, “Report of the Secretary-General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus.”

221 See Annex of S/26026, 1 July 1993, “Report of the Secretary-General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus.”

222 UN, *The Blue Helmets: A Review of United Nations Peace-keeping*, 1996 (third edition), New York: Department of Public Information, p. 153.

223 Interview, scholar, e-meeting, 04 August 2021.



Figure 5. Summary of the proposals of the Annan Plan



Source: Cyprus Dialogue Forum, <https://libguides.cydialogue.org/political/process>.

The approval of the Annan Plan would have changed UNFICYP into a “UN Settlement Implementation Mission in Cyprus (UNSIMIC)” as the security and stabilisation needs would have differed.<sup>224</sup> Its failure led to the review of UNFICYP, the adoption of a new concept of operation centred on “concentration with mobility,” and a reduction in size.<sup>225</sup> “Noting that considerable military capability still remains on the island,” and assessing “that a recurrence of fighting in Cyprus is increasingly unlikely, but that the potential for minor local violence and challenges to the ceasefire regime still exists,” the review recommended to the Secretary-General that UNFICYP should move “towards liaison, observation and mediation, rather than the deployment of forces to prevent the recurrence of fighting and to maintain the status quo.”<sup>226</sup> On the mediation front, its failure made the Mission of Good Offices resume its posture of strict facilitator and convener, as in 2006, “Papadopoulos insisted that he would not be rushed into a new peace process, nor would any future talks be subject to ‘stifling time frames’ or international arbitration.”<sup>227</sup> As a researcher put it, “the Annan Plan experience led the UN [to] become very timid, as it was thereafter not in charge of the process anymore.”<sup>228</sup> In the following years, negotiations intermittently continued between the leaders of both communities: between 2008 and 2012, between 2014 and 2016, and finally in 2017–2018. Each session generated more joint papers reflecting “convergences” (agreements in principle on the basis of “nothing is agreed until everything is agreed”), but some interviewees argued that successive failures in finalising a deal drove the two communities further apart each time.

In 2006, an agreement was made to restart substantive negotiations through the establishment of technical committees dealing with day-to-day issues and working groups designed to prepare proposals for the leaders on substantive aspects of the Cyprus problem. However, it took a change of leadership on the Greek Cypriot side for the technical committees to begin meeting and to bring about new “substantive talks” in March 2008, while reopening the Ledra Street/Lokmaci crossing point on both sides. The resumed peace talks were organised around six working groups and seven technical committees. The working groups covered EU matters, the economy, governance and power-sharing (and the issue of citizenship), property, security, and territory, with the objective of preparing the ground for the leader-level (Track I) negotiations on the substantive issues of the Cyprus problem. The technical committees would work on the day-to-day problems of the Cyprus issue and propose practical solutions “to improve the daily lives of Cypriots,” a type of confidence-building between the two communities,” “the only inclusive/participatory element of the peace negotiations,” as Professor Ahmed Sözen qualified them.<sup>229</sup> In his March 2011 report, Ban Ki-moon said that “the negotiations cannot be an open-ended process, nor can we afford interminable talks for the sake of talks. Now, more than ever,

224 Draft resolution S/2004/313 of 21 April 2004 vetoed by the Russian Federation.

225 S/2004/756, 24 September 2004, “Report of the Secretary-General on the UN operation in Cyprus,” para. 33–36.

226 *Ibid.*

227 James Ker-Lindsay, *The Cyprus Problem*, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

228 Interview, researcher, e-meeting, 17 June 2020.

229 Ahmet Sözen, “Re-Engaging the United Nations? Third parties and the Cyprus Conflict,” in Michális S. Michael and Yücel Vura (eds), *Cyprus and the Roadmap for Peace – A Critical Interrogation of the Conflict*, 2018, Edward Elgar Publishing.

both sides must demonstrate courageous and dedicated leadership and take practical steps to bring the negotiations to a conclusion. This will require the two leaders to build a greater level of trust, both between themselves and between their two communities.”<sup>230</sup> That month saw the 100th negotiation meeting since April 2008, without any agreement on the main issues.

The last high-level negotiations to date were undertaken on the island, in Mont-Pèlerin (2016 and 2017), Geneva (2017), and Crans Montana (2017). They created reasonably high levels of optimism on their possible outcomes, as “they incorporated a five-party conference with the participation of the guarantor powers and an exchange of maps outlining rival proposals for territorial boundaries took place”<sup>231</sup> and as “the two leaders had gone further than before.”<sup>232</sup> Assessments of these new “inconclusive” talks have been mixed. The Crans Montana negotiations were often mentioned by the EPON interlocutors. As an observer said, “each side went to Crans Montana protecting what they had.”<sup>233</sup> Greek interlocutors considered that the Turks failed at Crans Montana because they wanted a larger share of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), and they could not provide a clear date for the removal of their troops.<sup>234</sup> Most international interlocutors considered that, on the contrary, “in Crans Montana, Turkey put everything on the table, but (...) Cyprus did not want to accept anything.”<sup>235</sup> International interlocutors said that Turkey has been constructive and “was willing to make concessions” (on the reduction of its troops and its role as a Guarantor), “but the Greek Cypriot leader had not prepared home for a deal,”<sup>236</sup> and was “elusive” as he was running for elections the following year.<sup>237</sup> One interlocutor considered that “the talks failed because Anastasiades didn’t want to settle the Cyprus problem.” Another stated that Anastasiades “didn’t want to take that final step” and “surrounded himself with hardliners”.<sup>238</sup> A Turkish Cypriot participant present at the Conference on Cyprus in Crans Montana listed elements that were absent from the discussions: “mutual trust, mutual confidence, spirit of cooperation, power-sharing.”<sup>239</sup>

On the role of the UN, interlocutors underlined a number of mistakes made by the then newly appointed UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres. Several interlocutors have questioned why his “six-point framework” was only presented orally (see box 6), “resulting in each side having their vision of it and preventing the UN envoy from being able to mediate.”<sup>240</sup> According to John McGarry and Neophytos Loizides, “while Guterres was more assertive than his predecessor Ban had ever been, he arguably made two mistakes. First, he left the Conference on

230 S/2011/112, 4 March 2011, “Assessment status of the negotiations in Cyprus,” para. 22.

231 Amanda Paul, “Crans-Montana – A ‘now or never’ moment for a Cyprus settlement?” *Commentary*, 26 June 2017.

232 Interview, former UN staff, e-meeting, 9 July 2020. Interview, researcher, e-meeting, 18 January 2021.

233 Interview, e-meeting, 26 November 2020.

234 Interview, Athens, 15 November 2018.

235 Interview, former UN staff, e-meeting, 2 November 2020. Interview, researcher, e-meeting, 18 January 2021.

236 Interview, former UN staff, e-meeting, 2 April 2020.

237 Interview, former UN staff, New York, 22 June 2018.

238 Interview, researchers, e-meetings, 24 April 2020 and 17 June 2020.

239 Interview, TRNC official, e-meeting, 10 December 2020.

240 Interview, diplomat formerly posted in Nicosia, 18 November 2018.

June 30, shortly after it started and just after he presented the ‘Guterres Package’ and did not return until July 6. Second, he declared the talks over on the morning of July 7, shortly after he returned. His presence during the talks, or greater persistence after July 6th-7th ‘may’ have helped to prevent such a negative outcome.”<sup>241</sup> Other interlocutors interviewed questioned why Secretary-General Antonio Guterres left Crans Montana for a few days in 2017: “Was going to the G20 meeting more important than solving the Cyprus problem?” one reflected,<sup>242</sup> and why he also let the Greek Cypriot leader leave the table. One observer also considered the SASG “too optimistic” and “not enough present on the island” at the time.<sup>243</sup>

### Box 6. Six points of António Guterres (“Guterres Framework”)

Since UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres delivered the “six points” orally, there is no official document as such. The main points for discussion of his proposed “framework”, the objective of which is to reach a strategic agreement that would serve as a basis for a comprehensive solution, are the following:

On territory, Guterres’ proposals indicate the Turkish Cypriot side needs to adjust the map to address some concerns from the Greek Cypriot side.

On political equality, the framework suggested a rotating Presidency with a 2:1 ratio and decision-making (effective participation) based on a simple majority with one positive vote, and a deadlock resolving mechanism in cases where issues are of vital interest to the communities.

On property, the framework considers two forms of property administration: one for areas under territorial adjustment that would give priority to dispossessed owners, and another for areas not under territorial adjustment, which would be organised to give priority to current users.

On equivalent treatment, the framework considered the free movement of goods and persons. For those seeking permanent residence, equitable treatment will be granted to Greek and Turkish nationals in Cyprus.

On security, the Secretary-General suggested that, “areas that are under the Treaty of Guarantees could be replaced by adequate implementation monitoring mechanisms, covering various aspects, to be mutually agreed. In some of these, Guarantor Powers could be involved. A security system should ensure that both communities feel safe in a united Cyprus, while the security of one should not come at the detriment of the other.”

On troops, the Secretary-General considered that this issue (numbers, withdrawals if and when they will need to leave, timelines, etc.) should be agreed at the highest level when the time is right.

*Source: Esra Aygin, “The way is clear if there is will,” blog article, 11 February 2018 (<https://esraaygin.blogspot.com/2018/02/the-way-is-clear-if-there-is-will.html?m=0>). Based on the Report of the Secretary-General on his Mission of Good Offices in Cyprus (S/2017/814, 28 September 2017). See also <https://libguides.cydialogue.org/political/framework>.*

241 John McGarry and Neophytos Loizides, “The UN in 21st Century Cyprus: Meditation, Mediation-Lite and Beyond,” *loc. cit.* Interview with one of the authors, e-meeting, 4 May 2021.

242 Interview, member of NGO, Nicosia, 14 June 2021.

243 Interview, diplomat formerly posted in Nicosia, 18 November 2018.



The majority of interlocutors considered that Crans Montana probably put an end to the negotiations on a BBF, and since then, the two sides hinted at alternative approaches.

In July 2017, the Conference on Cyprus closed inconclusively after hope and expectations had been raised during the 2015–2017 phase of negotiations. As Secretary-General Guterres explained in his September 2017 report, the Conference ended because the parties “remained far apart with respect to the trust and determination necessary to seek common ground through mutual accommodation, ultimately preventing them from reaching the broad outlines of a strategic understanding across the negotiating chapters that could have paved the way for the final settlement deal.”<sup>244</sup> The majority of interlocutors considered that the Conference on Cyprus in Crans Montana probably put an end to the negotiations on a BBF, and since then, the two sides hinted at alternative approaches. In October 2018, Nikos Anastasiades spoke of an undefined “loose federation” and even a confederation; in April 2018, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, the Turkish Foreign Minister, tabled a two-state solution for Cyprus.<sup>245</sup> In his June 2018 report, the Secretary-General “expressed the willingness of the UN to support the process if and when they were ready to resume meaningful talks with the requisite political will.” However, as one civil society interlocutor summarised the situation, since the Crans Montana negotiations, “nobody sees a way forward.”<sup>246</sup> Four more years passed before the next attempt to resume talks was made (see section 4.6.1 for developments on the “Post Crans Montana situation”).

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244 S/2017/814, 28 September 2017, “Report of the Secretary-General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus,” para. 26.

245 Esra Aygün, “Cyprus may never be reunified again,” *loc. cit.*

246 Interview, member of an NGO, Nicosia, 16 June 2021.



## 4. An Overview of the UN Presence in Cyprus

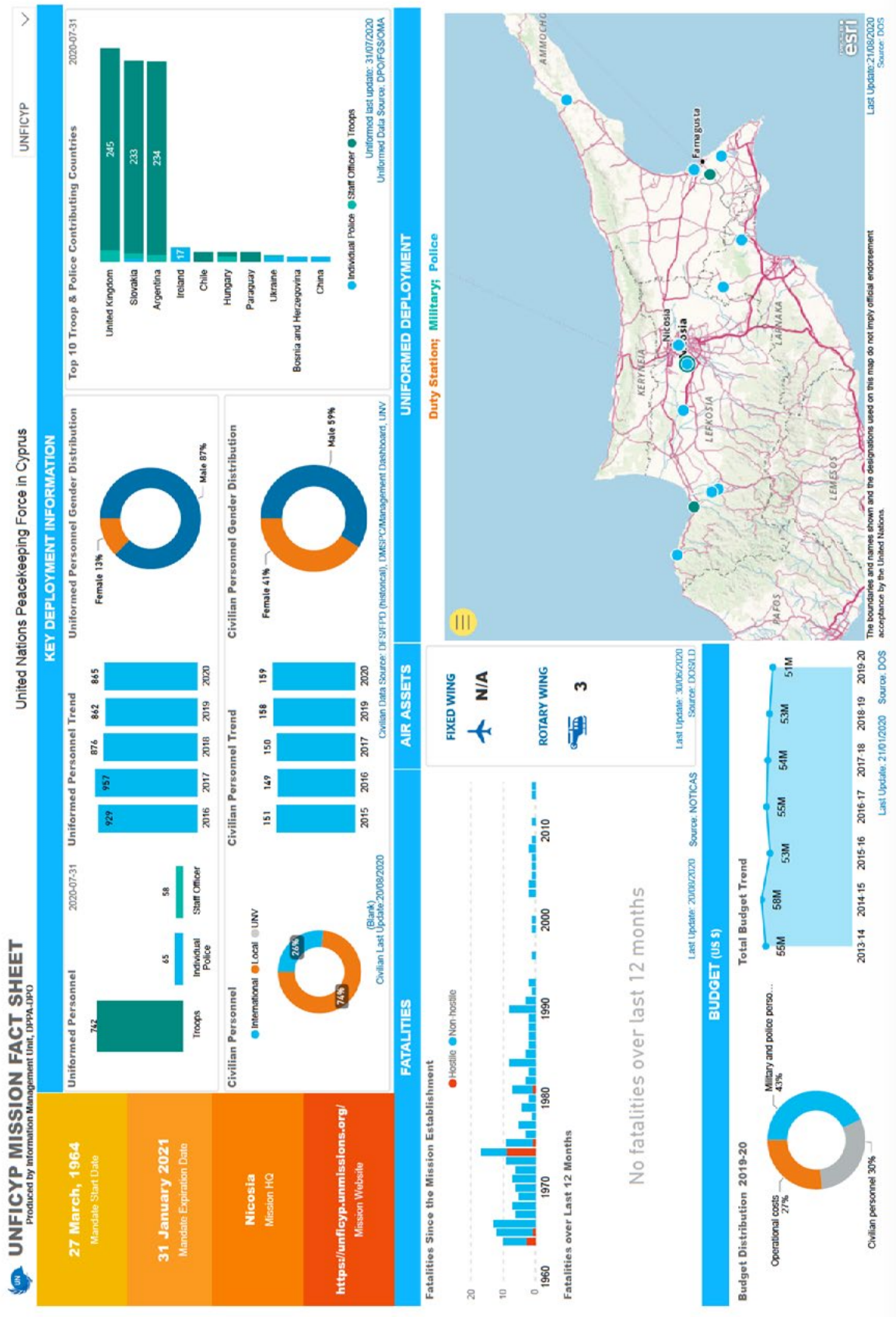
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The UN presence in Cyprus is made of two main elements: UNFICYP as the peacekeeping force and the peacemaking element with the Secretary-General's Good Offices Mission or the OSASG on Cyprus (OSASG-Cyprus). These two Missions have been kept separate from the beginning even if, before the 1990s, the separation was not as clear as since 2008, when the head of UNFICYP formally became the deputy head of the Good Offices (see annex 1). There was also a humanitarian component at the start, which developed after 1974 with the appointment by the UNHCR of a coordinator of humanitarian assistance (a role that ceased to exist in 1998 as the UNHCR focused from then on asylum seekers<sup>247</sup>), and since 1981 with the creation of the Committee on Missing Persons (CMP) (see box 9). One could consider that a third element exists, a peacebuilding one, which is scattered among some activities undertaken by the civil affairs section of UNFICYP, and those undertaken by a small UN Development Program (UNDP) office with the role of supporting the reconciliation process on the island.

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<sup>247</sup> More precisely, the UNHCR's current role in Cyprus is "to assist the Government to further refine and improve its asylum legislation and the procedures and capacities for a refugee protection system fully in line with international standards", see <https://www.unhcr.org/cy/unhcr-in-cyprus>.

Figure 6. UNFICYP Mission Fact Sheet



Source: [https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/unficyp\\_aug20.pdf](https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/unficyp_aug20.pdf)

UNFICYP (the largest of the three UN elements in Cyprus) has three features that are considered as peculiarities compared to the features of other peacekeeping operations, even if in a way each UN Mission should be considered *sui generis*. The specificities of UNFICYP are the following:

- UNFICYP is a Force, despite its civilian leadership (at least since the end of 1980s);<sup>248</sup>
- One of the main troop-contributing countries (TCCs) to UNFICYP is a direct actor in the context of the conflict: the UK in its role of “guarantor”; and<sup>249</sup>
- The budget of the Force is paid in part by one of the parties to the conflict, i.e. the host nation (RoC), and by one of the “Guarantors” (Greece).

In his initial 1964 Aide-mémoire, the Secretary-General explicitly stated that “troops of UNFICYP shall not take the initiative in the use of armed force. The use of armed force is permissible only in self-defence.” Moreover, “when acting in self-defence, the principle of minimum force shall always be applied, and armed force will be used only when all peaceful means of persuasion have failed.” Furthermore, “no action is to be taken by the troops of UNFICYP which is likely to bring them into direct conflict with either community in Cyprus.”<sup>250</sup> Another Aide-mémoire was written by the Secretariat in 1989, updated in June 2018, “to supervise the cease-fire in Cyprus.”<sup>251</sup>

UNFICYP is a force with troops deployed by one of the major actors in the conflict, Britain (a “Guarantor” and a permanent Member of the Security Council), since the beginning. Britain also has held the position of chief of staff in the military component. In fact, “Britain’s most enduring contribution of UN peacekeepers has been its post-colonial deployment with the UN Force in Cyprus.”<sup>252</sup> The force is only one of several military actors present along the buffer zone: 27,000 Turkish troops,<sup>253</sup> around 1,000 Greek troops, 12,000 from the Greek Cypriot National Guard, and 3,500 British troops in the sovereign bases, one of them (Dhekelia) being adjacent to the Green Line.

UNFICYP is financed according to a unique formula derived from the period when the Force was created and from a long period with a severe deficit as the budget was only funded by voluntary contributions (see box 14 in section 5.3.3). It was the third mission in that period to be

248 The head of mission of the other “UN Forces” (UNIFIL, UNDOF and UNISFA) is the Force Commander.

249 Up to the 1990s, the UK was also paying the national staff of UNFICYP.

250 S/5653, 11 April 1964, “Note by the Secretary-General,” para. 16-18.

251 To date, neither version has been formally endorsed by either side but the Security Council has expressed its support for the 2018 Aide-memoire and requested both sides to abide by it.

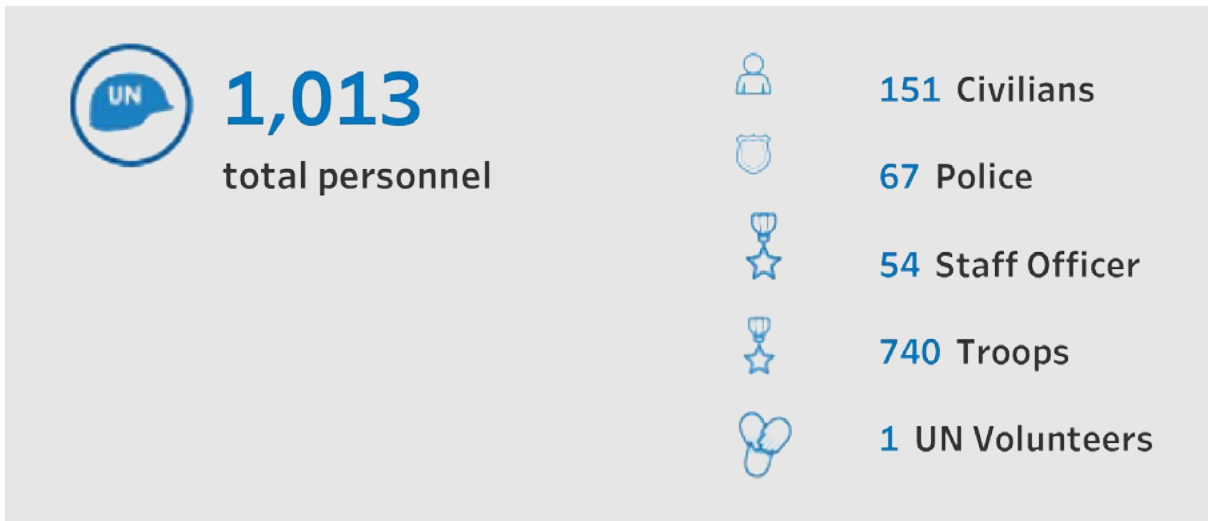
252 David Curran and Paul D. Williams, *The UK and UN Peace Operations: A Case for Greater Engagement*, Oxford Research Group, May 2016.

253 The official number of Turkish troops stationed in Northern Cyprus is 40,000 but it has fluctuated. The number of 27,000 was apparently given in the Crans Montana talks. The UN currently estimates the number to be between 12,000 and 22,000. Interviews, e-meeting and meeting in Nicosia, 26 November 2020 and 8 June 2021.

funded by the interested parties: the UN Security Force in West New Guinea (UNSF) of 1962-1963 was funded by the Netherlands and Indonesia, and the UN Yemen Observation Mission (UNYOM) of 1963-1964 was equally funded by Egypt and Saudi Arabia. As for the period from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022, the General Assembly, by its resolution 75/299, appropriated the amount of \$57.5 million, inclusive of the voluntary contribution of one-third of the net cost of the Force, equivalent to \$18.1 million, from the Government of Cyprus and the voluntary contribution of \$6.5 million from the Government of Greece. The OSASG budget is part of the Organization’s regular programme budget, and the proposed programme budget for 2022 to be discussed at the 76th session of the General Assembly amounts to \$2.9 million.<sup>254</sup>

## 4.1. The Current Deployment of UNFICYP

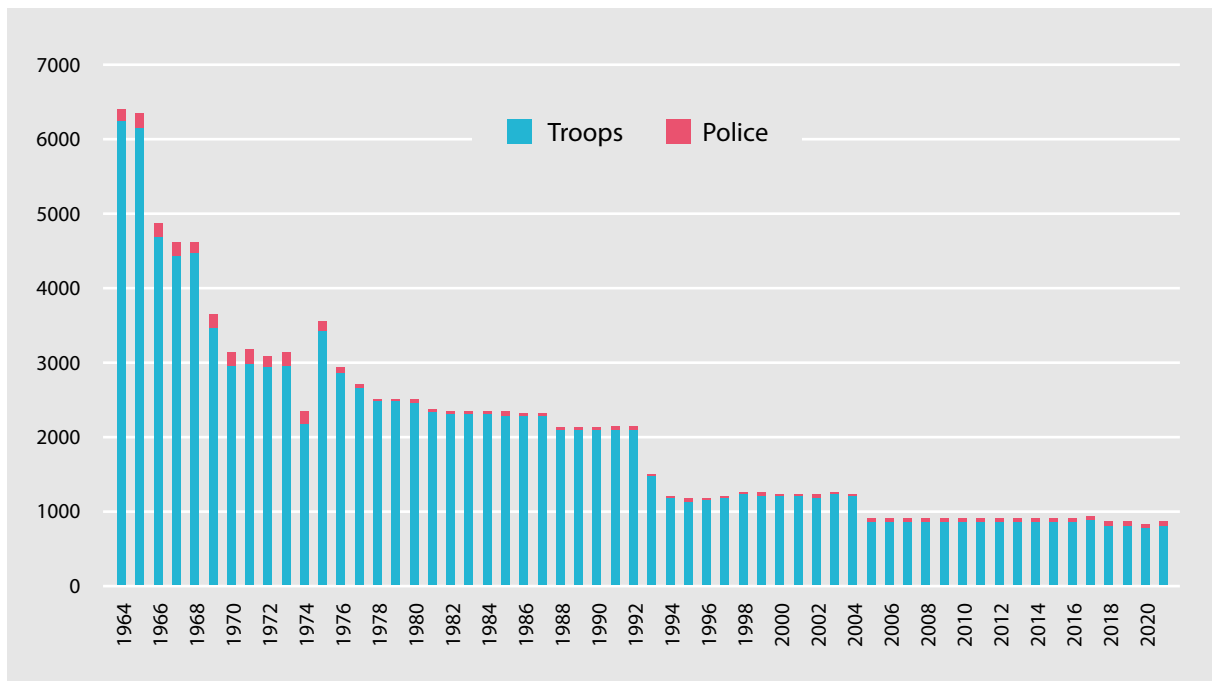
Figure 7. UNFICYP deployed personnel



*Deployed number of personnel as of August 2021. Civilian data as of May 2018.  
Source: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/unficyf>.*

As of 30 July 2021, UNFICYP had 741 troops, 52 staff officers, 67 police officers from 17 contributing countries (with Argentina, the UK, and Slovakia as the top three contributors), and 152 civilians (i.e. international staff, national staff, and UN Volunteers). Among them were 82 female military and 28 female police officers, 19 female international civilian personnel, 50 local female staff, and one female UN volunteer (see figure 15 in section 5.6).

254 A/76/6 (sect.3)/Add.2, 14 May 2021, “Proposed programme budget for 2022, Part II Political affairs, Section 3 Political affairs, Special political missions, Thematic cluster I: Special and personal envoys, advisers and representatives of the Secretary-General,” pp. 5-12.

**Figure 8. Evolution of UNFICYP's uniformed personnel since 1964**

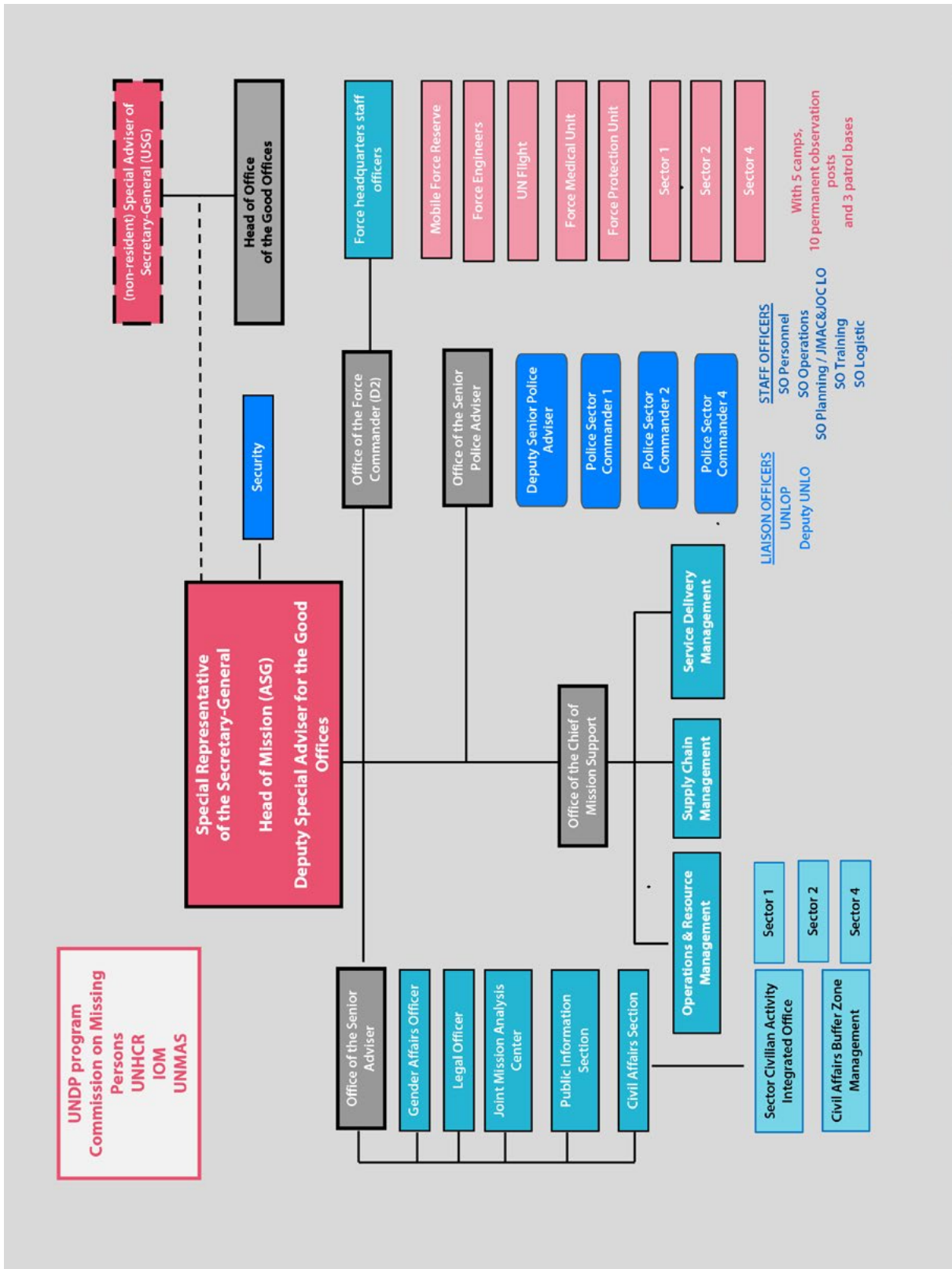
Source: Created by Alexandra Novosseloff from the Secretary-General reports on the UN Operation in Cyprus.

In creating “conditions conducive” to a successful peace process, UNFICYP has two main strategic objectives in which all components of the Mission take part in an integrated way: to prevent tensions and instability between the two communities, in particular in the buffer zone, and to support the building of relations, cooperation and trust across the island. UNFICYP has three main components: the civilian component under the authority of a senior adviser (sections that are engaged in aiding political as well as humanitarian and bicomunal contacts); the police, under the authority of a senior police adviser, which contributes to the maintenance of law and order in the buffer zone; and the military component deployed to ensure, to the extent possible, the maintenance of the military status quo along the ceasefire lines and under the authority of the Force Commander (see organisational chart 1). This structure and division of tasks have not changed since the end of the 1990s, but the recent 2017 Strategic Review recommended the creation of a Joint Operations Centre to provide integrated situational awareness, facilitate operational activities undertaken by individual mission components, and ensure effective information sharing, as well as a Joint Mission Analysis Centre to provide multisource integrated analysis and predictive assessments based on information collected from all components.<sup>255</sup>

255 S/2017/1008, 28 November 2017, “Strategic review of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus,” para. 48.



Chart 1. Organisational chart of UNFICYP



Source: Created by Alexandra Novosseloff from the UNFICYP budget report (A/75/746, 12 February 2021).

The buffer zone is the UNFICYP headquarters, where all three components, civilian, police and military, play an important role in maintaining peace. No death has been reported there since 1996.

The buffer zone is the UNFICYP headquarters (see map 5 of the Mission's deployment), where all three components, civilian, police and military, play an important role in maintaining peace. No death has been reported there since 1996. Between 1990 and 2011, the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) has helped demine the buffer zone with the clearance of 73 mined areas and the destruction of more than 27,000 land mines (antipersonnel and anti-tank mines). Not all minefields have disappeared, however, but the parties are now denying access to them. In his 2012 report, the Secretary-General clearly stated that "the sides continue to withhold access to the four remaining mined areas in the buffer zone, namely, one located south of Varosha under the control of the Turkish forces and three in the Laroujina pocket under the control of the National Guard. At the same time, no agreement was reached with the Turkish forces or the National Guard to extend demining operations to areas outside the buffer zone. Under these circumstances, demining in Cyprus ceased in January 2011."<sup>256</sup> Nevertheless, UNMAS has maintained its activities (see box 7), and in July 2016, it became an integral component of UNFICYP. UNMAS also provides assistance to the CMP to facilitate safe access to areas where it conducts activities and provides technical guidance to UNFICYP for small arms ammunition storage. According to the Mission, there are currently some estimated 48 suspected hazardous areas (mines), mostly along the ceasefire lines, although these are well-marked.

### Box 7. UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) activities in Cyprus



#### 1. Confidence building measures

UNMAS assistance is focused on the removal of mines and ERW that create barriers between communities and threaten peace. UNMAS operations contribute to confidence building measures and enable progress towards the implementation of a final settlement agreement. UNMAS also provides technical advice and training to the Committee on Missing Persons. The assistance facilitates safe access to sites where it conducts activities and contributes to its efforts to promote reconciliation between communities.

256 S/2011/332, 31 May 2011, "Report of the Secretary-General on the UN operation in Cyprus," para. 9-10.



## 2. Return to normal conditions

UNFICYP data indicates that there are 47 suspected hazardous areas in Cyprus that may be contaminated with mines and/or ERW, amounting to approximately 1.7 million square meters of land. Each area requires survey to determine the need for clearance. To prepare for future surveys and clearance, UNMAS conducts planning and coordination; data analysis and management of information on minefields and suspected hazardous areas; and conducts assessments. The activities help ensure that survey and clearance can get underway to release safe land to communities as soon as access is authorised by the sides.



## 3. Safer Freedom of Movement

UNMAS is committed to implementing activities to help reach the shared goal of a mine-free Cyprus, where communities are free from the threat of mines and ERW. To achieve this goal, UNMAS conducts advocacy and outreach activities to raise awareness and promote a mine-free Cyprus; provides training in mine/ERW awareness for UNFICYP personnel to help increase force protection and the implementation of UNFICYP activities; supports planning and coordination of UN activities; and implements the establishment or maintenance of minefield marking, as needed.

UNMAS activities facilitate the achievement of UNFICYP's mandated objectives, as described in UN Security Council Resolution 2537 (July 2020), and support progress towards a mine-free Cyprus.

Source: <https://www.unmas.org/en/programmes/cyprus>.

Before 1976, the UN referred to “the Green Line” (in particular in Nicosia), the “confrontation lines,” and “the area between the [ceasefire] lines.” Only in a report of December 1976 is a “buffer area between the two lines, which is patrolled exclusively by UNFICYP” described.<sup>257</sup> Today, the buffer zone varies between less than 3m wide in Nicosia to some 7km near Athienou, and its length is 180km from Kato Pyrgos on the northwest coast to the east coast at Dherinia/Famagusta. The buffer zone covers about 3% of the island. In the East, the Line is interrupted by the British base at Dhekelia, and it does not surround the inaccessible Turkish Cypriot exclave of Kokkina on the western end of the island. The buffer zone is off-limits to the armed forces of both sides, but it is not empty of inhabitants. About 10,000 Cypriots reside there in four Greek villages and one bicommunal village, Pyla. The 1976 report of the Secretary-General stated that “it is an essential element of the cease-fire that neither side can exercise authority or jurisdiction beyond its own forward military lines or make any military moves beyond those lines.” In this area, “the ‘status quo’, including innocent civilian activities and the exercise of property rights, is maintained, without prejudice to an eventual political settlement concerning the disposition of the area.”<sup>258</sup> Furthermore, “UNFICYP has endeavoured to facilitate normal farming activity,

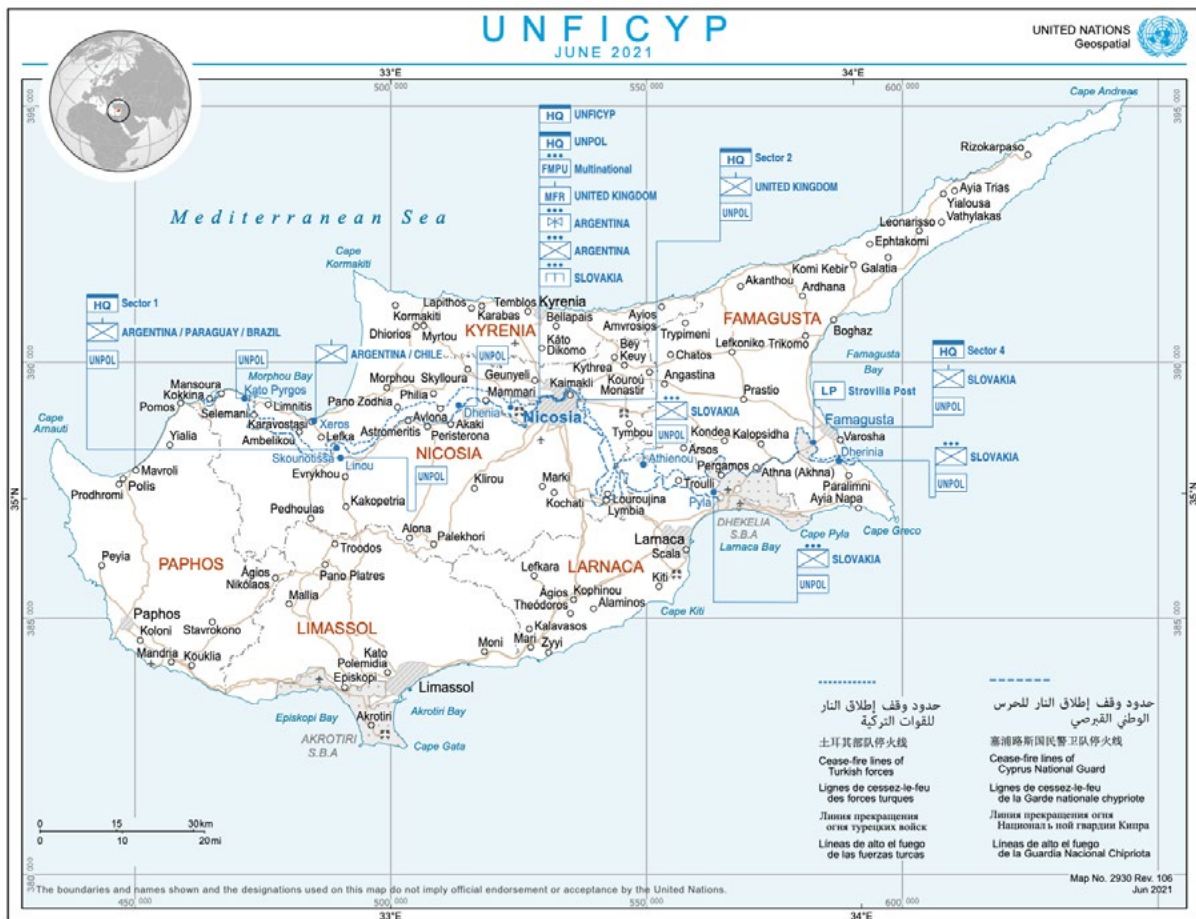
257 S/12253, 9 December 1976, “Report by the Secretary-General on the UN Operation in Cyprus,” para. 19-20.

258 *Ibid.*

especially by providing escorts to enable Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot farmers to work their fields and orchards in sensitive areas” in the buffer zone.

UNFICYP’s work is complicated by the absence of a formal ceasefire: “There is no formal agreement between UNFICYP and the two sides on the complete delineation of the buffer zone as recorded by UNFICYP, nor on the use and control of the buffer zone. As a result, UNFICYP finds itself supervising, by loose mutual consent, two constantly disputed cease-fire lines.”<sup>259</sup> The Mission tries to enforce strict discipline along the ceasefire lines, “on the premise that both sides wish to prevent incidents.”<sup>260</sup> This work is complicated by the fact that the ceasefire lines are, for the most part, unmarked unless at times by a few UN barrels.

Map 5. UNFICYP’s deployment as of June 2021



Source: <https://reliefweb.int/map/cyprus/cyprus-unficy-p-deployment-map-june-2021>.

Note: Sector 3 was dismantled in 1994 when the Canadian troops left, but the other sectors kept their original number.

259 S/26777, 22 November 1993 “Report of the Secretary-General in connection with the Security Council’s comprehensive reassessment of the UN Operation in Cyprus,” para. 12.

260 S/1999/657, 8 June 1999, “Report of the Secretary-General on the UN operation in Cyprus,” para. 20.



The UNFICYP headquarters are located in Nicosia, inside the buffer zone, near the former Nicosia Airport. As described in the latest report of the Secretary-General on the UNFICYP budget, the headquarters for the Mission and sector 2 of the area of deployment, and the Office of the SRSG/Head of Mission, are located in Nicosia. The headquarters for sector 1 and 4 are based in Skouriotissa and Famagusta, respectively. The Force provides administrative, logistical, and technical support for the substantive, military, and UN police personnel located at its main sector headquarters and deployed at six camps, 12 patrol bases and observation posts, and eight UN police stations across the island.<sup>261</sup>

The Secretary-General has always had a Special Representative in Cyprus. During the first year of UN presence in Cyprus, this position was combined with the one of mediator, but the functions were separated when the role of mediator became very active. After the resignation of Galo Plaza Lasso in December 1965, the position became vacant. In March 1966, the Secretary-General decided “to broaden the responsibilities” of the Special Representative, who was authorised “to employ his good offices.”<sup>262</sup> This Special Representative seemed to exert overall authority over the civilian personnel deployed as the Force remained under the command of the Force Commander. Between 1966 and 1977, the Special Representative combined the role of the (informal) civilian head of UNFICYP and envoy or facilitator in the talks organised between the two sides. In 1978, the position of Deputy Special Representative was created by the Secretary-General. Early in 1993, the Secretary-General decided “to appoint a senior international political figure to serve as Special Representative for Cyprus, but on a non-resident basis,” while the Deputy Special Representative remained a resident figure in Cyprus.<sup>263</sup> It remained unclear who the head of UNFICYP was until August 1994 when, “in line with the administrative arrangements in most other missions,” the Secretary-General decided to designate his Special Representative “as Chief of Mission of UNFICYP,” and the Deputy would assume this function in the Special Representative’s absence.<sup>264</sup> The Special Representative progressively assumed the function of Chief of the Mission. In April 1997, the Special Representative became a Special Adviser on Cyprus (see the list of special advisers, special representatives, and force commanders in annex 1).<sup>265</sup>

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261 A/75/746, 12 February 2021, “Budget for the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus for the period from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022, Report of the Secretary-General,” para. 5. For a description of the sectors, see <https://unficyp.unmissions.org/sector-1>, <https://unficyp.unmissions.org/sector-2>, and <https://unficyp.unmissions.org/sector-4>.

262 S/7180, 4 March 1966, Note by the Secretary-General.

263 S/26777, 22 November 1993, “Report of the Secretary-General in connection with the Security Council’s comprehensive reassessment of the UN Operation in Cyprus,” para. 42.

264 S/1994/971, 15 August 1994, “Letter Dated 10 August 1994 from the Secretary-General Addressed to the President of the Security Council.”

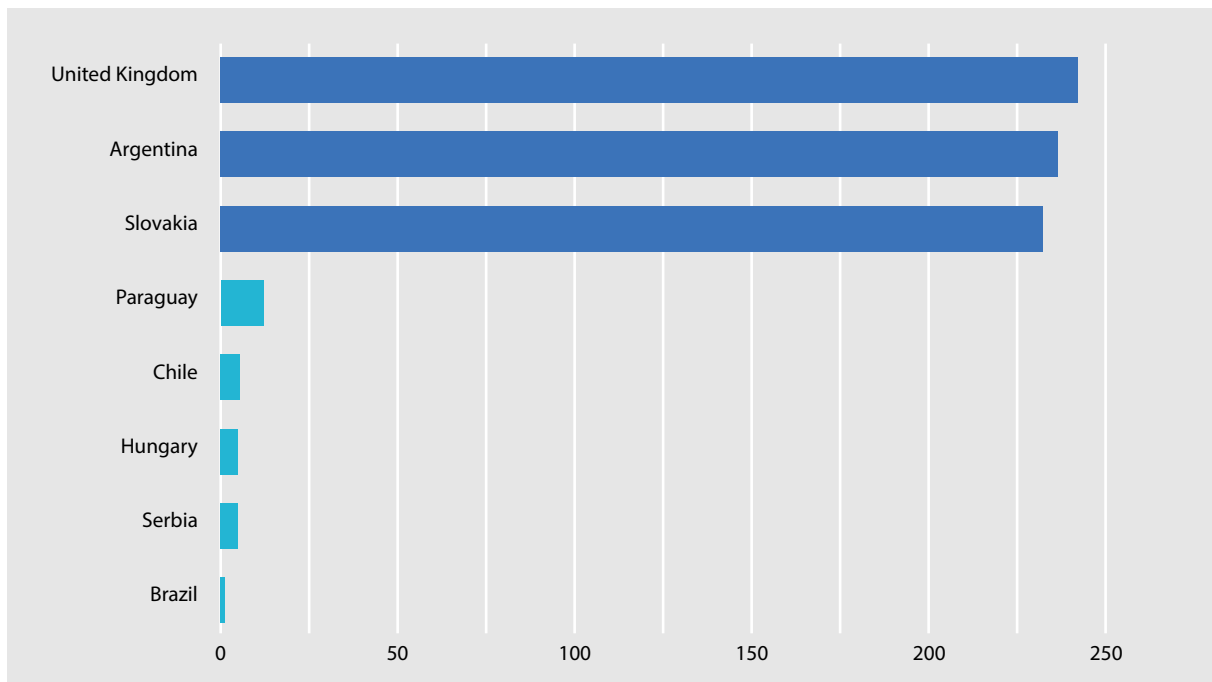
265 There is an unwritten rule that says that no P5 citizen should head UNFICYP or the Good Offices, and for a long time the parties did not want to have a European citizen as an SRSG either.



## 4.2. The Military Component: Managing the Buffer Zone through a Combination of Static Observation Posts and Mobile Patrols

The Force Commander is the head of the military component. In the absence of the SRSG, they are the UNFICYP deputy head of mission. Since 2014 (with the exception of Major General Mohammad Humayun Kabir from Bangladesh in 2016-2018), UNFICYP Force Commanders have been from NATO countries or NATO-partner countries, which has “added value” to the relationship with representatives from the Guarantors.<sup>266</sup> Traditionally, the position of military chief-of-staff has been held by a British officer, as the UK holds a particular position in the Cyprus issue and has for many years been one of the top three troop contributors to the UN Force. Britain has been a permanent element within UNFICYP since 1964. Argentina and Slovakia have also been long-standing contributors to UNFICYP, with more than 200 soldiers and police officers deployed from each nation. UNFICYP has 25 contributing countries, mainly from the European continent (see figure 10).

**Figure 9. UNFICYP’s current top 10 military troop contributors (as of 31 July 2021)**

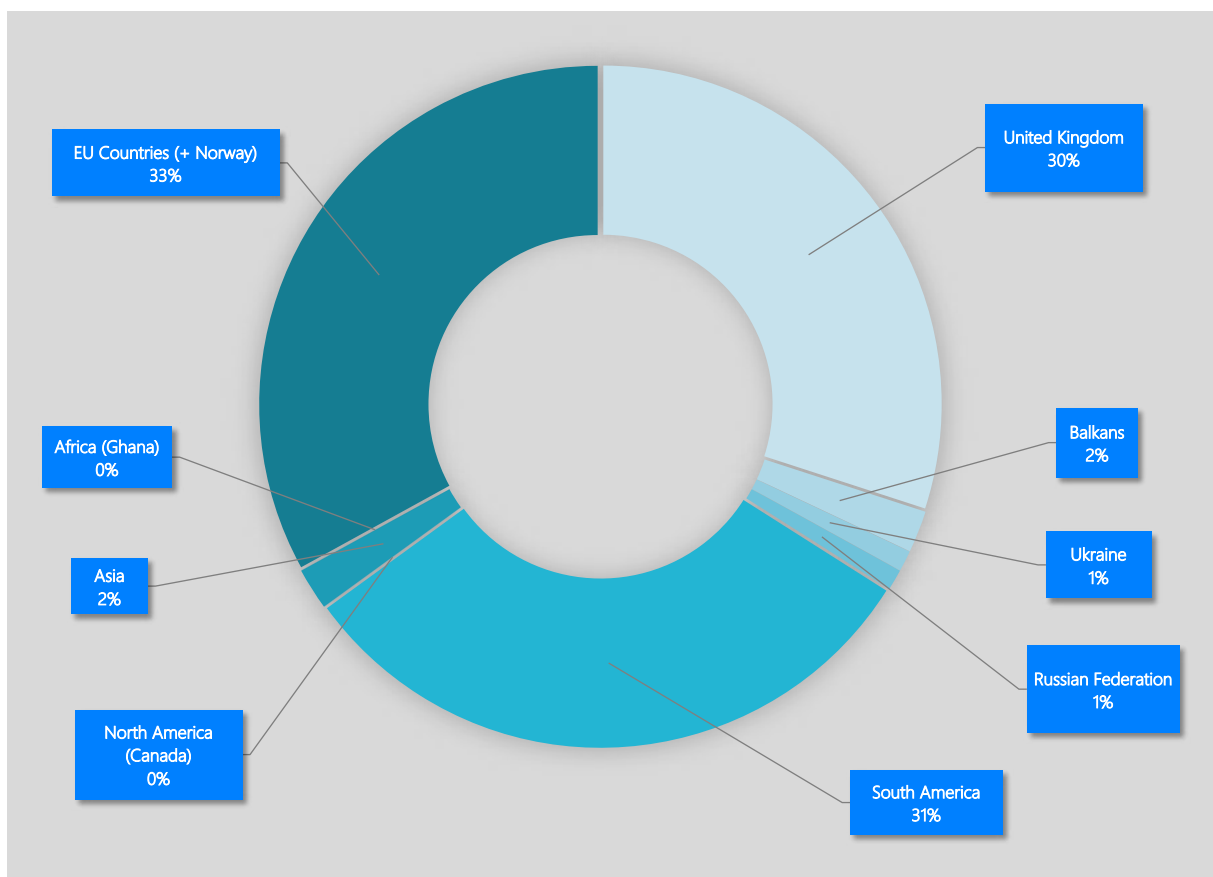


Source: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/data>.

266 Interview, former UN staff, e-meeting, 1 April 2020.

The representation of women in the force has exceeded that of other peacekeeping missions. Three women (two from Norway and one from Australia) have led the military component as Force Commander since 2014. As of July 2021, women represented 9.8% of troops and 26.9% of staff officers, while representing 9.8% of the military component overall.<sup>267</sup> This reflects an increase in representation since 2017. These statistics show that UNFICYP is exceeding the UN’s Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy targets, which aims to have 18% women military observers and staff officers, and 8% of troops by 2021.<sup>268</sup> However, UNFICYP is still below the higher target of 15% overall participation of women in the military component identified in the 2017 Strategic Review of UNFICYP.<sup>269</sup>

**Figure 10. Geographical distribution of UNFICYP’s contributors (as of 31 July 2021)**



*Elaborated by Alexandra Novosseloff. Source: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/data>.*

The main task of the UNFICYP military component is to prevent a recurrence of fighting through strict adherence to the military status quo in the buffer zone and along both ceasefire lines. This mandate was expanded to include the observation of the de facto ceasefire declared

<sup>267</sup> UN, “Contribution of Uniformed Personnel to UN by Mission, Personnel Type, and Gender,” 7 July 2021.

<sup>268</sup> UN, “Women Peacekeepers: Gender Imbalance,” July 2021.

<sup>269</sup> S/2017/1008, 28 November 2017, “Strategic review of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus,” p. 14.

on 14 August 1974, after the Turkish military operation, as well as the control of the buffer zone between the forces of the Cypriot National Guard and those of the Turks and Turkish Cypriots. The Secretary-General has often described Cyprus “as one of the most militarized places per capita in the world.”<sup>270</sup> In addition to maintaining the military status quo, UNFICYP must also preserve the integrity of the buffer zone from unauthorised entry or activities by civilians (in coordination with UNFICYP’s Civil Affairs section).

The military component of UNFICYP has evolved from manning observation posts and points (at one time, maintaining more than 100 of these) to having a more mobile posture after 2005, which implies that Blue Berets cannot be everywhere all the time: “it is a thinly spread force,” as described by a former Force Commander. UNFICYP Blue Berets nevertheless monitor the ceasefire lines and buffer zone 24/7, albeit not in their totality as the Mission does not have such capacity. UNFICYP focuses on hotspots, such as Avlona village in Sector 4. Mobile patrols are conducted on foot, in vehicles, on bicycles, and by helicopter. In the past few years, UNFICYP increased its capacity through technology to monitor the buffer zone day and night.<sup>271</sup> The “Mobile Force Reserve” (of around 65 British soldiers) is considered a key capacity that enables the Force to fill the possible gaps in the different sectors at times.<sup>272</sup> UNFICYP has 28 Military Observer Liaison Officers (MOLOs) and Sector Civil Affairs and Military Liaison Officers (SCAMLOs) who are described by the UN as “the backbone of the way UNFICYP deals with the opposing forces, be it at regimental level in the sectors or at the highest levels in the Headquarters in the pursuance of conflict resolution, improved communications and confidence building.”<sup>273</sup> As MOLOs deal directly with the opposing forces, SCAMLOs deal primarily with civilians to reduce tensions that may arise between civilians and military elements.

The main task of the UNFICYP military component is to prevent a recurrence of fighting through strict adherence to the military status quo in the buffer zone and along both ceasefire lines.

Regarding the security situation, the UNFICYP military authorities believe there is currently little risk of significant military action, but there is a possibility of low-intensity action as the result of a certain lack of discipline on both sides. There are frequent provocations in places where military posts face each other. Small tensions occur every day, often for petty reasons, and Blue Berets (in particular through the military observer and liaison structure which was strengthened

270 S/2018/676, 11 July 2018, “Report of the Secretary-General – UN Operation in Cyprus,” para. 4.

271 S/2017/1008, 28 November 2017, “Strategic review of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus,” para. 32.

272 The Mobile Force Reserve (created in 1997) is held at high readiness and trained in a variety of tasks from public order to incident response. It is able to provide support to Sectors and other elements of UNFICYP, including routine tasks such as patrolling. See <https://unficy.unmissions.org/other-key-units>.

273 See <https://unficy.unmissions.org/other-key-units>.

upon recommendation of the 2017 Strategic Review<sup>274</sup>) intervene on a daily basis to manage low-level disputes or misunderstandings caused by civilian activities or cases of ill-discipline of the military. In most cases, UNFICYP's liaison teams manage to de-escalate situations in the buffer zone rapidly by convincing parties to “honourably withdraw rather than become implacably stuck.”<sup>275</sup> However, with about 1,000 soldiers along each of the ceasefire lines, consisting mainly of young conscripts facing each other daily along the respective ceasefire lines, there is a constant risk of miscalculation between the two parties, and “everybody has a weapon in the island.”<sup>276</sup>

### Box 8. Categories of violations of the ceasefire as established by UNFICYP

UNFICYP considers the main categories of cease-fire violations to be:

- a. Any move of military elements forward of their cease-fire line into the buffer zone;
- b. The discharge of any type of weapons or explosives, without prior notification, along the cease-fire lines or up to a distance of 1,000 meters behind them;
- c. Building of new or strengthening of existing military positions within 400 meters of the opposing cease-fire line;
- d. Building of new or strengthening of existing military positions more than 400 meters from the opposing cease-fire line if UNFICYP considers this incompatible with the spirit of the cease-fire;
- e. Overflights of the buffer zone by military or civilian aircraft, or flights by military aircraft, of either side, within 1,000 meters of the buffer zone;
- f. Troop deployment and training exercises in an area closer than 1,000 meters from their cease-fire line without prior notification;
- g. Provocative acts between the two sides, such as shouting abuse, indecent gestures or throwing stones.

*Source: S/26777 (22 November 1993), “Report of the Secretary-General in connection with the Security Council’s comprehensive reassessment of the UN Operation in Cyprus,” para. 10.*

UNFICYP, in particular through their MOLOs, has only a formal relationship with the Turkish army and the National Guard (the commander of which is always a retired Greek General, and whose Chief of Staff and other key positions are also held by Greek nationals), and with liaison officers from forces working at UNFICYP headquarters. Security Council Resolution 2506 (30 January 2020), however, “called for the establishment of an effective mechanism for direct military contacts between the sides and the relevant involved parties, and urged UNFICYP,

274 *Ibid*, para. 38–39.

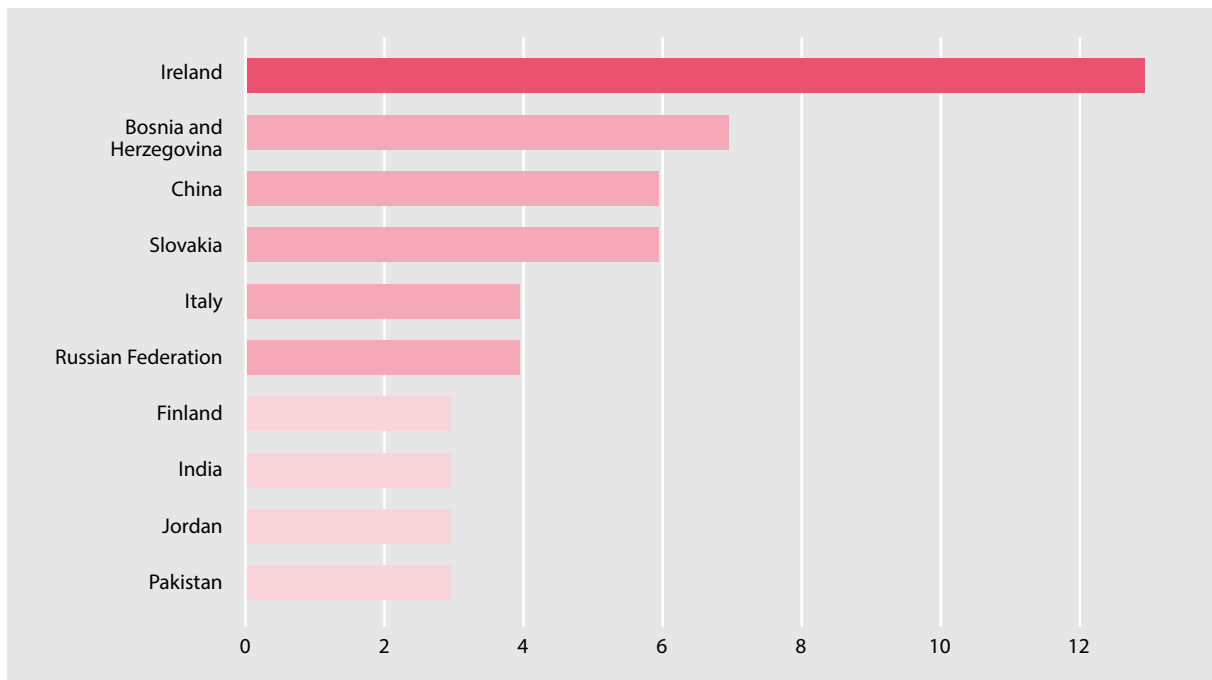
275 Interview, former FC, e-meeting, 26 November 2020.

276 Interview, UNFICYP staff, e-meeting, 25 November 2020. See also S/2018/676, 11 July 2018, “Report of the Secretary-General – UN Operation in Cyprus,” para. 4.

as facilitator through its liaison role, to submit proposals in this regard.” It reiterated its call in Resolution 2561 (29 January 2021), but the Secretary-General in his July 2021 report could only say that “no progress was achieved on the establishment of a direct military contact mechanism. Positions on the composition of the mechanism remained far apart and hardly bridgeable”<sup>277</sup> (see section 7.1. for further discussion on that idea). Despite the calls of the Secretary-General in his reports and the Security Council in its resolutions, however, there has been no progress in advancing the consideration of military confidence-building measures.

### 4.3. The Police Component: Facing New Security Challenges

**Figure 11. UNFICYP’s current top 10 police contributors (as of 31 July 2021)**



Source: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/data>.

The police component was strengthened with the reorganisation of the Force in 2005. The 67 UNFICYP police officers maintain law and order in the buffer zone. The police functions have significantly diversified over the years with the occurrence of new security challenges, such as organised crime and irregular migration (see box 9). The UN police officers conduct joint patrols with the military component, as particular attention has been given to an integrated approach.

<sup>277</sup> “In the south, the position remains that such interaction should involve the Turkish army alone, while, in the north, the response remains that only Turkish Cypriot security forces should be present from their side” (S/2021/635, 9 July 2021, “Report of the Secretary-General on the UN operation in Cyprus,” para. 20).



They perform their duties through a community policing approach and have no executive powers of any kind. They liaise with both sides to assist in the development of anti-crime strategies and to facilitate, as necessary, the investigation of crimes and criminal matters inside and across the buffer zone.

### Box 9. Evolution of the functions of the police component

As established in 1964

1. Establishing liaison with the Cypriot police;
2. Accompanying Cypriot police patrols which are to check vehicles on the roads for various traffic and other offences;
3. Manning United Nations police posts in certain sensitive areas, namely, areas where tension exists and might be alleviated by the presence of UNFICYP police elements;
4. Observing searches of vehicles by local police at roadblocks;
5. Investigating incidents where Greek or Turkish Cypriots are involved with the opposite community;
6. Special investigations as necessary.

**Monitoring and reporting tasks currently performed and challenges faced by the police component**

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graph TD
    Root[UNPOL Tasks and Challenges] --> IM[Irregular Migrants]
    Root --> UF[Unauthorised farming]
    Root --> UC[Unauthorised construction]
    Root --> CBC[Community based conflicts]
    
    IM --> H[Hunting]
    IM --> E[Escort to law enforcement]
    
    UF --> I[Incursion]
    I --> ID[Illegal dumping]
    
    UC --> IB[Irregular businesses]
    UC --> SG[Smuggling of goods]
    
    CBC --> T[Thefts]
    CBC --> A[Arson / intentional fire]
    
    style IM fill:#e91e63,color:#fff
    style H fill:#1e7145,color:#fff
    style E fill:#1e7145,color:#fff
    style UF fill:#1e7145,color:#fff
    style I fill:#1e7145,color:#fff
    style ID fill:#e91e63,color:#fff
    style UC fill:#1e7145,color:#fff
    style IB fill:#e91e63,color:#fff
    style SG fill:#e91e63,color:#fff
    style CBC fill:#1e7145,color:#fff
    style T fill:#1e7145,color:#fff
    style A fill:#1e7145,color:#fff
    
```

● Tasks   ● Challenges

*Source: S/5679 (2 May 1964), "Report by the Secretary-General on the organization and operation of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus," para. 4. See also <https://unficyp.unmissions.org/unpol>.*

In Pyla, the only bicomunal village in the buffer zone, the UN police is the only police force present and can only perform its duties through its good relationship with the two communities.

On numerous occasions, the Cyprus Police and Turkish Cypriot Police have sought the assistance of UN police when they needed to make an arrest or investigate in the village, as it is a grey zone for the two sides. The police component also facilitates and supports the Technical Committee on Crime and Criminal Matters established by the two leaders in the context of the Cyprus settlement talks and the Joint Contacts Room, where the sides exchange information daily on the crime situation and criminal incidents, such as murders, thefts, abductions, missing persons, and drug trafficking. The 2017 Strategic Review found that the Joint Contacts Room “is a unique example of cooperation between the two sides, who, within that framework, exchange information covering a wide range of criminal matters.”<sup>278</sup> In April 2019, the police component launched bicycle patrols in the buffer zone as part of a community-oriented policing initiative to “ensure greater flexibility in accessing the buffer zone” and “enable greater interaction with community members.”<sup>279</sup>

The police functions have significantly diversified over the years with the occurrence of new security challenges, such as organised crime and irregular migration.

Some interlocutors believe UNFICYP needs a stronger reporting mechanism on human rights, as Cyprus suffers from serious domestic violence and that receives the highest number of migrants per capita in Europe.<sup>280</sup> On the increasingly pressing issue of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers (see box 2), UNFICYP often serves as first responder when there are cases in need of urgent assistance in the buffer zone. Furthermore, “in the light of the recent increase in arrivals on the island outlined above, the mission’s police component stepped up its monitoring of any irregular crossing of the buffer zone by refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants, working hand-in-hand with immigration authorities and liaising closely with UNHCR.”<sup>281</sup> UNFICYP has pushed the sides towards the establishment of coordination mechanisms to deal with issues.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid*, para. 47.

<sup>279</sup> S/2019/562, 10 July 2019, “Report of Secretary-General on the UN operation in Cyprus,” para. 22.

<sup>280</sup> Interview, former UN police officer, e-meeting, 1 April 2020.

<sup>281</sup> S/2019/37, 11 January 2019, “Report of the Secretary-General on UN operation in Cyprus,” para. 34-35.

## 4.4. The Civilian Component: Diversifying UNFICYP’s “Civil Affairs” Activities

From the outset in 1964, there were 43 civilian political advisers, information, administrative and finance officers, secretaries, clerks, radio operators, and drivers in UNFICYP.<sup>282</sup> There was a Military Humanitarian Branch headed by a military officer until 1998, when it became the Civil Affairs section headed by a civilian for the first time. Some of these functions are now held in the Mission by the 122 local staff, as of February 2021. However, with 42 international staff in total, the number of civilians in UNFICYP has been steady over the years. The creation of a Civil Affairs section reflected the increased scope of civilian activities across all UN operations since the 1990s, and despite UNFICYP’s military nature, “the Force cannot turn a blind eye on what is happening to civilians.”<sup>283</sup> Civilians (international and national staff) are also present in the Mission Support, which has different Mission-wide responsibilities in providing support to the Mission components.

The Civil Affairs section of UNFICYP is in charge of liaison and engagement on civilian access to the buffer zone in close coordination with UN Police (UNPOL) and the military components, as well as managing humanitarian and bicomunal activities. It also provides regular humanitarian support to Greek Cypriots (328 individuals) and a Maronite (93 individuals) community in the Karpas peninsula in the north, in cooperation with UNHCR, by helping to search for missing persons (see box 10), partly managing (with the UN police) permits allowing civilian activities (including farming, grazing, construction, and utility maintenance) inside the buffer zone, and helping facilitate intercommunal activities across all Sectors and beyond the buffer zone. In 2014, to manage civilian activities in the buffer zone, UNFICYP established an integrated office in each sector known as a Sector Civilian Activity Integrated Office, including one civil affairs staff member, two police officers, and two military personnel.<sup>284</sup> After the 2017 Strategic Review recommendations, Civil Affairs officers have been dispatched to the three sectors of UNFICYP to strengthen integration and coordinate the integrated offices. Over the years, bicomunal activities and support for civil society initiatives have become central to UNFICYP’s work on the island as a means to return “to normal conditions” by working across the Mission’s components and in coordination with the Mission of Good Offices.

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282 *The Blue Beret (UNFICYP edition)*, 20 April 1964.

283 Interview, former UN staff, e-meeting, 03 February 2021. See also <https://unficy.unmissions.org/civil-affairs>.

284 S/2017/1008, 28 November 2017, “Strategic review of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus,” para. 21.

### Box 10. Committee on Missing Persons (CMP) in Cyprus

Following the General Assembly Resolutions 32/128 (1977) and 33/172 (1978), the UN Secretary-General announced the establishment of the CMP on 22 April 1981, by agreement between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities. However, the Committee only became operational in 2006, wasting many years before starting to search for people who have disappeared. Its objective is to work with families of the persons who went missing between 1963 and 1974, to establish the fate of the disappeared, whether they are alive or not, and in the case of the latter, to locate, identify and return the remains to their relatives. At the end of the process, a funeral, which the CMP offers to pay for, is arranged.

As of 1 July 2021, 1,006 out of 2,002 missing persons have been identified and their remains returned to their families. These figures have led the Secretary-General to describe it as “a model of successful cooperation between the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot communities”. The Secretary-General has reported on the work of the Committee in each of his reports on UNFICYP. The budget and funding for the Third Member of CMP and associated costs are handled via the Good Offices Mission budget.

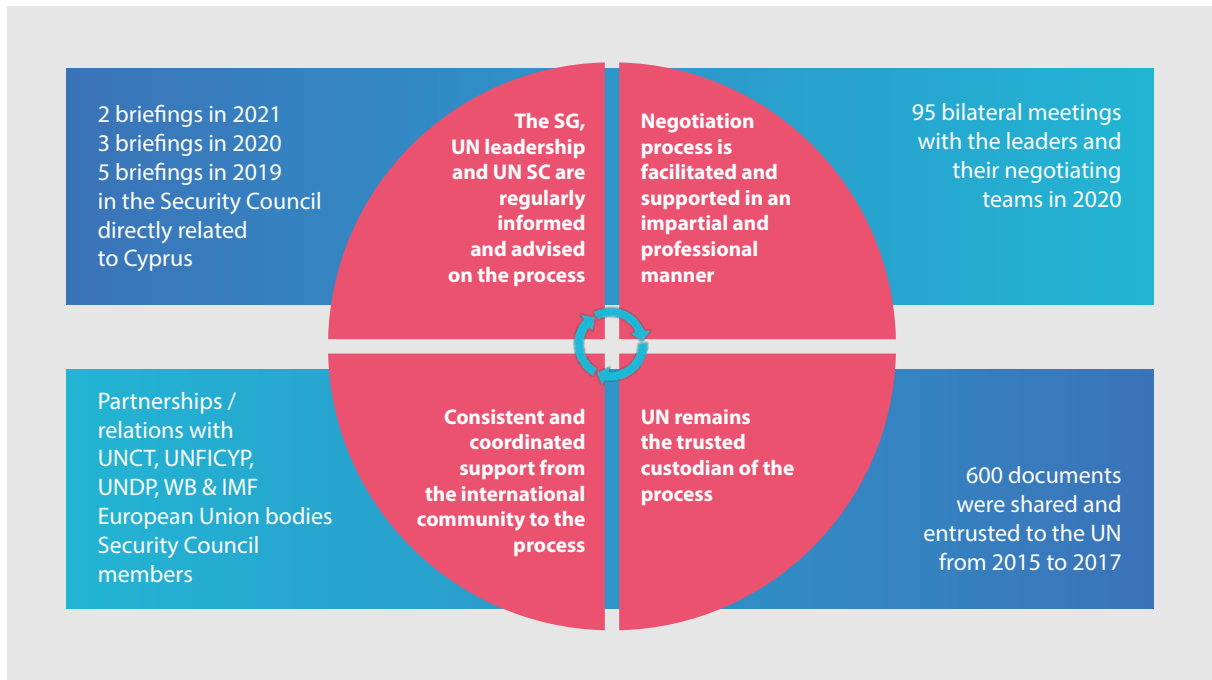
Over the years, the CMP has identified a second objective for itself, that of promoting “the overall process of reconciliation between both communities”. In the midst of the political impasse the island is facing, the CMP stands as an exception, being a bicomunal institution headed by a Greek Cypriot, a Turkish Cypriot, and an international member selected by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and staffed by scientists from both communities. Constituting a goodwill gesture towards peace on the island, it could also serve as an example for other joint initiatives between the two communities, including the federal government of a future united Cyprus. By identifying missing persons from both communities, the Committee brings Greek and Turkish Cypriot relatives closer together in their common grief. A civil society organisation of relatives of victims from both communities, named *Together We Can*, is associated with the bicomunal movement, tries to collect information on the victims and murderers, and provides information to the CMP. Acting as a purely humanitarian body, it is not part of the Committee’s mandate to prosecute the alleged perpetrators. A number of people regret that the Committee refrains from declaring the cause of death. This sometimes leaves relatives with a bitter feeling as they do not know why and by whom the crime took place.

After 15 years of research, the CMP may be entering the final stages of its process, as it is slowly running out of new information, leaving the other half of families who have not yet received remains without answers.

*Source: Nasia Hadjigeorgiou, “The Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus: A Humanitarian or Reconciliation-Promoting Institution?”* *Opinio Juris*, 23 December 2020. Nasia Hadjigeorgiou, “The missing truth in Cyprus,” *Justice Info*, 14 December 2020. CMP facts and Figures, <http://www.cmp-cyprus.org/content/facts-and-figures>; <https://www.cy.undp.org/content/cyprus/en/home/projects/CMP.html> and <https://www.icmp.int/where-we-work/europe/cyprus>. See also Théotime Chabre, “To create a victimary posture in a post-conflict country: the treatment of disappearance in the Turkish Cypriot community,” *Cahiers balkaniques*, “Politique et sociétés à Chypre aujourd’hui,” 2020, n°46, pp. 55-94.

## 4.5. The Mission of Good Offices

**Figure 12. The goals and achievements of the OSASG (2019-2021)**



Source: Infographics from the OSASG to the Secretary-General on Cyprus.

The position of “mediator” in the context of the Cyprus issue is as old as the peacekeeping mission, but its presence on the island has followed the ups and downs of the various peace negotiations. As James Ker-Lindsay described the general situation of the Good Offices: “The history of the Cyprus Problem has been one of repeated efforts to reach an agreement between the two sides followed by long periods of estrangement or talks about talks.”<sup>285</sup> This is why, although the need for mediation and Good Offices has been constant, the incumbent of these activities could be non-resident and engage through shuttle diplomacy between the parties when fully-fledged negotiations were not taking place. The task of the mediator also changed in 1974: “Since 1966, the Secretary-General’s special representatives have been engaged in promoting an agreed overall settlement. After the events of 1974, the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to undertake a new Mission of Good Offices “and to that end to convene the parties under new agreed procedures and place himself personally at their disposal, so that the resumption, the intensification and the progress of comprehensive negotiations, carried out in a reciprocal spirit of understanding and of moderation under his personal auspices and with his direction as appropriate, might thereby be facilitated.”<sup>286</sup> The position of mediator created in 1964 by Resolution 186 evolved to become a position of facilitator in the

<sup>285</sup> James Ker-Lindsay, *The Cyprus Problem in An Era of Uncertainty*, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

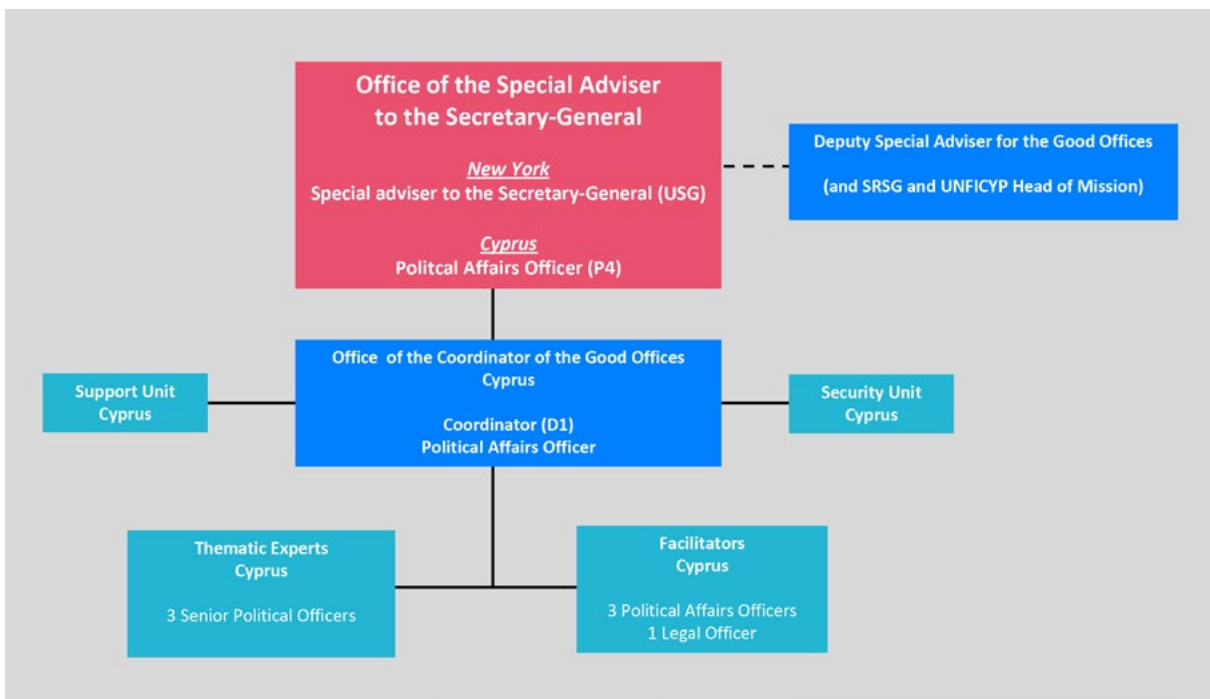
<sup>286</sup> S/26777, 22 November 1993, “Report of the Secretary-General in connection with the Security Council’s comprehensive reassessment of the UN Operation in Cyprus,” para. 39.



form of a Special Representative, then of a Special Adviser to the Secretary-General at the Under-Secretary-General level. In 2008, UNFICYP's SRSG (who is an Assistant-Secretary-General) became the Deputy Special Adviser.

The position of “mediator” in the context of the Cyprus issue is as old as the peacekeeping mission, but its presence on the island has followed the ups and downs of the various peace negotiations.

**Chart 2. Organisational chart of the OSASG**



Source: Created by Alexandra Novosseloff from A/676/6(sect. 3)/Add. 2, 14 May 2021.

On the island, except when there is an SASG actively involved in negotiations, the Mission of Good Offices is even more discreet, and somehow invisible to the general public, compared to UNFICYP. As a former UNFICYP senior staff acknowledged, “locally, UN agents are fundamentally viewed as one, or at least threads in one fabric.”<sup>287</sup> One interlocutor confirmed bluntly that “in general, people don’t really distinguish between the political and the peacekeeping role of the UN.”<sup>288</sup>

287 Susan S. Allee, “UN Blue: An Examination of the Interdependence Between UN Peacekeeping and Peacemaking,” *International Journal of Peace Studies*, Spring/Summer 2009, 14(1), p. 103.

288 Interview, former UNFICYP local staff, e-meeting, Nicosia, 01 December 2020.

The OSASG has had a consistent presence on the island only since 2008 to be “responsible for using its best endeavours with the representatives of the communities and the guarantor powers to promote a peaceful solution to and an agreed settlement of the Cyprus problem.”<sup>289</sup> As stated more recently, the strategic objective – to which the Good Offices Mission contributes – is “to achieve a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem.” To do so, the Mission assists the sides in conducting fully-fledged negotiations through an increased number of bilateral and joint meetings, papers of convergences, and technical committee and working group meetings, as well as the implementation of confidence-building measures.”<sup>290</sup>

With the support of UNFICYP, the Mission of Good Offices facilitates the work of bicomunal technical committees established by the two leaders in the context of the talks.

With the support of UNFICYP, the Mission of Good Offices facilitates the work of bicomunal technical committees established by the two leaders in the context of the talks (hence falling under the Track I process) to work on common issues of concern practically and “improve the daily lives of Cypriots” from both communities (see box 11).<sup>291</sup> The record of individual technical committees is mixed, but where they are successful, it has been argued that they have contributed to “developing a number of proto-federal structures through various (largely) bicomunal projects, associations and committees actively working to end the long stalemate.”<sup>292</sup> Separately, diplomatic representations in Nicosia undertook initiatives to support the negotiations, attempting to bridge the gap with the public by bringing together particular sectors or actors from both sides for dialogue. Such initiatives include the Religious Track of the Cyprus Peace Process, under the auspices of the Embassy of Sweden, and an ongoing political parties’ dialogue facilitated by the Embassy of Slovakia.<sup>293</sup> While not sufficient to significantly shift the narrative or public opinion, these activities are somewhat helpful in maintaining attention and focus on the peace process and countering negative and divisive rhetoric: “Overall, the main message conveyed by this work is about building trust, not about capacity building.”<sup>294</sup>

289 S/2008/456, “Letter dated 10 July 2008 addressed to the President of the Security Council.” This situation is due to the fact that after the failure of the Annan Plan, there was no political mission between 2004 and 2008, the Secretary-General being rather engaged in shuttle diplomacy continued until the time was ripe to restart talks and appoint a successor to Alvaro de Soto in 2008 (i.e. Alexander Downer).

290 A/76/6(sect.3)/Add.2, 14 May 2021, Proposed programme budget for 2022, para. 9-10.

291 The technical committees were controversially referred to by Turkish Cypriot leader Ersin Tatar as “bilateral committees”, and from which a number of the members resigned when Ersin Tatar was elected. Evie Andreou, “[Tatar controversially renames bicomunal committees](#),” *Cyprus Mail*, 18 January 2021.

292 John McGarry and Neophytos Loizides, “The UN in 21st Century Cyprus,” *loc. cit.*

293 S/2018/610, 14 June 2018, “Report of the Secretary-General on Progress towards a settlement in Cyprus,” para. 17.

294 Interview, UN staff, Nicosia, 10 June 2021.

### Box 11. The 12 bicommunal technical committees

The bicommunal technical committees were conceived by the UN as useful vehicles for interaction between the sides. They are designed to build confidence and improve the daily lives of Cypriots across a range of issues. The committees were established under Track 1 negotiations by the leaders between 2008 and 2015 and are listed below. Their work is facilitated by the OSASG-Cyprus with the support of UNFICYP, including through online platforms. All the committees are still in place.

2008	2008 Crime and Criminal Matters	Address issues related to cooperation on crime prevention and issues related to criminal matters
2008	Crisis Management	Share information and discuss issues related to responses to manmade or natural disaster
2008	Cultural Heritage	Recognize, promote and protect the rich and diverse cultural heritage of the island
2008	Economic and Commercial Matters	Discuss measures and initiatives to promote and facilitate economic contacts and trade between the two sides
2008	Health	Exchange of information on respective health systems and discuss public health issues that could affect both communities
2008	Humanitarian Matters	Help resolve day-to-day issues of a humanitarian nature that would require the assistance from the other community
2008	Environment	Exchange ideas regarding the preservation of the environment and the protection of the natural habitat across the island
2009	Crossings	Consider the opening of crossing points as a confidence building measure between the communities
2011	Broadcasting	Identify and resolve radio-frequency interference-related issues
2015	Culture	Promote cultural events that could bring the two communities closer together
2015	Education	Implement confidence building measures in schools of the two educational systems and promote contact and co-operation between students and educators
2015	Gender Equality	Provide recommendations on how to address gender specific issues and, bearing in mind UNSCR 1325 (2000), suggest how to integrate a gender perspective and ensure gender equality in the framework of a settlement

Source: <https://uncyprustalks.unmissions.org>.

As a political mission, the Mission of the Good Offices does not have any Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), as UNFICYP does. The Good Offices engages with the two communities, addressing and facilitating discussions and relations between community leaders equally in peace talks, with no reference to states. UNFICYP recognises one host state but also engages with leaders from the north, whom it refers to as “authorities”.

Each setback in negotiations has affected the UN on the ground in one way or another, despite its relentless efforts in helping lay the foundations for trust among Cypriots.

As the Secretary-General is required to report on the activities of UNFICYP every six months for the mandate to be renewed, they “only” regularly report on the work of the Good Offices Mission to the Security Council. The Council at times requests standalone reporting from the Good Offices Mission. Otherwise, it depends on the Special Adviser and the Secretary-General as to whether a separate standalone report is issued to the Council. In the past, the reporting of the Secretary-General’s “facilitation efforts” was often done in a short specific section at the end of the general report on UNFICYP. Since 2008, there have been times when no separate report was issued, not because there was no major ongoing initiative, but rather when negotiations were in such a sensitive period that the Secretary-General felt it was better to say less than more. The practice over the past two years has been the release of separate reports a few days apart. The Special Adviser (or UNFICYP SRSG as Deputy SASG in their absence) reports to the Secretary-General, the Security Council, and the General Assembly through the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs.

## 4.6. The Missions’ Current Challenges

In a way, UNFICYP’s mandate has proved to be simple and adaptable, even if a number of interlocutors have questioned the absence of significant change and the meaning of “the return to normal conditions.” The Mission’s way of fulfilling its mandate, with due consideration for the current needs on the ground, has been to interpret it in a manner that would ensure a common and stable environment in and around the buffer zone and support for reconciliation between the communities to create conditions conducive for a settlement and a stable foundation for peace.<sup>295</sup> Each setback in negotiations has affected the UN on the ground in one way or another, despite its relentless efforts in helping lay the foundations for trust among Cypriots. The Secretary-General admitted that “since the closing of the Conference on Cyprus in July 2017, there has been an entrenchment of positions on both sides vis-à-vis each other and, at times, a challenging of the role of the United Nations,” and “through enhanced patrolling, UNFICYP

<sup>295</sup> Interview, UN staff, Nicosia, 22 June 2021. See also Secretary-General’s report on UNFICYP (S/2021/635).

observed an increase in violations of the military status quo along the ceasefire lines.”<sup>296</sup> And UNFICYP has made it a priority to maintain the integrity of the buffer zone, and to prevent any attempt to have ceasefire lines resemble a “border.” UNFICYP has adapted to the new trends, initiatives, and frameworks developed in New York. It went through a strategic review in November 2017 and adapted its mandate implementation to the Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) Framework, developing tools for effective performance and accountability through the Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System (CPAS), in particular. In 2020-2021, the activities of the two UN Missions were disrupted by multiple restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic, in particular, the closure of the various checkpoints. This moved the island 20 years backwards, to the pre-2003 period, when the two parts of the island were isolated from each other. In January 2021, the Secretary-General warned against the impact of tensions at the regional level: “In the continued absence of a political solution and with regional tensions on the rise, political tensions on Cyprus increased during the reporting period. Challenges to the status quo on the ground, within and outside the buffer zone, appeared linked to the broader political context.”<sup>297</sup>

#### **4.6.1. Post Crans Montana Situation and the Difficulty in Resuming Talks**

After the International Conference on Cyprus ended inconclusively on 7 July 2017 in Crans Montana, it took four years to gather the parties in the same room again. The leaders had met with the Secretary-General for “informal and trilateral talks” held in Berlin (for the first time in an EU capital city) in November 2019.<sup>298</sup> In the period following Crans Montana, the Secretary-General did not want to engage in yet another conference on the future of the island without testing the willingness of the parties to engage on a genuine solution. Therefore, he did not replace the outgoing Special Adviser Espen Barth Eide (from Norway) at the time, but appointed a UN high-level official, Jane Holl Lute (from the United States), one year later in July 2018. Holl Lute’s role was to engage in a sort of shuttle diplomacy to organise a “talk about talks” conference after consulting the parties, elaborate on some terms of reference “that would constitute a consensus starting point for a possible negotiated conclusion to the Cyprus issue,” and “help determine whether the necessary conditions were in place for a meaningful process.”<sup>299</sup> In this context, in April 2021, the Secretary-General chaired an informal 5+1 meeting in Geneva, with the objective of determining whether common ground existed for the parties to negotiate a lasting solution within a foreseeable horizon.

296 S/2019/37, 11 January 2019, “Report of the Secretary-General on UN operation in Cyprus,” para. 8.

297 S/2021/4, 8 January 2021, “Report of the Secretary-General on UN operation in Cyprus,” para. 5.

298 See the statement of Antonio Guterres following this informal meeting in Berlin at <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2019-11-25/un-secretary-general's-statement-cyprus>.

299 S/2019/562, 10 July 2019, “Report of the Secretary-General on the UN operation in Cyprus,” para. 3.



The position of Special Adviser remains open, and a decision to fill it would be a move the Secretary-General could make at an opportune moment to shift the talks process. In the meantime, the Good Offices Mission has been increasingly involved in providing Jane Holl Lute with substantive support and briefings, although she continues to lead consultations. The Secretary-General has followed a line clearly stated in his November 2019 report: “The people of Cyprus deserve to know that this time is different.”<sup>300</sup> He was “prepared to adapt to the needs of the island, depending on how far the two sides are prepared to go,”<sup>301</sup> and saw that process as an “opportunity to test the parties’ vision on the future of the island.”<sup>302</sup> Yet, a number of interlocutors regretted that, to date, Antonio Guterres has not visited Cyprus.

Over two and a half years and without much internal coordination or prior knowledge on the Cyprus problem,<sup>303</sup> Jane Holl Lute, as a representative of the Secretary-General, was left with room to seek the parties’ reflections and set up “an informal five-plus-United Nations meeting, in a conducive climate, at an appropriate stage,” i.e., a conference between the UN, the two Cypriot leaders, and the Guarantors.<sup>304</sup> One member of the diplomatic community considered that “the Secretary-General made a mistake in having an envoy without real status” to navigate during this period.<sup>305</sup> Several interlocutors considered that Holl Lute “chose the course of action that assembles all that has been going wrong in the process for years: she lacked understanding of the core issues about the Cyprus problem, she did not meet with the civil society and she led a non-transparent process”.<sup>306</sup>

This process happened once again in difficult times, with the two communities showing an “absolute lack of willingness to collaborate,” as described by an activist.<sup>307</sup> First, in February 2020, the RoC decided to unilaterally close four of the crossing points due to the Covid-19 health crisis. In March, the Turkish Cypriot side followed suit and closed two additional crossings, with only a few crossing points remaining open with Covid-19-related restrictions in place, effectively placing Cyprus in a pre-2003 situation that lasted for more than one year. Second, tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean increased in February 2020. Third, a change of leadership in north Cyprus altered the dynamics of potential negotiations: on 18 October 2020, a nationalist who is close to Turkey, Ersin Tatar, was elected as the new “president” of TRNC, and soon promoted the idea of a “two-state solution” and “sovereign” (not just political) equality, while opening part of the fenced-off area and abandoned city of Varosha/Maraş (see box 11 below). This further deepened mistrust between the two sides in the context of the organisation of the 5+1 informal conference.

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300 S/2019/883, 14 November 2019, “Report of the Secretary-General on his mission of Good Offices in Cyprus,” para. 32.

301 Interview, TRNC official, e-meeting, 14 February 2021.

302 Interview, former TRNC “negotiator,” e-meeting, Lefkoşa, 03 December 2020.

303 This assessment reflects the complaints made by the majority of interlocutors on both sides (and especially by Turkish Cypriot ones) as well as by UN staff in various interviews.

304 S/2021/4, 8 January 2021, “Report of the Secretary-General on the UN operation in Cyprus,” para. 4.

305 Interview, diplomat, Nicosia, 14 June 2021.

306 Interviews during field visit, June 2021.

307 “Disappointment after UN-led Cyprus reunification talks stall yet again,” *RFI*, 29 April 2021.

### Box 12. The fenced-off area of Varosha/Maraş



© Alexandra Novosseloff, 2013

Located in the south of Famagusta, Varosha (Maraş in Turkish) was already developed during British colonial times as a commercial and tourism centre. In the early 1970s, the suburb of six square kilometres was booming, as it was widely recognised as one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world – attracting around 700,000 annual visitors and home to around 39,000 Greek-Cypriot residents.

In July 1974, as Turkey's troops approached Varosha, the inhabitants suddenly fled, fearing violence but intending to return once tensions settled down. After a swift evacuation, made possible by the presence of a British military base nearby, and a short battle, the city was fenced and blocked off by the Turkish military. Turkey transformed Varosha into a bargaining chip in the negotiations on the future of the island. Since then, a number of Famagustians consider their town as “divided between the liveable part and the forbidden one”. “Famagusta is like a bird with one wing broken and this broken wing is Varosha,” said one Turkish Cypriot resident. In Resolution 550 (1984), the Security Council has considered that “attempts to settle any part of Varosha by people other than its inhabitants as inadmissible,” and it has called “for the transfer of that area to the administration of the United Nations.”

Until recently, the fenced-off area of Varosha was prohibited to most people, except for Turkish military forces, UN officials, and occasional journalists, hence earning the nickname “forbidden city” or “ghost town.” Only the main beach was public and open to visitors, lying set against the backdrop of decaying hotels and the rest of the abandoned resort town, after half a century of neglect. Nature has taken over, prickly pear bushes have invaded the entire suburb, and trees have sprouted in living rooms.

Yet on 15 February 2020, Turkish and Turkish Cypriot officials visited Varosha – regardless of the opposition of the then Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akinci – considering the reopening of the area a historic opportunity to bring tourism and economic benefits. On 8 October 2020, ten days before the presidential elections in the North, Ersin Tatar, the then Prime Minister and Turkish-backed nationalist candidate, reopened sections of the beachfront to the public in a sort of “21st century theme park”.<sup>308</sup> Fully supporting this decision, Turkish President Recep Tayyip

308 Helena Smith, “Unease in the air as Cyprus ‘ghost town’ rises from the ruins of war,” *The Guardian*, 18 July 2021.

Erdoğan paid a visit to Varosha on 15 November 2020, during which he called for a “two-state” solution. On 20 July 2021, Turkish Cypriot leader Ersin Tatar announced that 3.5% of the fenced-off area will be demilitarised and opened for its Greek Cypriot owners to return.<sup>309</sup> According to UNFICYP, “this partial opening mostly took the form of limited infrastructure works to prepare access by civilians, road rehabilitation and closed-circuit television installation.<sup>310</sup> On 23 July 2021, the Security Council adopted presidential statement n°13 in which it condemned that reopening and called for “the reversal of all steps taken on Varosha since October 2020”.

These decisions triggered strong reactions from both Greek and Turkish Cypriots, supporters of a BBF, and denouncing Ankara’s overt meddling in domestic affairs. Among the protest signs were the words “no picnics over other’s pain”. For most Greek Cypriots displaced, the pain is still acute, as their material losses have never been redressed.<sup>311</sup> In total, Varosha could represent over €5 billion in compensation.<sup>312</sup> To avoid reparations or compensations, Turkey could return Varosha’s properties to its rightful owners, but it could also transfer its jurisdiction to the TRNC, in effect retaining de facto control.

Another solution put forward by Vasia Markides, daughter of an exile from Varosha, and Ceren Bogac, an urbanist from Famagusta (interviewed by EPON), is to turn the suburb into an eco-city, a model for sustainability and peaceful coexistence, “aiming at building trust between the two communities.”<sup>313</sup> Famagusta’s business community is also in favour of reopening Varosha in cooperation with the Greek Cypriot community. Before any rebuilding can begin, ownership of Varosha’s properties will need to be certified, a process which could lead to potential new disputes. In December 2020, the Turkish Cypriot “authorities” claimed to have received 300 applications to the Immovable Property Commission (<http://www.tamk.gov.ct.tr>) on Varosha.<sup>314</sup>



© Alexandra Novosseloff, 2021

Source: Mete Hatay, “*Varosha: Between Human Rights and Realpolitik*,” *FES Briefing*, 2021; <https://www.ecocityproject.org>; <http://www.vasiamarkides.com> and <https://cerenbogac.com/famagusta-ecocity-project>.

309 Evie Andreou, “EU, Nicosia slam Turkish Cypriot decision to open part of Varosha,” *Cyprus Mail*, 20 July 2021.

310 S/2021/4, 8 January 2021, “Report of the Secretary-General on the UN operation in Cyprus,” para. 11.

311 In fairness, it must be mentioned here that the claims of the Turkish Cypriots regarding properties in the south have not been addressed either, as the issues of property and territory are among the most difficult chapters of the negotiations.

312 “Dream of reviving north Cyprus ghost town may turn sour,” *France24*, 22 September 2019.

313 Chloé Emmanouilidis, “In Cyprus, the ghost town of Varosha dreams of a green renaissance,” *Vox Europe*, 14 July 2021.

314 Interview, TRNC official, e-meeting, 03 December 2020.

Despite this difficult context and the absence of agreement by the two sides on the terms of reference, the parties agreed to participate in the informal 5+UN meeting held in Geneva on 27-29 April 2021. It was their first meeting of the sort since the Conference on Cyprus in Crans Montana. However, they attended with diametrically opposed positions and visions for the future of the island: the two-states solution on the one hand and the BBF on the other. As summarised by one interlocutor: “The sides presented their opposition and came back home.”<sup>315</sup> The Secretary-General could only conclude that this “new effort to break the impasse ended without finding common ground.”<sup>316</sup>

In such circumstances, some observers have questioned “the UN’s insistence on going to Geneva in such circumstances” (despite the fact that the meeting was held at the request of the parties) and carrying on with an approach that tends to “reinforce the idea that the Cyprus problem cannot be solved, which is damaging the hopes.”<sup>317</sup> One commentator answered this question by saying that most probably “it is [the Secretary-General’s] job to try and try again and leave no stone unturned until there are no more stones left to turn,” and so “he knew that common ground would not be found and that he would have to convene another meeting, presumably after the parties had a chance to let off steam and state their case internationally.”<sup>318</sup> It was the first time that the option of a two-state solution was formally presented by one of the sides (in a way, “weakening the UN acquis,” as underlined by a diplomat),<sup>319</sup> and the positions of the sides were so far from each other that they seemed unbridgeable. Many interlocutors considered that it further entrenched division.

For the UN, the Geneva informal meeting was not considered a failure as it allowed the parties to state their positions clearly to each other and<sup>320</sup> kept the process ongoing, but “this kind of meeting can only happen once.”<sup>321</sup> In the end, the Secretary-General announced that not “enough common grounds to allow for the resumption of formal negotiations in relation to the settlement of the Cyprus problem” was found. The UN considers that a follow-on meeting could be held “in the near future”, but there seems to be no rush to do so.<sup>322</sup> The visit of Turkish president Erdogan in July 2021, in particular, confirmed that further steps would be taken to reopen Varosha. The push towards a two-state solution<sup>323</sup> is the kind of event that can “complicate chances for finding common ground between the parties or that could trigger tensions,” as stated by the Secretary-General.<sup>324</sup>

315 Interview, UN staff, Nicosia, 16 June 2021.

316 “UN chief pledges to fight for all Cypriots, as impasse remains,” *UN News*, 29 April 2021.

317 Podcast *Nicosia Uncut*, Episode 23, “Discussing the 5+1 Geneva failure and next day scenarios for Cyprus,” 03 May 2021.

318 Alper Ali Riza, “Next 5+1 meeting should be at Ledra Palace in Nicosia,” *Cyprus Mail*, 2 May 2021.

319 Interview, diplomat, Nicosia, 15 June 2021.

320 As underlined by the Secretary-General, “in an informal meeting convened without preconditions, it is useful that all parties are able to express their positions in an open manner.” S/2021/634, 9 July 2021, “Report of the Secretary-General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus,” para. 39.

321 Interview, UN staff, 22 June 2021.

322 S/2021/635, 9 July 2021, “Report of the Secretary-General on the UN operation in Cyprus,” para. 3. See also <https://unficy.unmissions.org/transcript-press-conference-united-nations-secretary-general-antónio-guterres-informal-5-1-meeting>. Interviews during field visit, Nicosia, June 2021.

323 See Diego Cupolo, “Erdogan, Tatar announce controversial plan to further reopen Cypriot ghost town,” *Al-Monitor*, 20 July 2021; see also *The Guardian*, 20 July 2021.

324 S/2021/634, 9 July 2021, “Report of the Secretary-General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus,” para. 49.



#### 4.6.2. The Security Challenge of Maintaining the Integrity of the Buffer Zone

Since the beginning, UNFICYP has been closely monitoring any violation of the ceasefire by military forces and any breach in compliance with the permit system by civilians in or close to the buffer zone.<sup>325</sup> In January 2020, UNFICYP reported 414 military violations and 389 in June 2020 (there were also more than 700 in the year 1990). In the past few years, UNFICYP has witnessed a “significant increase in heavy weapons violations,” “significant increases in unauthorized military construction,” “building of more permanent installations, such as bunkers and watchtower,” and the “use of aerial drones by individuals on either side and possibly by the opposing forces.” In particular, in 2020, the National Guard has deployed 223 “prefabricated concrete firing positions” along the southern ceasefire line, including 35 inside the buffer zone, which for UNFICYP “constituted a significant violation of the military status quo.”<sup>326</sup> This violation was also qualified as such in the latest resolutions of the Security Council. Turkish forces in the North have, for their part, built more permanent installations, such as bunkers and a watchtower, and installed a closed-circuit television network.<sup>327</sup> For UNFICYP, “unauthorized farming and hunting within the buffer zone” has been “the primary source of tension.” This is due to “the lack of recognition of UNFICYP’s mandated authority within the buffer zone,” despite several aide-mémoire (1964, 1989 and 2018) which have been elaborated on by the Force but not formally endorsed by the parties.

The status quo has thus been qualified as “not a real one” by most Blue Berets. As pointed out by UNFICYP personnel, “Cyprus is the least active conflict in the area but it is not outside its dynamics.”<sup>328</sup> In September 2017, UNFICYP’s strategic review made a similar observation: “Challenges remain that have the potential to escalate tensions, negatively affect a resumption of the talks and contribute to a further deterioration in the relationship between the sides.”<sup>329</sup> The fact is that “tensions in the buffer zone mainly relate to civilian activity” (“with on average 3,180 civilian incidents each year”). Civilian activity has the potential to raise military tensions: “As Cypriots seek to protect their rights to farm their land in the buffer zone, tensions often arise between communities, between civilian authorities and potentially with the opposing forces.”<sup>330</sup>

The buffer zone, the only common space shared by the two communities, is being encroached upon from both sides, and the management of civilian activity there has stretched the Mission. This process of encroachment started in the 2000s but has increased lately as uncertainties about

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325 This system of permits dates back to the 1970s. Under that system, farmers receive permits from UNFICYP authorising the use of land in the buffer zone whenever it does not interfere with security or law and order concerns. In the absence of formal endorsement by the authorities, many in the buffer zone do not feel compelled to comply with UNFICYP requirements. UNFICYP estimated that the level of compliance at present is around 40% of all civilian activities in the buffer zone. See report of the Strategic Review (S/2017/1008).

326 S/2021/4, 8 January 2021, “Report of the Secretary-General on UN operation in Cyprus,” para. 13.

327 S/2019/37, 11 January 2019, “Report of the Secretary-General on UN operation in Cyprus,” para. 11.

328 Interview, UN staff, e-meeting, 27 November 2020.

329 S/2017/1008, 28 November 2017, “Strategic review of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus,” para. 8.

330 *Ibid*, para. 10-11.



the future of the island have encouraged it.<sup>331</sup> In his latest report, the Secretary-General confirmed that “encroachment by both sides into the buffer zone, mostly in the form of unauthorized construction, has increased significantly,” and considered that these actions, “in addition to creating operational challenges for UNFICYP,” “generated tensions on the ground and between the sides, carry security risks and do not contribute to a positive climate.”<sup>332</sup> The occasional extension of farming land, construction of a house, or reconstruction of a property is mobilising all components of the Mission to report, investigate and liaison with one another to defuse potential tensions. The integrity of the buffer zone has been undermined over the years and has become a major concern for UNFICYP. The latest major incident was the construction in March-April 2021 of a 12,009 m concertina fence “in parallel to the southern ceasefire line and located for the most part inside the buffer zone.”<sup>333</sup> As one diplomat emphasised: “The island is full of provocations from both sides.”<sup>334</sup> One UN staff member acknowledged that “the integrity of the buffer zone is being compromised in the name of ‘normalizing’ it,” although “that zone should be safeguarded until a final settlement as it is first and foremost a buffer between two armies.”<sup>335</sup> As such, the buffer zone cannot be treated as a “normal” space.

#### 4.6.3. UNFICYP’s Improved Performance in the Context of the Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) Initiatives

Between 2017 and 2020, after the Conference on Cyprus had failed in Crans Montana, UNFICYP underwent review, the fourth one since its creation. Reviews have been held in 1974, 1992 and 2004, each time after a major change to the status quo on the island. A strategic review in 2017 and a visit of the Office of Peacekeeping Strategic Partnership (within the Office of Military Affairs of the Department of Peace Operations (DPO) of the UN Secretariat) in 2019 provided a number of recommendations. In February 2019, UNFICYP became the fourth peacekeeping mission to implement the CPAS for UN peacekeeping, a system for identifying drivers of change and making an honest assessment of where the Mission can have an impact. These reviews and reforms occurred in the context of the implementation of “Action for Peacekeeping” (A4P), an initiative the Secretary-General formally launched at the end of 2018, including shared commitments on a set of key priorities among Member States, the Secretariat and regional organisations. The “A4P+” priorities for 2021-2023 were recently put forward to maintain support from Member States (see table 4).<sup>336</sup>

331 Interview, UN staff, Nicosia, 15 June 2021.

332 S/2021/635, 9 July 2021, “Report of the Secretary-General on the UN operation in Cyprus,” para. 60.

333 *Ibid*, para. 13.

334 Interview, diplomat, Nicosia, 14 June 2021.

335 Interview, UN staff, Nicosia, 22 June 2021.

336 See details of this initiative at <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/action-for-peacekeeping-a4p> and [https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/a4p\\_background\\_paper.pdf](https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/a4p_background_paper.pdf).

**Table 4. Action for Peacekeeping**

A4P key priorities	
<p><b>1. POLITICS</b> Advance political solutions to conflict and enhance the political impact of peacekeeping</p> <p><b>2. WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY</b> Implement the women, peace and security agenda</p> <p><b>3. PROTECTION</b> Strengthen the protection provided by peacekeeping operations</p> <p><b>4. SAFETY AND SECURITY</b> Improve the safety and security of peacekeepers</p>	<p><b>5. PERFORMANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY</b> Support effective performance and accountability by all peacekeeping components</p> <p><b>6. PEACEBUILDING AND SUSTAINING PEACE</b> Strengthen the impact of peacekeeping on sustaining peace</p> <p><b>7. PARTNERSHIPS</b> Improve peacekeeping partnerships to enhance collaboration and planning</p> <p><b>8. CONDUCT OF PEACEKEEPERS AND PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS</b> Strengthen conduct of peacekeeping operations and personnel</p>
A4P+ Priorities for 2021-2023	
Collective coherence behind a political strategy	Accountability to peacekeepers
Strategic and operational integration	Accountability of peacekeepers
Capabilities and mindsets	Strategic communications
Cooperation with host countries	
Priorities for UNFICYP in the framework of A4P	
Three priorities of the mandate —>	Reduce tensions, promote reconciliation and trust-building, rule-of-law
Additional priorities—>	Environmental peacebuilding, youth, gender parity
Mission HQ priorities—>	Conduct and discipline, tackling hate speech, promoting UN values

Source: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/action-for-peacekeeping-a4p>; interviews with UNFICYP staff during a field visit.

According to the January 2019 report, in the Cyprus context, A4P should translate into a commitment by all members states (the Security Council members as well as the stakeholders in the Cyprus problem) “to support the efforts of UNFICYP to contribute in a meaningful way to

creating the conditions conducive to a lasting political settlement, including through progress in all of these fields.”<sup>337</sup>

Guided by the A4P initiative, UNFICYP is committed to contributing to advancing political solutions in the context of its existing mandate. The main added value of the Mission towards that objective derives from its efforts to prevent tensions, maintain calm, and bolster trust between the communities. The use of targeted patrolling, focusing on hotspots, coordinated cross-component engagement – military, police and civilian – at all levels, and community outreach have allowed UNFICYP to address some of the civilian and military violations successfully. The Force also ensures that TCCs provide enough properly trained troops with the right resources, hence “demonstrating readiness to take action when required.”<sup>338</sup> The high level of representation of women in senior leadership positions in the Mission has enabled the UN to point to UNFICYP as an example of progress on WPS, as part of the A4P initiative.

Through CPAS (to which the Good Offices Mission also contributes), UNFICYP has developed a stronger culture and practice of evidence-based, data-driven analysis, planning and decision-making since its introduction in February 2019. This has allowed the Mission as a whole, and the military component, in particular, to develop a more empirical understanding of trends in the buffer zone and along the ceasefire lines – seeking to address levels of tension, thereby allowing the component to measure the impact its actions are having on the ground (e.g. the effect of patrolling or liaison and engagement on opposing force and civilian behaviour and compliance). It has improved the integration of information and analysis.

As an integrated planning and assessment tool, CPAS has, therefore, facilitated an integrated approach to mandate delivery.

According to interlocutors in the Mission, prior to CPAS, components were planning their activities in silos, rather than with the aim of delivering an integrated response and achieving an integrated effect. As an integrated planning and assessment tool, CPAS has, therefore, facilitated an integrated approach to mandate delivery. CPAS has helped ensure more consistency in reporting on violations and incidents in the buffer zone over time and between components, thereby facilitating a common operational picture and understanding of trends. Tracking of indicators allows UNFICYP to understand and anticipate seasonal trends and other variations empirically, be it for military violations (e.g. violation patterns during troop rotations or in relation to political or regional developments) or civilian incidents (e.g. variations linked to farming cycles). This allows the Mission to plan more effectively and adopt preventive strategies, despite the fact that it lacks a crucial planning capacity.

337 S/2019/37, 11 January 2019, “Report of the Secretary-General on UN operation in Cyprus,” para. 62.

338 Interview, UN staff, Nicosia, 15 June 2021.

#### 4.6.4. The Missions' Challenging Covid-19 Period

The emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic and the measures taken by both sides to limit its spread have had a significant impact on the freedom of movement of Cypriots on the island and constituted a source of tension between the two sides. For UNFICYP, “the restrictions put in place by both sides changed the operational context of the mission significantly”:

UNFICYP worked to ensure the continued fulfilment of its mandate while exercising the utmost care to avoid exposing its personnel to risks or contributing to the virus's spread on the island. Pandemic-related restrictions presented a challenge to effective liaison, with less direct, face-to-face engagement with political and government stakeholders, opposing forces and civil society, affecting all aspects of the mission's work. With restrictions imposed on the population on both sides, civilian activity in the buffer zone dropped significantly and, with crossing points closed and curfews in place in both communities, trust-building activities moved online from mid-March onwards, continuing at a much-reduced pace. Growth in humanitarian requests generated by the closing of crossing points resulted in significantly increased demand for facilitation by UNFICYP.<sup>339</sup>

One of the first impacts of the pandemic on UNFICYP was operational, i.e. in the rotation of staff officers and formed units, the establishment of force preservation measures linking with host-nation and UN requirements, and the ongoing achievement of the Mission's mandate across the buffer zone in a highly restricted environment.<sup>340</sup> The closure of the crossing points limited the Mission's freedom of movement across the island, and in turn isolated approximately 20% of the military force from their standing lines of support. The effects of such isolation included limitations on patrolling, resupply, and capacity to continue engagement with key military leaders in the north. On 12 April 2020, one day after UNFICYP announced its first case of Covid-19, the Turkish Cypriot authorities implemented a new set of measures barring UN personnel and representatives of the international community from crossing to the north. These restrictions affected the Mission's activities north of the buffer zone by isolating the two UNFICYP camps located in the north.<sup>341</sup> In addition, “the inability of the parties to agree on harmonizing procedures at the crossing points, including testing requirements for crossing, led to frequent disputes that required the intervention of UNFICYP”; there was also “an increase in requests for UNFICYP to resolve humanitarian concerns and thus facilitate, among others, post-mortem transfers, burial attendance, crossings of people for hospital visits and facilitation of the movement of medicine across the Green Line.”<sup>342</sup>

339 S/2020/682, 10 July 2020, “Report of the Secretary-General on UN operation in Cyprus,” para. 10.

340 Interview, former UN staff, 26 November 2020.

341 S/2020/682, 10 July 2020, “Report of the Secretary-General on UN operation in Cyprus,” para. 12.

342 S/2021/635, 9 July 2021, “Report of the Secretary-General on the UN operation in Cyprus,” para. 12 and 37.

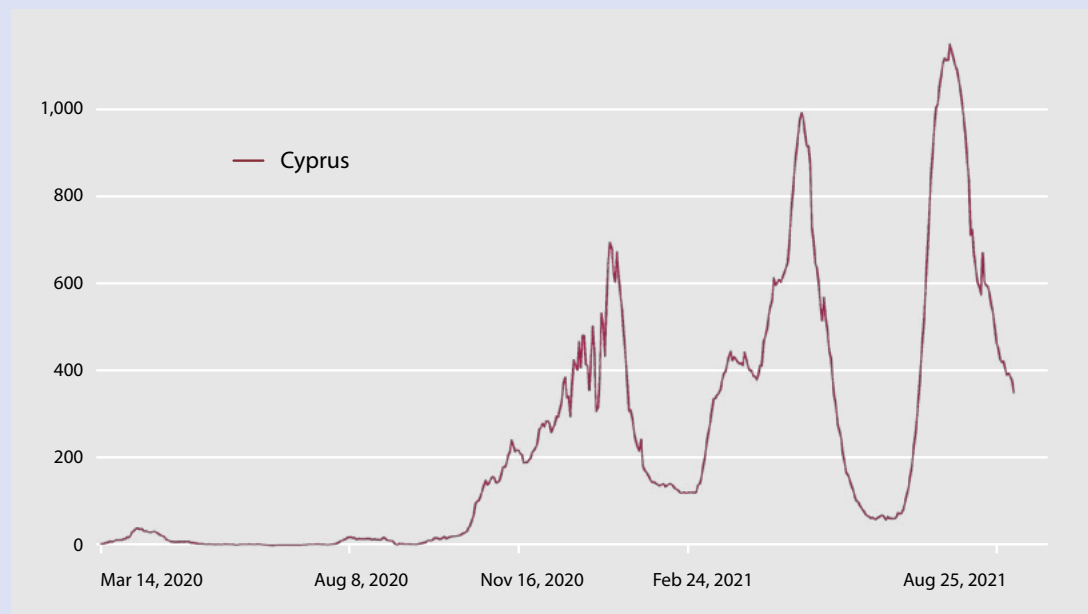
For the first time in 17 years, the North and South were once again completely isolated, serving as a powerful reminder that Cyprus remains a divided island.

During this period, the SRSG considered that “one of the major achievements was to continue to keep the buffer zone calm and stable, to prevent incidents and from raising tensions to spark into a greater dispute.”<sup>343</sup> UNFICYP and the Mission of Good Offices have also been able to continue to support civil society organisations to reach across the divide and continue to cooperate with each other to build trust. It has managed to support a number of networking events and launched the Youth Champions for the Environment and Peace initiative.<sup>344</sup> On a number of occasions, UNFICYP facilitated several cases of exchange of medication, medical equipment, samples and crossings of patients for medical treatment across the divide.

### Box 13. The Covid-19 pandemic: Back to 2003?

#### ***New daily confirmed COVID-19 cases per million people***

Shown is the rolling 7-day average. The number of confirmed cases is lower than the number of actual cases; the main reason for that is limited testing.



Source: <https://covidtracker.fy/covidtracker-world>.

343 “Top UN official in Cyprus Elizabeth Spehar talks about the challenges and highlights of 2020”, *Blue Beret*, Winter 2020.

344 UN Peacekeeping, “Empowering Youth as Agents of Change,” 29 April 2021.



On 29 February 2020, allegedly concerned that crossings from the North to the South may increase contamination rates (although there were no confirmed cases on the island), the RoC closed four crossing points for an initial period of seven days. Yet, international airports in the south were not closed or access regulated, allowing international travel to Cyprus from countries with major outbreaks of the virus. A few weeks later, and as a response, the Turkish Cypriot authorities closed two further crossing points. It was also announced that elections for the Turkish Cypriot leader would be postponed until October, and other restrictive measures, such as curfews and partial lockdowns, were introduced. On 16 March 2020, all crossing points were closed as the island detected its first cases of Covid-19.

For the first time in 17 years, the North and South were once again completely isolated, serving as a powerful reminder that Cyprus remains a divided island. Many Cypriots called for the reopening of the crossings, and the protests sometimes ended in confrontations with the police, a rare phenomenon in Cyprus.<sup>345</sup> In his July 2021 report on UNFICYP, the Secretary-General noticed that “estrangement deepened between the two communities, exacerbated by the restrictions at the crossing points and by an atmosphere of distrust fed by the continual and duelling rhetoric between the two sides” (para. 7).

Both the Security Council (in Resolution 253) and the Secretary-General (in his January 2021 report) have expressed their concern that the uncoordinated decisions to close the crossing points along the Green Line prevented most bicomunal engagement, and that such a prolonged closure threatened the progress made since 2003. In June 2020, the Greek Cypriot side began reopening the checkpoints to all Cypriots and permanent residents, as long as they had negative Covid-19 tests, but only those who are enclaved or Maronites were allowed entry into the North. However, in mid-December 2021, the TRNC took the decision to impose a Covid-19 test every 72 hours.

*Sources: For Covid-19 statistics, see TRNC Government website at <https://saglik.gov.ct.tr/TRAVEL-RULES>, and University of Cyprus website at <https://covid19.ucy.ac.cy>. See also Fiona Mullen (Sapientia Economics) and Hubert Faustmann (FES), “The Impact of the Covid-19 Crisis on Divided Cyprus,” FES Briefing, April 2020.*

Nevertheless, a number of interlocutors have considered that overall the UN failed to push the sides to cooperate during the pandemic (even though the UN cannot “force” the sides or any party to cooperate, something that the general public often does not always understand) and to be more vocal on the consequences of prolonged closures. For its part, the Mission acknowledged that its efforts to promote a more coordinated approach on this issue not only failed to produce the desired results, but also drew significant criticism against the Mission and its leadership. It is difficult for a mission to communicate on its failures that are also often the result of a lack of cooperation from the parties. Yet, “weeks of discussions and building the consensus reached on a set of harmonized COVID-19 related measures devised by the Technical Committee on Health, and the regular engagement of [the SRSG] with representatives of the two leaders proved critical to foster an agreement, on 2 June, on the reopening of the three remaining crossing points and on the harmonization of the pandemic-related procedures for all crossings.”<sup>346</sup> All crossing points were reopened on 4 June 2021, with a set of new harmonised measures in place.

345 S/2020/682, 10 July 2020, “Report of the Secretary-General on UN operation in Cyprus,” para. 4.

346 S/2021/634, 9 July 2021, “Report of the Secretary-General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus,” para. 27.

## 5. Analysis and Findings (Across Six Dimensions)

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This section summarises our research findings across the six dimensions of peace operations identified as most salient by the EPON methodology, six dimensions that are conditions that influence the effectiveness of a peacekeeping operation.

### 5.1. Political Primacy: The Multiple Interactions between Peacekeeping and Peacemaking

As described by researchers, “Cyprus remains one of the most stubbornly intractable conflicts on the international stage,”<sup>347</sup> where “military success fosters a diplomatic stalemate,”<sup>348</sup> and where there has been at times some impatience from the “international community” over the lack of progress. Over the years, the UN has been the only consistent actor accepted by the parties and persistently trying to find a solution to the Cyprus problem through various forms of negotiation and ideas of government or state organisation. Each Secretary-General has put forward proposals, supported by resolutions of the Security Council, to try to find a solution or organised discussions around the “Cyprus problem,” with their own negotiation technique, such as framework agreements, confidence-building measures (CBMs), proximity talks, direct

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347 James Ker-Lindsay, *The Cyprus Problem in An Era of Uncertainty*, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

348 Philippe Achilleas, *Chypre – L’UNIFCYP*, *op. cit.*, p. 174.

negotiations, comprehensive settlement, bottom-up vs top-down, UN-led vs Cypriot-led, etc. (see figure 3). However, in all “these talks that have punctuated the lives of Cypriots with hope and disappointment,”<sup>349</sup> “there was always something missing.”<sup>350</sup>

Over the years, the UN has been the only consistent actor accepted by the parties and persistently trying to find a solution to the Cyprus problem through various forms of negotiation and ideas of government or state organisation.

### 5.1.1. A Division of Labour between the Peacekeeping and the Peacemaking Elements

As underlined before, Cyprus is one of the few cases where a peacekeeping mission evolves alongside a special adviser in charge of conflict resolution, and where the peacemaking element is as old as the peacekeeping one. In these settings, the political element frees up the peacekeeping mission from the burden of mediation, facilitation or shuttle diplomacy between the parties. There seems to be a clear division of labour between the security stabilisation of the situation through monitoring the ceasefire and the political and diplomatic efforts towards a long-term stabilisation and settlement of the country. Both support each other in their final objective but are not necessarily fully coordinated on the ground, as the security and the political elements follow a different pace, timeline, and logic, even if, in the case of Cyprus, the appointment of the UNFICYP SRSG as deputy special adviser has helped both Missions move in the same direction. The UN considers peacekeeping an enabler of political processes, and UNFICYP’s goal is to create conditions conducive to a successful peace process. Furthermore, Member States also agreed as part of the Declaration of Shared Commitments for A4P that peacekeeping has a role in advancing political solutions in order to “enhance the political impact of peacekeeping.” Yet, the leverage provided with the presence of a UN peacekeeping mission alongside a political mission has perhaps been under-utilised, given the lack of urgency attached to finding a resolution to the Cyprus problem, particularly in the Security Council. There has also been mixed direction from various Secretaries-General throughout the Missions’ life cycles.

In his 1964 Aide-Mémoire on the definition of the roles and mandates of UNFICYP and the mediator, the Secretary-General considered that “in carrying out its function, the UN Force shall avoid any action designed to influence the political situation in Cyprus except through contributing to a restoration of quiet, and through creating an improved climate in which political

<sup>349</sup> *Ibid*, p. 152

<sup>350</sup> Interview, researcher, e-meeting, 14 December 2020.

solutions may be sought.”<sup>351</sup> Peacekeeping has, therefore, a security and stabilisation task of its own, but an objective that should allow peacemaking to evolve with success. In other words, the peacekeeping element serves the peacemaking one, although the two operate separately. This concurs with the views of Kofi Annan, who pointed out in May 2004 that “a primary reason for peacekeeping was to facilitate a political settlement,” a statement in line with what the High-level Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) report in 2015 and Antonio Guterres in 2017 promoted as the primacy of politics in peacekeeping settings. Peacekeeping and peacemaking are kept separate also because the UN did not want that the failure of negotiations to affect the peacekeeping force on the ground, but EPON interviews have shown that people tend to make that link (see section 5.1.3). However, the opposite is true as well; they are separate because the UN does not want the necessary frictions happening in and adjacent to the buffer zone to negatively affect the ability of the special advisers and the Good Offices Mission to carry out the Secretary-General’s diplomatic peacemaking role. The Cyprus case has an added layer of complexity as one side, the Turkish Cypriots, has considered UNFICYP (rightly or wrongly) increasingly partial (due to its financial setup and because the SOFA is only signed with the RoC, see section 5.3.3).

There seems to be a clear division of labour between the security stabilisation of the situation through monitoring the ceasefire and the political and diplomatic efforts towards a long-term stabilisation and settlement of the country.

A number of interlocutors have underlined “the contradiction between the role of UNFICYP in maintaining the status quo, and the role of the Good Offices that is trying to change the status quo through a settlement”. One interlocutor said: “It is problematic to have a peacekeeping mission that confirms the division without having progress on the peace process. It is upholding the division that the peace talks need to overcome.”<sup>352</sup> However, it is upholding peace by ensuring tensions do not escalate. Another set of interlocutors have nevertheless considered that it is useful to have a permanent office of the special adviser present on the ground, “and not only an envoy flying in and out,”<sup>353</sup> and “to keep the two mandates apart not for them to pollute each other.”<sup>354</sup> The problem is, as one interlocutor added, that “the sides use peacekeeping to bring issues on the negotiating table.”<sup>355</sup> In the end, a number of interlocutors questioned whether it is really possible to separate peacekeeping and peacemaking. This is the reason why the leadership and the staff of the two UN Missions need to maintain close cooperation.

351 S/5653, 11 April 1964, “Note by the Secretary-General,” p. 2.

352 Interview, e-meeting, 02 April 2020.

353 Interview, UN staff, e-meeting, 25 November 2020.

354 Interview, former UN staff, e-meeting, 03 February 2021.

355 *Ibid.*

The leverage provided with the presence of a UN peacekeeping mission alongside a political mission has perhaps been under-utilised, given the lack of urgency attached to finding a resolution to the Cyprus problem, particularly in the Security Council.

### 5.1.2. Characteristics of Negotiations on Cyprus: A Recipe for Inconclusiveness?

Resolution 186 recommends the appointment of a mediator to “promote a peaceful solution and an agreed settlement of the problem confronting Cyprus (...), having in mind the well-being of the people of Cyprus as a whole and the preservation of international peace and security.” The mediator was only active in 1964-1965 (Galo Plaza from Ecuador, who resigned) and in 2002-2004 (Kofi Annan). Annan assumed a more hands-on approach but his plan was rejected. For the remaining periods, the UN representative of the Secretary-General has been a facilitator. After 2004, “the UN was forced and asked to take a backseat.”<sup>356</sup> As a result, successive negotiations on the Cyprus problem have generally been “*Cypriot-owned*” and “*UN-facilitated*”. Some interlocutors suggested that the Cypriots could be in charge of the contents but not necessarily the process which could be handled by the UN, but this division of labour was never clearly set out as such. After the Annan Plan, the Greek Cypriots, in particular, wanted to ensure that “they would negotiate a ‘Cypriot solution’ meaning a solution agreed without the interference and pressure of outside parties, and without timelines.”<sup>357</sup>

A number of interlocutors questioned whether it is really possible to separate peacekeeping and peacemaking.

A second feature is that *the negotiating process is “leader-led”*, “a process of negotiations led by the political elite,”<sup>358</sup> and a “top down process excluding the grass roots movements.”<sup>359</sup> A number of interlocutors have pointed to the lack of outreach of leaders to the population regarding what is discussed in the negotiations. The majority of interlocutors have also underlined the lack of inclusion of civil society (see section 5.4.1 for further developments on this point) and the

356 Interview, UN staff, Nicosia, 16 June 2021.

357 Mete Hatay and Rebecca Bryant, *Negotiation the Cyprus Problem(s)*, June 2011, Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation, p. 11.

358 Interview, Greek Cypriot lawyer, e-meeting, 02 December 2020.

359 Interview, UN staff, e-meeting, 17 December 2020.



general failure of CBMs.<sup>360</sup> As highlighted by the Secretary-General in his last report, “Cyprus negotiations remain closed and leader-focused, where information is insufficiently shared with the public and only very few actors are involved.”<sup>361</sup> A researcher described these negotiations as “conducted by elderly men in a closed room.”<sup>362</sup> Several interlocutors questioned the elitist way of conducting the negotiations and regretted the little space given to civil society. Hence, some have explained the failure of the peace negotiations as due to the “heavy reliance on Track one and inadvertently its omission of the other tracks.”<sup>363</sup> The leader-led process is considered by the majority of interlocutors “an old-fashioned and outdated approach,” and that people and civil society should be more involved<sup>364</sup> as it is impossible to “reunify” a country by a solely top-down approach. While this very high-level process may have been appropriate in the 1960s-70s, it is no longer the case.<sup>365</sup> Several interlocutors regret that “the UN had been coopted into this top down and male driven approach promoted by the two leaders.”<sup>366</sup> Moreover, this feature made the negotiations “dependent on shifted electoral calendars and of course on the political positioning of elected officials.”<sup>367</sup>

The leader-led process is considered by the majority of interlocutors “an old-fashioned and outdated approach,” and that people and civil society should be more involved

The third feature of the “Cyprus peace process” is *the search for a comprehensive settlement in the process of which “nothing is agreed until everything is agreed.”* For some interlocutors, “to look for a comprehensive settlement is reproducing the status quo as everything becomes a bargaining chip, and that method has to be questioned”; an incremental approach could be favoured with the aim for both sides to take increasing responsibility.<sup>368</sup> Therefore, the majority of interlocutors have questioned this methodology of negotiations, in which the cart was put before the horse: “instead of creating the necessary trust and confidence prior to any substantial negotiation for a comprehensive solution, the two communities have continuously attempted to negotiate a solution before these conditions were put in place.”<sup>369</sup> A number of interlocutors have, therefore, considered that the principles behind the process are flawed because, for example, the principle

360 Colin Irwin, “Cyprus Lessons: How to melt a frozen conflict,” Conference given in Morocco in June 2018. One interlocutor regretted that too often CBMs have been quickly politicised, although some could have been used as a way of making “the two leaders report on their progress.” Interview, diplomat, Nicosia, 15 June 2021.

361 S/2021/634, 9 July 2021, “Report of the Secretary-General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus,” para. 50.

362 Interview, researcher, e-meeting, 17 June 2020.

363 Ahmet Sözen, “Re-Engaging the United Nations? Third parties and the Cyprus Conflict,” *op. cit.*

364 Interview, researcher, e-meeting, Larnaca, 21 December 2020.

365 Focus group with Greek Cypriot researchers and civil society activists, e-meeting, Nicosia, 18 December 2020.

366 *Ibid.*

367 Gilles Bertrand, “Chypre: trop de négociations ont-elles tué la négociation?” *Confluences Méditerranée*, 2017/1, n°100, pp. 111-121.

368 Interview, researcher, 08 July 2020.

369 Christos Yiangou, “Solving the Cyprus problem: An out-of-the-box approach,” *Cyprus Mail*, 14 February 2021.

of “nothing is agreed until everything is agreed,” means that “we end up with nothing every time.”<sup>370</sup> They thought that an incremental approach should be favoured, with each step being permanently secured. As one researcher put it: “a step-by-step process needs to be created without waiting for the big bang solution to happen.”<sup>371</sup> There is a need to focus more on the conditions for the talks. According to Christos Yiangou, a former diplomat, “such an approach should aim at cultivating the bicomunal economic, political, social and cultural ground before any comprehensive solution is negotiated and agreed. Namely, an evolutionary or gradual approach, within a pre-agreed road map, could offer the two Cypriot communities the opportunity to fulfil their negotiating interests by creating trust and confidence concurrently, something essential for a future comprehensive settlement based on a new revised plan by the UN.”<sup>372</sup>

Instead of building up, the negotiations have brought more divisions because their setting has not fundamentally changed, they have lacked inclusivity, and they have not created common ground.

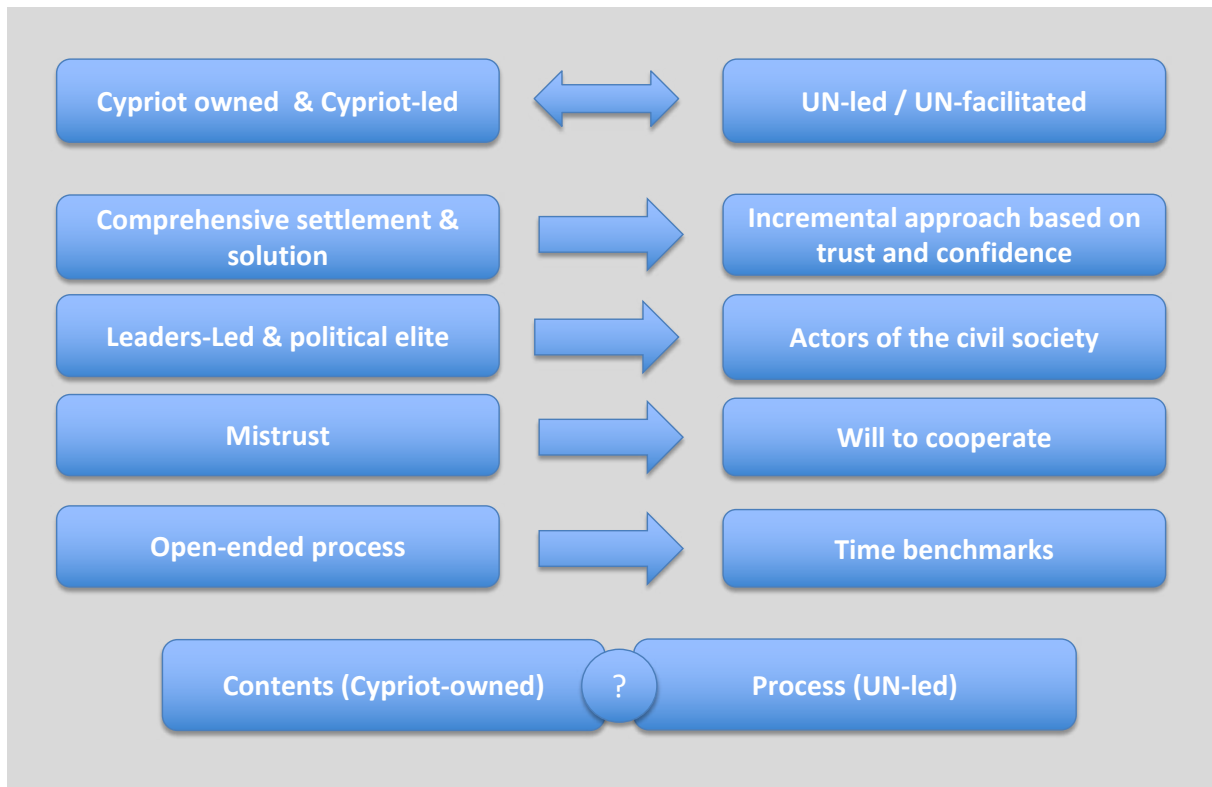
The fourth feature of these negotiations is that they have been *conducted by leaders who are mainly deeply distrustful of each other*. As pointed out by Prof. Ozay Mehmet from Carleton University in Canada, “political settlements are made between people, based on trust and a will to cooperate. In Cyprus, the bitter reality is that the great majority of Turkish and Greek Cypriots have virtually zero mutual trust. Populist leaders are always ready to exploit people’s mistrust.”<sup>373</sup> As a result, each failure of the talks has pushed the two communities apart. Instead of building up, the negotiations have brought more divisions because their setting has not fundamentally changed, they have lacked inclusivity, and they have not created common ground.

370 Interview, journalist, e-meeting, 18 January 2021. In reponse, a member of RoC’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated, “there is an acquis, a body of work from past negotiations that form an agreed basis and a number of convergences; what has been achieved remains” (interview, e-meeting, 8 February 2021). A UN staff explained that “each round of negotiations has built upon the prior and in the context of the Cyprus settlement negotiations, precedent is everything. Hence, the large part of the body of work has remained, even if the talks have resumed and died down in waves over time” (interview, e-meeting, 13 August 2021).

371 Interview, researcher, e-meeting, Lefkoşa, 16 December 2020.

372 Christos Yiangou, “Solving the Cyprus problem: An out-of-the-box approach,” *loc. cit.*

373 Ozay Mehmet, “Last tango in Cyprus,” *loc. cit.*

**Figure 13. Main features of the Cyprus peace process over the years**

Created by Alexandra Novosseloff.

The fifth feature of the Cyprus process is its length with *open-ended negotiations* that prolong the status quo, which are not conducive to seeking a compromise and give no leverage to any of the stakeholders. It has created a reality in which “the two sides have locked themselves into a dead end.”<sup>374</sup> One interlocutor explained that “the Greek Cypriots don’t like that kind of engagement with deadlines and texts put on the table; they don’t want externally imposed time constraints.”<sup>375</sup> On the contrary, the Turkish Cypriots would have wanted timelines to an end state in which their unrecognised political status would become clear.<sup>376</sup> A number of interlocutors have considered that negotiations “can’t go on like this forever,”<sup>377</sup> and that it is high time to introduce time benchmarks that could, ultimately, allow the process to end.

To these characteristics of the negotiating processes on Cyprus, one could add a sixth feature: the various high-level talks involving the Guarantors were mainly held abroad, far away from the Cypriots, and rarely on the island.<sup>378</sup> As an independent observer noted, “neutral territory

374 Focus group with Greek Cypriot researchers and civil society activists, e-meeting, Nicosia, 18 December 2020.

375 Interview, Greek Cypriot lawyer, e-meeting, 2 December 2020.

376 Mete Hatay, Rebecca Bryant, *Negotiation the Cyprus Problem(s)*, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

377 Focus group with Greek Cypriot researchers and civil society activists, e-meeting, Nicosia, 18 December 2020.

378 Some say this is because the RoC refuses to meet Turkish officials on the island.

may suit some negotiations but not talks on the future of a small island like Cyprus, which need to be held close to the people to whom negotiators are accountable.”<sup>379</sup>

A number of interlocutors have considered that negotiations “can’t go on like this forever,” and that it is high time to introduce time benchmarks that could, ultimately, allow the process to end.

### 5.1.3. A Strategic Connection Between a Means, Peacekeeping, and an End, Peacemaking

In his 1964 “aide-mémoire concerning some questions relating to the function and operation of the UN Peace-Keeping Force in Cyprus,” the Secretary-General explained that “the operations of the Force and the activities of the UN mediator are separate and distinct undertakings, and shall be kept so.” Nevertheless, their respective “activities are complementary in the sense that the extent to which the Force shall be able to ensure quiet in Cyprus will help the task of the Mediator, while on the other hand any progress effected by the Mediator will facilitate the functioning of the Force.”<sup>380</sup> The peacekeeping mission should allow the political process to evolve in a quiet environment. As the Secretary-General pointed out in 1966, “peace-keeping (...) can provide an atmosphere of quiet and can buy a reasonable time for peace-making, for resolving the differences which give rise to the conflict.” In other words, “peace-keeping is a means and not an end, and can only be a first step toward pacific settlement.”<sup>381</sup> In line with the A4P principles (one of the objectives of which is to advance political solutions to conflict and enhance the political impact of peacekeeping), UNFICYP considers support to the creation of conditions conducive to the resumption and conduct of viable negotiations for a settlement as a key strategic objective. With this goal in mind, the military and police shape the security environment, ensuring that peace is maintained. The sustaining activity towards the end-state aims at increasing trust and cooperation across the currently divided communities. Decisive action is contributing to conditions that will generate political support and encouragement for the leaders of the sides to negotiate and seize opportunities afforded by a unification agreement through the building of a constituency for peace.<sup>382</sup>

379 Alper Ali Riza, “Next 5+1 meeting should be at Ledra Palace in Nicosia,” *loc. cit.*

380 S/5653, 11 April 1964, “Note by the Secretary-General,” para. 15.

381 S/7350, 10 June 1965, “Report by the Secretary-General on the UN Operation in Cyprus,” para. 172.

382 S/635, 9 July 2021, “Report of the Secretary-General on the UN operation in Cyprus.”

The peacekeeping mission should allow the political process to evolve in a quiet environment.

As one interlocutor considered, “the UN has been a successful facilitator at keeping the sides at bay but unsuccessful in breaking down the status quo.”<sup>383</sup> As the Secretary-General stated in one of his latest reports, “UNFICYP continues to play an indispensable role in preventing tensions at various levels from escalating and hindering dialogue and the search for a political solution.”<sup>384</sup> He further considered that “there is a direct link between the mandates of peacekeeping and Good Offices Missions, where, on the one hand, the prevention of an escalation of tensions on the ground contributes to conditions conducive to advancing political solutions to conflicts and, on the other hand, progress towards a political agreement can contribute to a calmer and more stable situation.”<sup>385</sup> In the preambular paragraph of Resolution 401 in December 1976, the Security was already considering that “in existing circumstances the presence of the UN Peace-keeping Force in Cyprus is essential not only to help maintain quiet in the island but also to facilitate the continued search for a peaceful settlement.” As one senior staff of the Force underlined: “Success is often about presence.”<sup>386</sup>

The UN has been a successful facilitator at keeping the sides at bay but unsuccessful in breaking down the status quo.

Even if “the failure to reach a peace agreement is not the fault of a peacekeeping operation,” and that its long-standing nature is mainly because “the reasons for which it has been created have not been addressed,” as underlined by officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cyprus,<sup>387</sup> a number of interlocutors have made a link between the peacekeeping and the peacemaking endeavours. Interlocutors who readily acknowledge the stabilising effect of the UNFICYP often add that the UN has not been able to bring a peace settlement, and this is true even though the two Missions are clearly separated, showing that the bureaucratic structure has no visibility on the ground or outside the UN. While peacekeeping and peacemaking are kept separate, they are derived from the same resolution and as a result, “both elements have to be regarded as vital for the overall success or failure of the mission.”<sup>388</sup> The Secretary-General’s reports give a clear sense that there is a connection between the holding of talks, an ongoing negotiating process, the level of tension in the buffer zone, and the number of violations committed on both sides. In such circumstances, the failure of the talks will tend to hide the achievements of the peacekeeping mission, as many interlocutors link these two

383 Interview, member of civil society, Nicosia, 25 June 2021.

384 S/2019/37, 11 January 2019, “Report of the Secretary-General on UN operation in Cyprus,” para. 50.

385 S/2020/23, 7 January 2020, “Report of the Secretary-General on UN operation in Cyprus,” para. 55.

386 Interview, UN staff, Nicosia, 15 June 2021.

387 Interview, MFA staff, e-meeting, 8 February 2021.

388 Jan Asmussen, “UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP),” *op. cit.*, p. 206.



aspects of the UN's role. One interlocutor in UNFICYP acknowledged that “when there [are] no negotiations, tensions in the buffer zone increase.”<sup>389</sup> Another interlocutor explained that in the long absence of negotiations, or because the parties have been tired of these negotiations and don't expect progress, they have become “notably less cooperative and more opportunistic.”<sup>390</sup> One month before the renewal of the UNFICYP mandate, UN staff have also noted a more aggressive tone towards the UN or increased complaints to the UN on the actions of the other side.<sup>391</sup> The Secretary-General concluded in January 2021 that “the absence of a viable peace process since July 2017 has resulted in increasingly substantial changes on the ground. This, in turn, has heightened tensions between the two sides, moving the parties further apart and possibly affecting the efforts towards an overall sustainable solution.”<sup>392</sup>

The absence of a viable peace process since July 2017 has resulted in increasingly substantial changes on the ground.

The Cyprus problem has all the features that the UN would discourage in any other conflict setting, and that have been overall a recipe for inconclusiveness. The UN has accepted a methodology of engaging in a negotiating process in Cyprus that it would reject elsewhere. The UN has been used by the two sides to maintain a particular type of process – very elitist, exclusive, male-dominated and leader-led – with which it has become stuck due to the attitudes of both sides and the unavoidable issue of recognition. As a result, some say that it has become part of the Cyprus problem. Voices have been raised to try to devise a “healthier process,” and they advocated for an incremental approach with the aim of having both sides take on increasing responsibility as well as the need to focus more on the conditions for the talks before any comprehensive solution is negotiated and agreed. Interlocutors also suggested the introduction of deadlines and benchmarks that would eventually bring the process to an end. Since 2017, however, the stalemate in the negotiations has resulted in substantial changes on the ground and increased the tensions between the two sides, moving them further apart.

## 5.2. Realistic Mandates and Matching Resources of Interposition and Mediation

### 5.2.1. The Art of Interposition and Beyond

The mandate of UNFICYP, established by Resolution 186, is “to use its best efforts to prevent a recurrence of fighting and, as necessary, to contribute to the maintenance and restoration of law and order and a return to normal conditions.” The prevention role is the primary function

389 Interview, UN staff, Nicosia, 15 June 2021.

390 Interview, former UN staff, e-meeting, 26 November 2020.

391 Interviews during field visit, June 2021.

392 S/2021/4, 8 January 2021, “Report of the Secretary-General on the UN operation in Cyprus,” para. 48.

of UNFICYP. It has first taken the form of a force deployed throughout the country and then, after 1974, a force of interposition between two parties in a buffer zone between two ceasefire lines. A former senior official has described the mandate as: “a relatively small force and a mission of interposition between opposing forces deployed in far greater numbers,” an interposition role where soldiers have to “draw on qualities of quiet diplomacy, courtesy and patience.”<sup>393</sup> This role requires proactive engagement and communications to promote trust and goodwill across the buffer zone between the opposing forces, even when they are reluctant. UNFICYP records all observed violations and engages with the two sides to resolve issues that arise in and around the buffer zone, with a view to maintaining calm and preventing escalation. As summarised in the 2017 Strategic Review in its assessment of the situation in Cyprus and of the action of UNFICYP: “UNFICYP operates in an environment characterised by constant but contained military incidents along the ceasefire lines, combined with a vastly increased level of civilian activity in the buffer zone.”<sup>394</sup> Hence the role of UNFICYP goes beyond interposition when helping local authorities (as the UN does not have any executive mandate) to restore law and order and ensure the return to normal conditions, thus contributing to the long-term stability of Cyprus. This part of the mandate has been qualified by a number of researchers as ambiguous as the Council did “not clearly spell out what ‘law and order’ and ‘normal conditions’ were referred to.”<sup>395</sup>

## || The prevention role is the primary function of UNFICYP.

Two criticisms have been made of UNFICYP to the EPON team: it has an outdated mandate, and the “normal conditions” that Resolution 186 aims at have never been defined. A number of interlocutors have considered that the Security Council has not adapted the mandate to the evolution of the conditions on the ground, but none of them could really describe what was missing in it. UNFICYP was created at a time when mandates given by the Security Council were short, clear and simple, even if each exact term was not necessarily defined. When the mandate was issued in 1964, the UN Mission had to operate in a very divisive environment: “The normality it was supposed to achieve was destroyed in 1974, as it was not possible to return to the pre-1963 conditions anymore.”<sup>396</sup>

In the mandate, the point of contention underlined by a number of interlocutors is specifically how to interpret what the return to “normal conditions” would be, even if the Secretary-General did give a number of indications. For the UN, “the principal objective was to restore conditions that would enable the people of the island, Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot alike, to go about their daily business without fear for their lives and without being victimized, and in this connection to restore governmental services and economic activities disrupted by the intercommunal

393 Interview, e-meeting, 26 November 2020.

394 S/2017/1008, 28 November 2017, “Strategic review of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus,” para. 50.

395 Esref Aksu, “The UN in the Cyprus conflict: UNFICYP,” *op. cit.*, p. 135.

396 Interview, former UN staff, e-meeting, 02 April 2020.

strife.”<sup>397</sup> UNFICYP never deviated from that original idea, still considering in its current concept of operations that the “return to normal conditions” should be read as including the process of supporting the two communities to “achieve greater economic and social parity between the two sides and to broaden and deepen economic, cultural and other forms of cooperation.”<sup>398</sup>

The UN definition does not take any position on the type of state, government or constitutional order suitable for such “normal conditions”, which and may be what a number of interlocutors regret. The UN definition also reiterates that no peacekeeping mission can substitute for the will of the parties to achieve peace; the UN can only help them “to contribute” and assist them in reaching that goal if they have the will to do so. As the Secretary-General stated in 1964, the “ultimate responsibility for a return to normal conditions in Cyprus must obviously rest primarily with the authorities and people of Cyprus themselves, and normality can come about only as a result of a determination by the two communities.”<sup>399</sup>

A number of interlocutors have advocated for a stronger reporting on human rights, as Cyprus suffers from ongoing domestic violence and as the island has received the highest number of migrants per capita in Europe.

With such a definition, one could consider that UNFICYP has accomplished its mission as Cyprus has not had any fatalities since 1996 and has thus become a “conflict without casualties” or a “comfortable conflict” which is “difficult to solve but easy to manage”. It is so comfortable that the presence of UNFICYP has made “people forget that no cease-fire agreement exists between the parties or the belligerents.”<sup>400</sup> By its mere presence, UNFICYP even “created a sense of security.”<sup>401</sup> With a very small contingent, it has had a stabilising effect on the conflict and the situation on the ground. Today, Cyprus is an island where its people can “move around freely and carry on with their day’s work without fear or hindrance.” Little animosity exists among Cypriots, as the opening of the crossing points have shown since 2003. Nevertheless, the two communities have their own definition of what “normal conditions” are. Turkish Cypriots

397 UN, *The Blue Helmets: A Review of United Nations Peace-keeping*, *op. cit.*, p. 277. Before taking that position, the UN clearly considered that it could not accept any of the positions put forward by the sides: “The efforts of UNFICYP to carry out its mandate were impeded by the parties’ conflicting interpretations of the duties of the Force under that mandate. To the Cyprus Government, UNFICYP’s task was to assist it in ending the rebellion of the Turkish Cypriots and extending its authority over the entire territory of the Republic. To the Turkish Cypriots, a ‘return to normal conditions’ meant having UNFICYP restore, by force if necessary, the status of the Turkish Cypriot community under the 1960 Constitution, while the Cyprus Government and its acts should not be taken as legal. The Secretary-General in his reports rejected both these interpretations” (*ibid*, p. 274).

398 S/2021/635, 9 July 2021, “Report of the Secretary-General on the UN operation in Cyprus,” para. 66.

399 S/5671, 29 April 1964, “Report by the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the operations of the UN peace-keeping Force in Cyprus,” para. 2 and 4.

400 Interview, journalist and activist, e-meeting, 18 January 2021.

401 Interview, researcher, e-meeting, UK, 14 December 2020.

are seeking recognition, considering that the context in 1963–1964 was an “abnormal situation” with the absence of their representatives in the Cypriot government. Greek Cypriots wish to have Turkish troops leave the island. To criticise the lack of definition of one aspect of the mandate is certainly also for the sides to question the purpose of the Mission as a whole and to use this to undermine the progress of ongoing negotiations.

Beyond interposition, UNFICYP has been involved in areas as the Mission was forced to adapt to circumstances (like its humanitarian activities, the potential work on human rights, the help provided to migrants or refugees) or to the support it could provide to the peacemaking mandate (like all the work on bicomunal activities). These two directions had the consequence of expanding the civilian component of the Mission. On the one hand, this is considered by the parties as somehow outside UNFICYP’s mandate. The RoC MFA considers that “it is not UNFICYP’s job to do bicomunal activities; it should only facilitate contacts on the ground.”<sup>402</sup> On the other hand, other interlocutors, mainly from civil society, wish UNFICYP would do more on that front, to have more “peacebuilding elements into the UNFICYP mandate” or “to redesign its mandate around peacebuilding.”<sup>403</sup> UNFICYP has no mandate when it comes to human rights or human trafficking. A number of interlocutors have advocated for a stronger reporting mechanism on human rights, as Cyprus suffers from ongoing domestic violence and as the island has received the highest number of migrants per capita in Europe.<sup>404</sup> One interlocutor even suggested the Mission should have an environmental adviser as the consequences of climate change are increasingly prominent on the island.<sup>405</sup>

### 5.2.2. The Art of Mediation and Facilitation in the Absence of the Will of the Parties to Cooperate

As underlined in previous sections, the UN has been less of a mediator (who elaborates plans and submits ideas to the sides) than a facilitator (who convenes the sides and keeps the process moving forward) in the numerous negotiations undertaken on the future of the island since 1964. What it has never been is a “meditator”, i.e. a ‘robust’ mediator “who may insist on time-frames for negotiations, and then, if the sides cannot reach agreement, present one themselves or, at least, ‘bridge’ whatever gaps remain between the parties,”<sup>406</sup> as the Secretary-General was left alone in this role and the support of the Security Council was elusive at best. In this role, the UN has often found itself in an uncomfortable position and accused of not doing enough

402 Interview, MFA staff, e-meeting, 8 February 2021.

403 Focus group with researchers from Famagusta, e-meeting, 16 December 2020.

404 Interview, former UN staff, e-meeting, April 2020.

405 *Ibid.*

406 The concept of “meditator” was put forward by James Ker-Lindsay (“The Emergence of ‘Meditation’ in International Peacemaking,” *Ethnopolitics*, 2009, 8(2), pp. 223–233). See also the article by John McGarry and Neophytos Loizides underlining that the Secretary-General could not fulfil that role in Cyprus (“The UN in 21st Century Cyprus: Meditation, Mediation-Lite and Beyond,” *loc. cit.*). It should be pointed out that some experts in negotiation techniques consider facilitation as a form of mediation.

for the parties to reach a solution and of being an easy scapegoat for parties who want to find an external actor to blame. A young activist even said: “We don’t see what the UN is doing in these negotiations, we just see them standing there.”<sup>407</sup> However, if the UN Good Offices is there to facilitate the peace talks, it cannot obviously lead them, and the process always remains in the hands of the parties. It needs “to remind both parties that they are equal but tell them that their strengths are different.”<sup>408</sup> Even if the UN treats the parties equally, it cannot avoid some clashes with them, which has been the case with some special envoys.

The Secretary-General was left alone in this role and the support of the Security Council was elusive at best.

Indeed, a number of critics have spoken up about the selection and attitudes of successive special advisers: “every new special adviser or SRSG think[s] that the Cyprus problem can be solved within a year”, they “start to learn the Cyprus issue after they arrive [on] the island”, and they “look at the substance of issues before looking at the process.” A former UN staff member considered that “UN envoys should first understand the culture of the people to avoid any mis-steps.”<sup>409</sup> A number of interlocutors have also highlighted the way the parties have treated UN senior officials: “SRSGs have all been labelled at some point Turkish spies,”<sup>410</sup> and “each SRSG or special envoy is a target for [a] witch-hunt, and this is affecting [the] UN’s efficiency.”<sup>411</sup> Interlocutors have said that some UN officials have even been threatened that they were going too far in trying to secure a deal: “The Greek Cypriots are taking the UN for granted and are playing with UN officials.”<sup>412</sup> As in most missions, UN leadership is instrumentalised by the parties, and the members of the Security Council have let that happen.

The lack of will from the parties to engage in a meaningful political process, something that has limited the UN in its effectiveness.

This situation has also been the consequence of a lack of strategic communication on the part of the UN and the Security Council in managing the expectations of the parties, both at the leader and population level, even when national leaders are bullying representatives of the Secretary-General, and they are aware of the situation. This is also a consequence of the lack of will from

407 Interview, Focus Group on Youth, e-meeting, 10 March 2021.

408 Interview, former UN staff, e-meeting, 02 April 2020.

409 Interview, former UN staff, e-meeting, London, 16 March 2021.

410 Interview, Greek Cypriot activist, e-meeting, Nicosia, 14 December 2020.

411 Interview, researcher, e-meeting, 16 December 2020. See also elements of this in Constantinos Adamides and Michalis Kontos, “Re-Engaging the United Nations?” *op. cit.*, pp. 8-9.

412 Interview, researcher, e-meeting, 16 December 2020.



the parties to engage in a meaningful political process, something that has limited the UN in its effectiveness. As a former UN staff put it, it is “impossible to compensate for the absence of political will with technicalities,” “you can’t want a deal more than the parties do,” and the parties have “become experts in not solving issues.”<sup>413</sup>

The mandate of UNFICYP has been considered adapted to the context and circumstances overall, despite the lack of definition for a return to “normal conditions” mentioned in Resolution 186. The two sides have not been able to agree on the meaning of this. UNFICYP’s prevention role has been efficient to the extent that Cyprus has often been referred to as “a conflict without casualties” (since 1996), a “comfortable conflict,” and “difficult to solve but easy to manage”. Beyond interposition, some interlocutors have advocated for a stronger reporting mechanism on human rights, as Cyprus suffers from serious domestic violence and has received the highest number of migrants per capita in Europe.

A number of interlocutors view the UN’s role as simple facilitator, with the process always remaining in the hands of the parties. They have also been critical of the choice of some UN special envoys, while acknowledging that they were often mistreated by the sides, especially Greek Cypriots. Overall, the UN has had difficulties in explaining its action and managing expectations. It has been considered too timid in its approach to the sides and in pointing out those who have been unconstructive during the various talks held. The lack of will from the parties to engage in a meaningful political process has limited the UN’s effectiveness.

### 5.3. Legitimacy and Credibility of the UN Presence in Cyprus

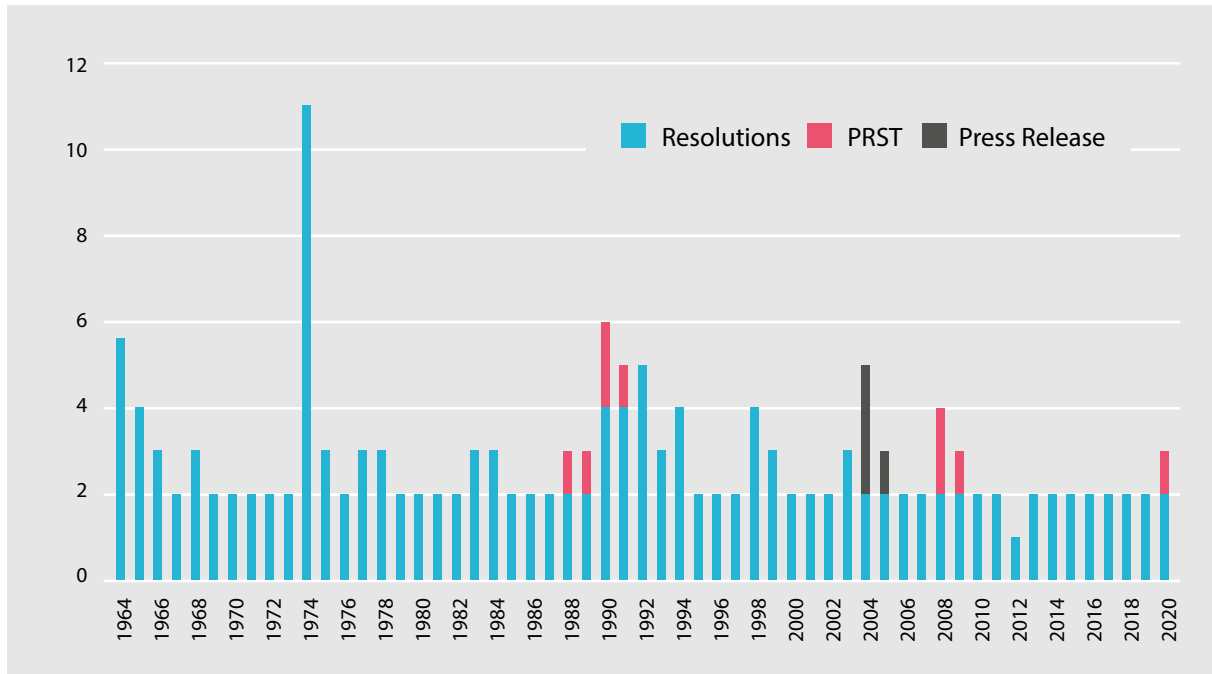
The legitimacy and the credibility of a UN mission is the result of combined action by the various organs of the UN and its main stakeholders: the Secretariat, the Security Council, the contributing countries, and the host country. A UN mission cannot be credible in a vacuum, without any support from the P5, regional actors, Cyprus’ Guarantors, and its host country, even with a very good mandate. A number of interlocutors have also highlighted the fact that regional tensions can have an impact on the situation on the ground, in the buffer zone, even if not in a direct way. The enhancement of defences (such as the construction of prefabricated concrete firing positions on the Greek Cypriot side and installation of CCTV on the Turkish Cypriot side) and the opening of the fenced-off area of Varosha/Maraş are examples of this which show that the status quo is not static. Legitimacy is also a consequence of Cypriots’ perceptions of the Mission on the impact of its activities on the stability of the situation and progress made in negotiations.

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413 Interview, former UN staff, e-meeting, 02 April 2020.

### 5.3.1. A Passive Security Council Far from the Mission

**Figure 14. Number of decisions taken by the Security Council on “The situation in Cyprus”**



Source: <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/resolutions-0>. Graph created by Alexandra Novosseloff.

The Security Council has spent overall little time on the “Cyprus problem”.

As figure 14 above shows, the Security Council has spent overall little time on the “Cyprus problem,” except when it initiated the Mission and appointed a mediator and during the 1974 crisis. On average, two resolutions are made per year, mainly to renew UNFICYP’s six-month mandate, support ongoing negotiations, or reiterate the lack of meaningful progress on the political front. The New York-based NGO Security Council Report described Cyprus as “a low-intensity issue on the Council’s agenda.”<sup>414</sup> This reflects the lack of urgency on the part of the “international community” towards a conflict that has no victims. Moreover, most of the work of trying to find a solution to the Cyprus problem was left to the different secretary-generals by the Council, without giving them much support, as reflected by the general absence of press releases and presidential statements. This indicates that overall the Security Council seems to be “happy with the status quo”<sup>415</sup> and relatively united on Cyprus, or sometimes desperate. The UN may be united on the need to keep UNFICYP as it is, but less so when it comes to

414 Security Council Report, *Monthly Forecast on Cyprus*, January 2021.

415 Interview, diplomatic representation, e-meeting, Nicosia, 02 December 2020.

the contents of the negotiations. As one interlocutor put it, “the great powers and the geostrategic dynamics have prevented the P5 from having the political will to bring a solution to the island.”<sup>416</sup> While the Council is united in its support for the political process, Members diverge somewhat on the conditions and timeframe for the talks; some seem to share the view that this process cannot be open-ended and that the Council could apply pressure on the parties to revive the negotiations.<sup>417</sup> In the Council, the RoC plainly benefits from its status as a legitimate, recognised representative for the island, with its permanent mission to the UN. However, the Turkish Cypriots are more invisible to Members of the Council (except when Turkey was a non-permanent Member in 2009-2010).<sup>418</sup> As a result, “Turkish Cypriots don’t have a lot of friends in the Security Council.”<sup>419</sup> This can be attributed to their non-recognition status, just like the other “de facto states.”

Cyprus as “a low-intensity issue on the Council’s agenda.” This reflects the lack of urgency on the part of the “international community” towards a conflict that has no victims.

In the Council, the UK, France and Russia seem to have had “a special interest in Cyprus”; they follow the issue in the Council more closely than other Members.<sup>420</sup> The UK is the penholder for all resolutions on Cyprus, one of the Guarantors, and holds two sovereign bases on the island. Therefore, it has major interests in Cyprus, has pushed in a subtle way for talks, but otherwise has been very cautious in “not destabilizing its relation with Cyprus.”<sup>421</sup> Brexit has led British authorities to try to re-invest in the Cyprus file by being more imaginative and impartial than if they were still in the EU, but they have felt isolated in their wish to overcome apathy in the Council and have “felt a lot of resistance from the Greek Cypriots.”<sup>422</sup>

Traditionally, the Russian Federation had been the greatest external “impediment to change”. 40 000 Russian citizens live in Cyprus, and there are close links between the Greek and Russian Orthodox churches and private Russian investment in the North and the South of the island. Russia is the only permanent Member that has used its veto power on a resolution on Cyprus. It has used it three times: first in August 1974 (when it was still the USSR) on the role of

416 Interview, diplomatic representation, e-meeting, Nicosia, 31 March 2021.

417 Security Council Report, *Monthly Forecast on Cyprus*, January 2021.

418 Turkey was elected a non-permanent Member of the Security Council in 1951-1952, 1954-1955, 1961, and then only in 2009-2010. The Cyprus issue (and its occupation of the north of the island) has most probably prevented Turkey from being elected more often as a non-permanent Member of the Council. During Turkey’s last tenure, it voted against resolutions renewing UNFICYP’s mandate. In 2012-2013, Azerbaijan followed that policy in solidarity with Turkey. In 2014, Turkey lost its bid for another tenure in the Council. See annex 1. Berdal Aral, “Turkey in the UN Security Council: Its Election and Performance,” *Insight Turkey*, Fall 2009, 11(4), pp. 151-168.

419 Interview, UN staff, e-meeting, New York, 15 April 2020.

420 January 2021 Monthly Forecast on Cyprus, *op. cit.*

421 Interview, researcher, e-meeting, 18 January 2021.

422 Interview, researcher, Nicosia, 14 June 2021.

UNFICYP after a ceasefire agreement and an increase in its strength, then in May 1993 on the financing of UNFICYP, and third in April 2004 on a US-British draft resolution laying the groundwork for a post-settlement force replacing UNFICYP in case of a settlement by a “United Nations Settlement Implementation Mission in Cyprus.” According to James Ker-Lindsay, “most observers accept that the move was prompted by a Greek Cypriot request.”<sup>423</sup> Russia is, therefore, seen by the Greek Cypriots as protecting their interests in the Security Council. It has, for example, strongly opposed any attempt to exert pressure on both sides. Russia has recently offered its mediation in any talks with Turkey over energy exploration in the East Mediterranean Sea.<sup>424</sup> Cyprus is also “a small but important pro-Russian voice in the European Union.”<sup>425</sup> Ultimately, “Russia doesn’t want any change because it fears that Cyprus would join NATO in case of reunification.”<sup>426</sup>

Russia is the only permanent Member that has used its veto power on a resolution on Cyprus.

France has been traditionally well-aligned with the RoC policies and positions and is “visibly absent from any real substantial bi-communal work.”<sup>427</sup> It has recently augmented its military presence in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea in cooperation with Greece.<sup>428</sup> With Russia, France is considered the main defender of the RoC and the Greek Cypriot community in the Security Council. France is not part of the discussions about a solution for the island and because of that position, some interlocutors considered that it could raise a European voice on the Cyprus problem. Therefore, interlocutors regretted that France has not yet used its position to take more of a leadership role on the issue. Some interlocutors have suggested that as a very close ally of the government of Cyprus, France could take the initiative with the Greek Cypriots, press them to agree to a settlement and warn them about the perspective of having a militarised border in Cyprus.<sup>429</sup> Some even consider that France could have a role in changing the discourse within the EU on Cyprus and exert more pressure for Cyprus not to interfere in a number of issues related to Turkey in particular.

The US and China have been more distant members of the P5 on the Cyprus issue. Under the Trump Administration, the US pushed for a strategic review of UNFICYP, with the alleged objective of closing the Good Offices, if not the UN Force.<sup>430</sup> The US has emphasised that peacekeeping missions must support political processes and that the Council should reconsider

423 James Ker-Lindsay, “The UN Force in Cyprus after the 2004 Reunification Referendum,” *International Peacekeeping*, September 2006, 13(3), p. 415.

424 “Russia offers to mediate any Cyprus-Turkey talks,” *Reuters*, 8 September 2020.

425 James Ker-Lindsay, *The Cyprus Problem*, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

426 Interview, TRNC official, e-meeting, Lefkoşa, 14 February 2021.

427 Interview, former EU staff, e-meeting, 18 June 2020.

428 Luigi Scazzieri, “The Eastern Mediterranean Heats Up,” Center for European Reform, 26 August 2020.

429 Interview, researcher, e-meeting, 18 January 2021.

430 Elias Hazou, “UN pondering UNFICYP’s fate,” *Cyprus Mail*, 30 April 2017.

the mandates of missions like UNFICYP where the political process is absent. It has also supported the introduction of timed benchmarks for an exit strategy tied to the political process.<sup>431</sup> With the new Biden Administration, some interlocutors have expressed their wish for a more influential US in the negotiations, as has been the case in the past, such as under the Obama Administration. China has been an advocate for the territorial unity of Cyprus (“it never wanted to allow any small community to get its independence”<sup>432</sup>) but has otherwise been quiet on the Cyprus problem in the past. More recently, the Chinese interest in the “Cyprus problem” has changed parallel to the growing Chinese investments in the south of the island.<sup>433</sup> This could be the consequence of a regional opportunity for China that is “moving in where the United States is withdrawing,” as one scholar stated.<sup>434</sup>

A certain apathy has reached the Council chamber, and none of its Members has taken the initiative on the Cyprus problem.

Overall, no Council member has openly wished for the closing of UNFICYP. A certain apathy has reached the Council chamber, and none of its Members has taken the initiative on the Cyprus problem. As one diplomat in Nicosia summarised: “The Council is happy with the frozen conflict; all five profit from the current situation and it gives them a certain influence; they have no ambition to solve the Cyprus problem.”<sup>435</sup> The Council has generally been issuing “always the same resolutions,” as one interlocutor noted,<sup>436</sup> and has constantly repeated that “the status quo is unacceptable, that time is not on the side of a settlement, and that negotiations on a final political solution to the Cyprus problem have been at an impasse for too long.” A number of interlocutors regret the lack of firmness of the Council and considered that it could hold the two leaders more accountable than it has done so far, as ultimately a settlement is in the interests of all. A researcher explained, “if we do get new talks on the future of the island, we will need the Security Council to make a bold statement for the Greek Cypriots to take this issue more seriously than before.”<sup>437</sup> The problem is that a number of countries “look at Cyprus through the prism of their policy towards Turkey, and that obstructs the good functioning of the Good Offices.”<sup>438</sup> Overall, “an effective solution to the problem has generally been a distant secondary concern for the key international actors.”<sup>439</sup> As one journalist underlined: “Cyprus is a little part of a bigger power game.”<sup>440</sup> Considering the strategic context, the “international community”

431 Security Council Report, *Monthly Forecast on Cyprus*, November 2019.

432 Interview, former TRNC negotiator, e-meeting, Nicosia, 01 December 2020.

433 “China and Cyprus: Building bilateral ties,” *Cyprus Mail*, 9 May 2021.

434 Interview, scholar, e-meeting, 04 August 2021.

435 Interview, diplomat, Nicosia, 14 June 2021.

436 Comments made by interlocutor. Interview, UN staff, e-meeting, 2 November 2020.

437 Interview, researcher, e-meeting, 18 January 2021.

438 Interview, TRNC official, e-meeting, Lefkoşa, 14 February 2021.

439 Susan S. Allee, “UN Blue: An Examination of the Interdependence Between UN Peacekeeping and Peacemaking,” *loc. cit.*, p. 87.

440 Interview, journalist, e-meeting, 18 January 2021.



needs “to have an island of relative security,” despite its protracted conflict.<sup>441</sup> However, the Security Council (and more generally the “international community”) is less effective in these kinds of conflicts and breakaway entities. It is often caught between the imperative of respecting international law and the need to acknowledge that the isolation of breakaway regions is counterproductive in the long run.

### 5.3.2. A Regional Context that Exacerbates Tensions

The region is regularly shaken up by the Greek-Turkey rivalry, competing claims over the disputed waters of the Mediterranean Sea, their long-standing disagreement over maritime boundaries of Greek islands adjacent to Turkey, the Turkish promotion of the neo-nationalist maritime concept of “Mavi Vatan – Blue Homeland”,<sup>442</sup> and more recently the dispute over hydrocarbons among Turkey, the Turkish Cypriots, and the RoC (see box 14). These tensions have been exacerbated by other factors related to Turkey’s regional ambitions (in Syria and Libya) and Turkey’s policy towards European and Arab states (security and migration in particular).<sup>443</sup>

The unresolved Cyprus problem is no longer comfortable for the international community because it affects stability and security in the Eastern Mediterranean,” as a result, Cyprus is becoming “part of a broader dispute”.

Similar to Fiona Mullen, Director of Sapienta Economics, the majority of EPON interlocutors have highlighted that in this context, “the unresolved Cyprus problem is no longer comfortable for the international community because it affects stability and security in the Eastern Mediterranean,” and that as a result, Cyprus is becoming “part of a broader dispute” (see discussion on the status quo in section 6.1.2).<sup>444</sup> These tensions de facto ended the decoupling between the Cyprus problem and the bilateral relations between Greece and Turkey. As one researcher also pointed out, “sovereignty is a central issue to the Cyprus problem and the discovery of natural gas complicated it, exacerbated the tensions, and made it part of the Cyprus problem.”<sup>445</sup>

441 Interview, UN staff, e-meeting, 25 November 2020.

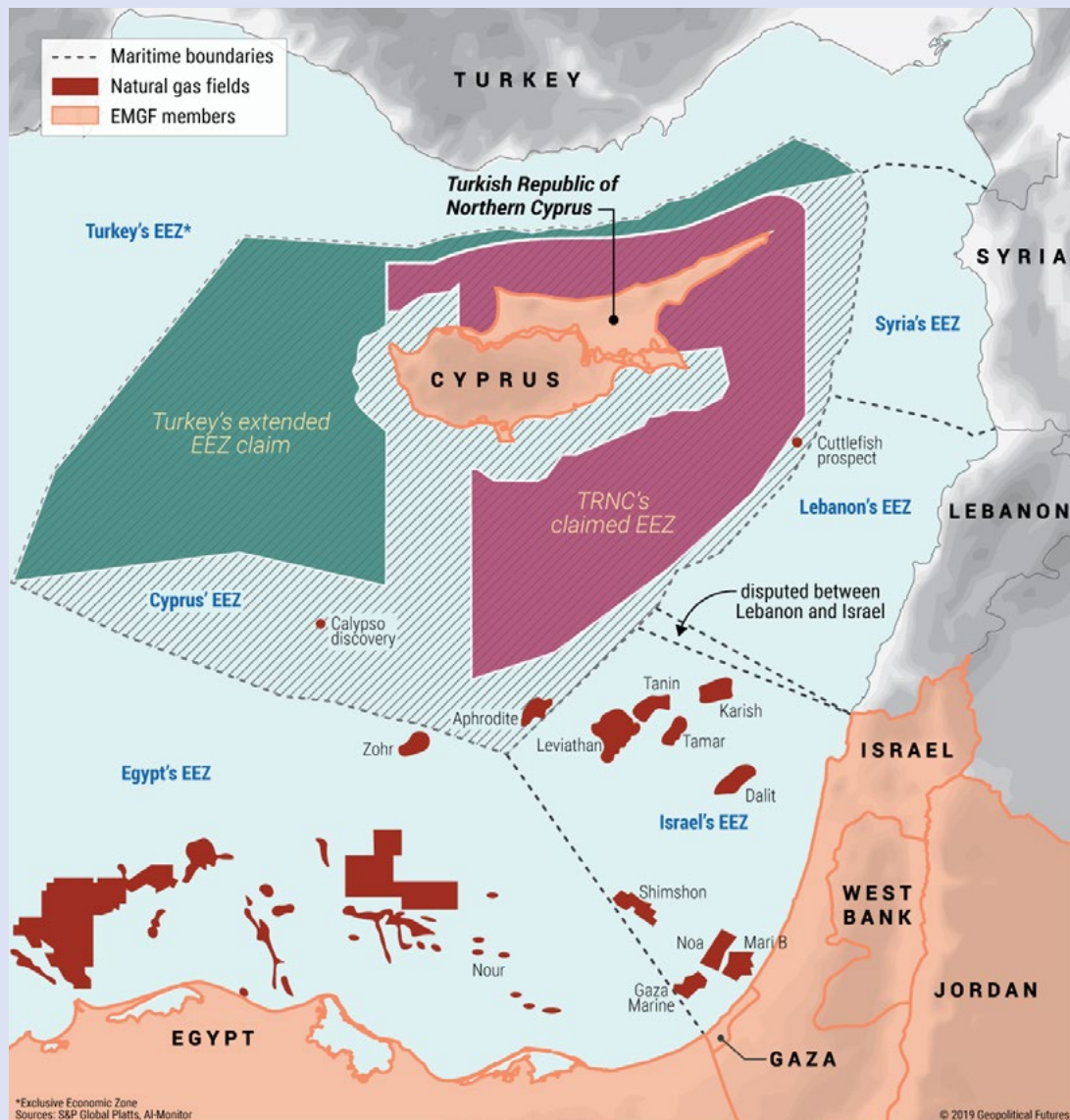
442 Aurélien Denizeau, “Mavi Vatan, la ‘Patrie bleue’: Origines, influence et limites d’une doctrine ambitieuse pour la Turquie,” *Études de l’Ifri*, April 2021, 30 pages.

443 Agneska Bloch and Israa Saber, “What’s Driving the Conflict in the Eastern Mediterranean?” *Lawfare blog*, 25 January 2021. See also Bruno Tertrais, “Whose Sea? Untangling the Eastern Mediterranean Great Game,” and a series of papers written on that issue on the Institut Montaigne blog, October 2020.

444 Helena Smith, “Greek and Turkish Cypriot leaders to hold talks on resuming peace process,” *The Guardian*, 26 April 2021.

445 Interview, researcher, Nicosia, 14 June 2021.

### Box 14. The Cypriot dispute over hydrocarbons



The RoC proclaimed its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and entered into delineation agreements with Egypt in 2003, with Lebanon in 2007, and Israel in 2010, prior to the significant discovery of natural gas offshore made in 2011. The delineation of its continental shelf south of the island, in accordance with the International Law of the Sea Convention (UNCLOS), resulted in the demarcation of a 51 km<sup>2</sup> stretch of sea divided into 13 licensing blocks where contracted gas companies could explore for natural gas. Turkey – who has not signed UNCLOS and therefore does not consider it binding – rejected the EEZ agreements. In addition, RoC and the TRNC have conflicting views on who holds the legal rights over Cyprus's natural resources and the actions towards gas exploration by the RoC have excluded the TRNC because of the recognition issue: "The Greek Cypriots maintain that any sharing of the revenues from natural resources can come only after a solution. The Turkish Cypriots and Turkey argue that not only at the island's natural resources jointly owned, but so is the right to explore and exploit them irrespectively of whether there is a solution."<sup>446</sup>

446 Ayla Gürel and Harry Tzimitras, "Gas Can Become the New Lost Opportunity," in James Ker-Lindsay, *Resolving Cyprus*, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

On 13 June 2019, in the context of UN shuttling on confidence-building measures, the Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akıncı put forward a TRNC proposal in coordination with Turkey, calling on the Greek Cypriot side to cooperate in developing the island's joint energy resources, and to establish a joint committee, with the facilitation of the UN, and the EU as an observer, to plan, decide and implement future hydrocarbon activities, including an agreement on the revenue-sharing. The Greek Cypriot leader, Nikos Anastasiades, sent a letter to the Secretary-General dismissing the proposal, and then submitted a counter proposal on 13 August 2019, which was deemed "not serious" by the Turkish Cypriots and Turkey. Since then, the parties have continued to refer to these 2019 proposals in statements and as part of their respective contributions to the Secretary-General reports to the Security Council as a basis for further discussions.

The May 2021 International Crisis Group report on the Greece-Turkey relations has underlined that "the unresolved feud over Cyprus fed maritime disputes between Turkey and Greece, and vice versa," and recommended "Greek and European officials should encourage their Greek Cypriot counterparts to explore potential revenue-sharing arrangements with the de facto northern republic for gas drilling around the island – the lack of such arrangements is one of Turkey's main grievances." In September 2021, it also recommended the UN "propose talks about gas revenue sharing that might assuage energy-related grievances on the Turkish side."

*Source: International Crisis Group, "Turkey-Greece: From Maritime Brinkmanship to Dialogue," Europe and Central Asia, Report n°263, 31 May 2021; Michaël Tanchum, Eastern Mediterranean in Uncharted Waters, Perspectives on Emerging Geopolitical Realities, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 2021; Zenonas Tziarras (ed.), The New Geopolitics Of The Eastern Mediterranean – Trilateral Partnerships And Regional Security, Re-Imagining The Eastern Mediterranean Series Report 3/2019, FES and PRIO; Map from "Natural Gas Cooperation in the Eastern Med," Geopolitical Futures, 22 November 2019.*

The P5 has been cautious in taking bold initiatives on the Cyprus problem that would change the status quo, making it very difficult for the rest of the UN to operate

Analysts on peacekeeping operations often say that these long-term operations are victims of the lack of strategic interest of the P5 in the regions and countries where they are deployed. UNFICYP is a counter example to this analysis: it stands in a region that receives intense strategic attention worldwide, and that is precisely the reason why the P5 has been cautious in taking bold initiatives on the Cyprus problem that would change the status quo, making it very difficult for the rest of the UN to operate. In this context, "the relative stability of the Cypriot frozen conflict (...) leads the UN to conclude that life support is preferable to pulling the plug."<sup>447</sup> However, a number of interlocutors have considered that "nothing will happen in Cyprus if it is left to the people on the island,"<sup>448</sup> considering that any move on the Cyprus problem would be triggered by an external power.<sup>449</sup> To summarise the overall situation, when the region is divided, peace is hard to achieve.

<sup>447</sup> Erol Keymak, "Adopting a Piecemeal Approach," in James Ker-Lindsay (ed.), *Resolving Cyprus*, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

<sup>448</sup> Interview, diplomat, Nicosia, 15 June 2021.

<sup>449</sup> See Birol Yeşilada, "Quo Vadis Cyprus?" *loc. cit.*, pp. 26-33.

### 5.3.3. Legitimacy of the UN for the Island's Stakeholders: Local and National Ownership and Perceptions

Contrary to other peacekeeping missions, UNFICYP has enjoyed overall legitimacy from both sides; although over time, the Turkish Cypriot community began to raise its doubts on the impartiality of the UN in Cyprus. Greek Cypriots and RoC authorities are the main supporters of the UN presence in Cyprus, as the status quo is a reassurance to them, and they feel that being an agenda item of the Security Council prevents Turkey from going too far in its domination over the island and the region. They see UNFICYP as a buffer against Turkey and a potential witness to a hypothetical Turkish attack. For Greek Cypriots and the RoC, the main role of the UN is its presence and involvement in the talks, even if they do not want the UN to lead; they want it to be a partner, and by being so, strengthen their own legitimacy as the sole sovereign owner of the island (as stated in Resolutions 367 and 541 as well as in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between the UN and RoC; see section 6.2.1 for developments on the issue of recognition). The UN has to be impartial in all situations where it intervenes, as a constitutive element of its legitimacy, and therefore cannot ignore the claims of the “other side.”

Greek Cypriots and RoC authorities are the main supporters of the UN presence in Cyprus, as the status quo is a reassurance to them.

Turkish Cypriots consider UNFICYP's mandate imbalanced as they are not part of the “consent” of the host state, which is the cause of their doubts over the impartiality of the UNFICYP. The RTCN “authorities” have in recent years become more vocal in criticising UNFICYP for not seeking the “approval and consent of the Turkish Cypriot side” for its presence and operations.<sup>450</sup> They mainly see UNFICYP as part of the status quo that they wish to challenge. As a consequence, UNFICYP interlocutors have noticed that tensions occurring in the buffer zone “are generally in the northern ceasefire line,” Turkish forces are referring to Blue helmets as “opposing forces” challenging their position on the ceasefire lines, and “challenging the presence of UNFICYP in areas it believes are north of the northern ceasefire line.”<sup>451</sup>

The peculiar and unique mode of financing UNFICYP<sup>452</sup> was raised by a number of interlocutors, in particular the Turkish Cypriot community, who sees it as another source of impartiality. According to Turkish Cypriots, the fact that a third of UNFICYP's budget (see box 15) is covered by one party to the conflict (RoC) and one Guarantor (Greece) calls into question the UN's neutrality and constitutes “a conflict of interest.” One interlocutor acknowledged that

450 See <https://pio.mfa.gov.ct.tr/en/statement-by-ministry-of-foreign-affairs-of-UNSC-extension-of-unficyyp>.

451 Interview, UN staff, Nicosia, 22 June 2021.

452 OSASG-Cyprus is funded through the regular budget for special political missions and therefore does not have this issue.



the way the budget of UNFICYP is organised “opens [it] to criticism.”<sup>453</sup> One added: “How can we be impartial if we take part of the budget from one side?”<sup>454</sup> An author considered that “not the organization but the individuals can be affected by this approach and their neutrality might be hampered naturally.”<sup>455</sup> However, the majority of UN interlocutors in the field and at headquarters have denied these accusations, saying that it is never a consideration they have in mind when undertaking their activities. This modus of financing adopted in 1993 was first a way to solve the endemic deficit of a mission entirely funded through voluntary contributions, and “so today’s arrangement is arguably better than the previous one.”<sup>456</sup> If the funding arrangement was to be changed today, it would require much more political capital than one could expect in the first place: “Changing the funding arrangements definitely would have to go through the Fifth Committee, which is currently not prone at considering major changes to established administrative processes.” As a result, UNFICYP’s funding arrangement is “not a problem that anyone believes needs solving, or at least one worth the political capital required to get there.”<sup>457</sup> Nevertheless, the Secretary-General could commission a review on that mode of financing some 30 years after its adoption as a way of placing UNFICYP on the same footing as other UN peace operations.



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453 Interview, UN staff, e-meeting, New York, 15 January 2021.

454 Interview, former UN staff, e-meeting, 03 February 2021.

455 Abdullah Soydemir, “*The Role and Effectiveness of UN Peacekeeping Mission in the Cyprus Island*,” *Girne American University*, 30 April 2018.

456 Interview, UN staff, e-meeting, 14 April 2021.

457 *Ibid.*



### Box 15. The hybrid financing of UNFICYP

Resolution 186 recommended that “all costs” pertaining to the stationing of the Force “be met by the Governments providing the contingents and by the Government of Cyprus. The Secretary-General may also accept voluntary contributions for that purpose.” Originally, the governments contributing troops to the Force had agreed to cover their basic expenses, while the UN would cover operational costs and logistics. From 1964 to 1993, however, UNFICYP found itself entirely financed by voluntary contributions. Despite the numerous calls by the Secretary-General to Member States to provide UNFICYP with secure funding, the UN operation was in constant deficit, reaching US\$200 million in June 1993. This had an impact on the reimbursement of TCCs. For example, in 1992, TCCs were only reimbursed for expenses from 1981.

Security Council Resolution 682 (21 December 1990) expressed concern over UNFICYP’s “chronic and ever-deepening financial crisis” and considered “alternative arrangements for meeting the costs of the Force, in order to place the Force on a sound and secure financial basis.” In 1993, Resolution 47/236 of the General Assembly (backed by Security Council Resolution 831 of 27 May 1993) considered that the costs not covered by voluntary contributions should be borne by Member States, in accordance with Article 17 of the UN Charter. On 15 April 1993, the Government of Cyprus, in a letter to the Secretary-General (S/25647, annex), conveyed an offer to contribute voluntarily on a continuing basis one-third of the annual cost of UNFICYP. On 7 May 1993, the Government of Greece, in a letter to the Secretary-General, indicated its intention to contribute voluntarily \$6.5 million on an annual basis to the cost of the Force (S/1999/657, 8 June 1999). The consequence of those two offers is that the costs of UNFICYP have since 16 June 1993 been financed on a basis combining: (a) voluntary contributions and (b) contributions assessed on the entire membership of the UN.

*Source: Chapter IV of Philippe Achilleas, Chypre – L’UNIFCYP, Paris: Montchrestien, CEDIN-Paris I, 2000, pp. 137-149; S/23144, 15 October 1991, “Report of the Secretary-General on Financing of the United Nations Peace-Keeping Force in Cyprus”; S/26777, 22 November 1993, “Report of the Secretary-General in connection with the Security Council’s comprehensive reassessment of the United Nations Operation in Cyprus”.*

Finally, another source of legitimacy for a UN mission is the perception of its effectiveness by the population itself, not only the authorities of the country where it is deployed. EPON interlocutors who have worked on this issue have underlined the lack of clarity among Cypriots about the UN. This is first and foremost due to the lack of continuous visibility of its missions on the ground. As pointed out by an activist, “the average Greek Cypriot doesn’t know the UN is in Cyprus.”<sup>458</sup> People do not often encounter the UN unless they go close to the buffer zone: “The UN has been an unreachable organization.”<sup>459</sup> “If you are not involved in an NGO, you don’t have any interaction with the UN,” said a young Cypriot.<sup>460</sup> People see the UN mainly through its role in the political talks on the future of the island. Prof. Ahmet Sözen also considered that “the United Nations in Cyprus, and more specifically UNFICYP, failed to create awareness among the average Greek and Turkish Cypriot regarding the range of tasks that they perform in Cyprus.”<sup>461</sup> Voices have been raised among interlocutors over frustration regarding the UN’s

458 Interview, Greek Cypriot activist, e-meeting, Nicosia, 14 December 2020.

459 Interview, activist and researcher, e-meeting, Larnaca, 14 December 2020.

460 Interview, Focus Group on Youth, e-meeting, 10 March 2021.

461 Ahmet Sözen, “Re-engaging the United Nations? Third parties and the Cyprus Conflict,” *op. cit.*

limited area of operation. Some have questioned UNFICYP's usefulness if it cannot intervene outside the buffer zone, as this is their perception. Nevertheless, one professor from Famagusta said that overall, "both communities have positive views about the UN presence in Cyprus, except the nationalists," as he considered that "the UN is needed here."<sup>462</sup> Another Turkish Cypriot interlocutor added: "The political elite in the north want the UN out, but the people like it. And through the UN, they also have an access to the 'international community.'"<sup>463</sup>

EPON interlocutors who have worked on this issue have underlined the lack of clarity among Cypriots about the UN.

One major inter-communal survey was commissioned by UNFICYP in February 2007 "to evaluate the effectiveness and ongoing relevance of the United Nations work in Cyprus," as well as "to gauge how Cypriots feel about the Mission and the rest of the UN presence on the island, and on their attitudes towards a possible peaceful resolution of the Cyprus problem" in preparation for the 2008 direct negotiations.<sup>464</sup> The majority of Greek and Turkish Cypriots believed the UN was biased in favour of the other community, were wary of the true intentions and preferences of the other side, and did not want UNFICYP to withdraw before the restoration of normal conditions and a peaceful settlement. However, they also wanted the UN to make more effort to understand Cypriot concerns across the island.<sup>465</sup> This survey shows the continuing mistrust between the two communities, which is also directed at the work of the UN, and the link that is always made between the work of the UN and the state of negotiations on the future of the island. No such survey has been conducted by UNFICYP since then, and it may be an idea to repeat that exercise and determine how opinions have changed since then regarding the UN's role (see box 16). A more recent survey focused on youths looked at the level of confidence young Cypriots have towards the UN Mission in Cyprus and the UN Secretary-General. The results show that about a third of respondents are "somewhat" confident, but a similar number are "not at all" confident in this regard.<sup>466</sup> This questions whether the work of the UN in Cyprus is sufficiently people-centred.

462 Interview, scholar, Famagusta, 18 June 2021.

463 Interview, researcher, e-meeting, 8 July 2020.

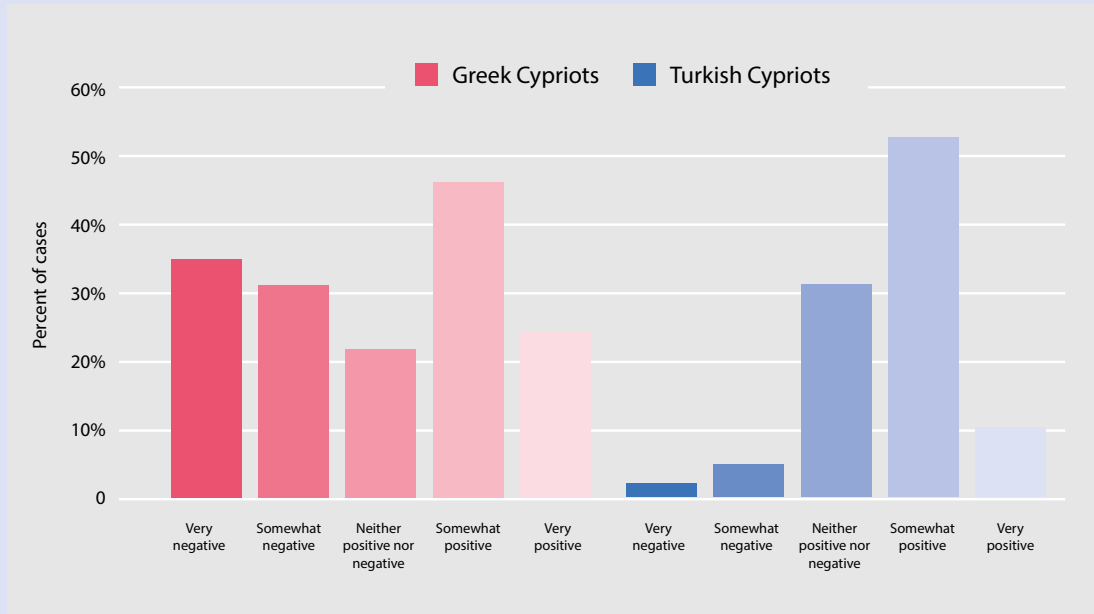
464 "Cyprus: UN poll finds majority backing in both communities for federal settlement," *UN News*, 24 April 2007. See also S/2007/328, 4 June 2007, "Report of the Secretary-General on the UN operation in Cyprus," para. 10.

465 *Ibid.*

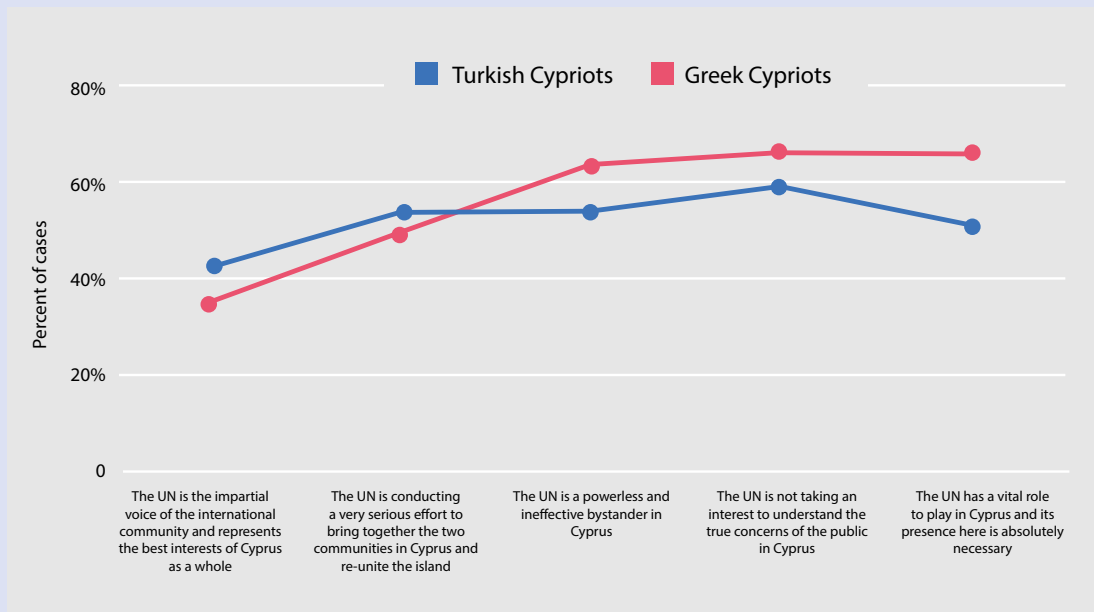
466 Cihan Dizdaroğlu, "Moving Beyond Soliloquy – Youth Perceptions on Politics, Peace and Inter-Communal Contacts," *FES Report*, 2020.

### Box 16. Elements of the 2007 Intercommunal Survey on the UN's role in Cyprus

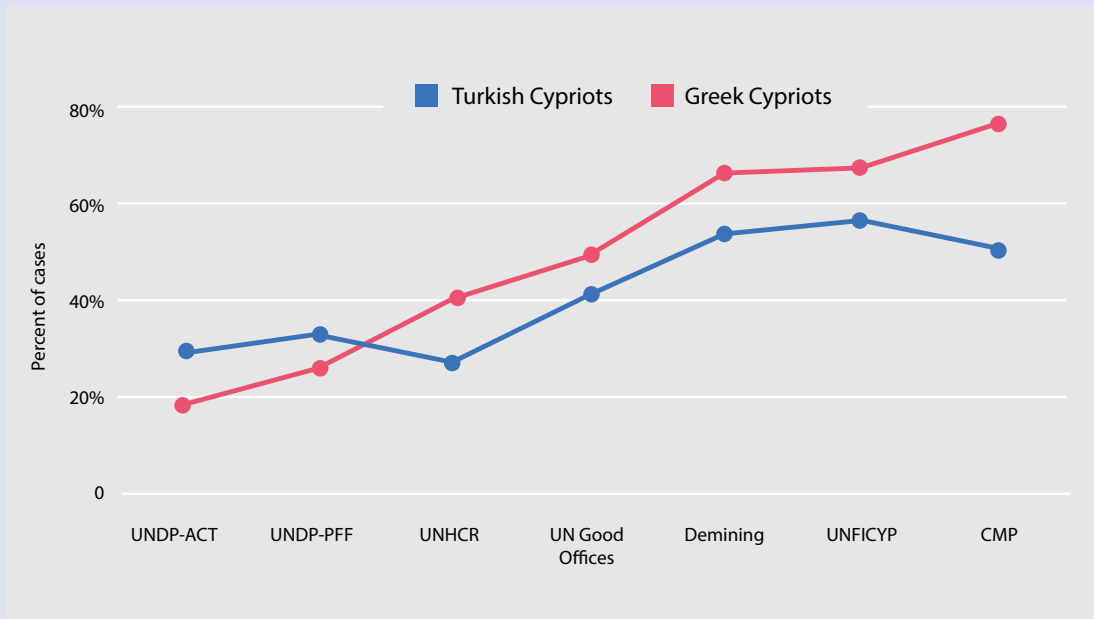
*To what extent do you consider UNFICYP to be a positive or negative presence on the island?*



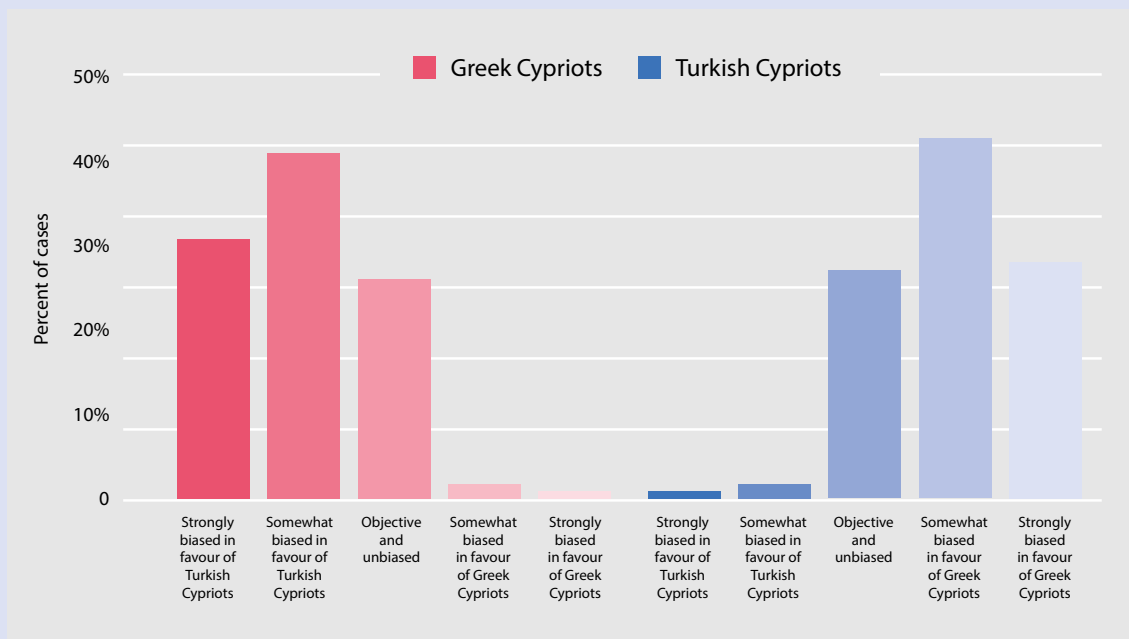
#### General attitudes toward the UN



**How aware are you about each of the UN agencies that operate in Cyprus?**



**In your opinion, is the UN's current effort objective, or biased in favour of one or the other side?**



Source: "The UN in Cyprus – An intercommunal survey," *The Blue Beret*, April 2007, special edition. Survey undertaken with the help of the Centre for Sustainable Peace and Democratic Development (<https://www.seedsofpeace.eu>).

EPON recommends that a new discussion be initiated by the Security Council and the Secretary-General on the budget of UNFICYP to make it similar to any other peace operation, i.e. financed by the peacekeeping budget. This would help counter any accusation of partiality increasingly directed at the UN Mission.

Despite their length, the two Missions are not very well known by the Cypriots, except by those crossing the Green Line or those involved in intercommunal activities. When they do know about the UN, people have a fairly global positive view of its actions and would want it to do much more. They nevertheless keep a level of distrust towards the effectiveness of the UN as they always make a link between the work of the peacekeepers and the state of negotiations on the future of the island. Some funding should be granted to UNFICYP in order to conduct in cooperation with some NGOs or researchers a major opinion poll on its work, on the model of what was done in 2007, in order to prioritise some of its activities and develop a targeted communication strategy.

## 5.4. People-Centred Approaches: Acting as Connectors and Conveners towards a Stronger Role for the Civil Society

The UN has persistently tried to bring the two communities together since the deployment of its troops and personnel in Cyprus. It has promoted and facilitated a number of CBMs as standalone initiatives and through Track I bicomunal technical committees. Both UNFICYP and the Mission of Good Offices have worked as “connectors and conveners” among civil society actors and local community representatives.<sup>467</sup> This was done in an environment where “civil society actors involved in promoting a culture of peace in Cyprus enjoy little political space or institutional support.”<sup>468</sup>

Both UNFICYP and the Mission of Good Offices have worked as “connectors and conveners” among civil society actors and local community representatives.

These efforts have developed after the opening of the crossing points in 2003. Since then, the two UN Missions have tried hard to focus the attention of the sides on the need to be more open to civil society actors. In his 2012 report, the Secretary-General considered that “civil society also has a crucial role to play in building public confidence in the process. Unfortunately, civil society organisations, and women’s groups, in particular, remain outside the framework of

<sup>467</sup> *Ibid*, para. 24.

<sup>468</sup> S/2017/1008, 28 November 2017, “Strategic review of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus,” para. 25.



the negotiations.”<sup>469</sup> Acknowledging this flaw in the negotiations, the Security Council, in 2013 with Resolutions 2089 and 2114, called upon the two leaders to, *inter alia*, “increase the participation of civil society in the [peace] process.” It had to repeat that call in 2018 with Resolution 2398 (30 January 2018), stressing “the importance of the full and effective participation of civil society and women in particular at all stages of the peace process and urges their involvement in the development and implementation of post-conflict strategies for sustainable peace; and further stresses the importance of the full and effective participation of youth.” These successive calls show that both sides have only moved incrementally towards acknowledging the role of civil society actors. Overall, the UN has been limited in its work due to the leader-led negotiating process that does not include civil society organisations (as described in section 5.1.2), the difficulty in reaching out to civil society actors outside the Nicosia bubble, and the fragmentation and weakness of civil society. These contextual difficulties do not mean the UN should not try to improve the effectiveness of its interactions with actors in civil society to influence the contents of the peace negotiations and to have civil society’s role much better acknowledged, even if its means have remained limited.

The majority of EPON interlocutors emphasised that civil society was rarely utilised in the peace process, or at least not in a sufficient way that could have had an influence over the various talks held.

#### 5.4.1. A Leader-led Process and Fragmented Civil Society

The majority of EPON interlocutors emphasised that civil society was rarely utilised in the peace process, or at least not in a sufficient way that could have had an influence over the various talks held to date, the period of the early 2000s in the context of the Annan Plan being an exception.<sup>470</sup> There is a gap between the high level of negotiations and the space given to civil society. Representatives of civil society have expressed their desire to have a voice in the negotiations or Track II process that could influence negotiations,<sup>471</sup> while acknowledging that there is “not much willingness from the government to include voices from civil society.”<sup>472</sup> In

469 S/2012/149, 12 March 2012, “Assessment report of the Secretary-General on the status of the negotiations in Cyprus,” para. 22.

470 On the role of the Turkish Cypriot society that overturned the hardline parties in favour of pro-solution/EU forces during that time, see George Kyris, “Europeanization beyond Contested Statehood: The European Union and Turkish-Cypriot Civil Society,” *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 2013, 51(5), pp. 1-18.

471 Alexandros Lordos, Erol Kaymak, and Nathalie Tocci, *A People’s Peace in Cyprus: Testing Public Opinion on the options for a comprehensive settlement*, April 2009, Centre for European Policy Studies. See also UNDP, *Cyprus Human Development Report: Youth in Cyprus*, 2009.

472 Interview, UN staff, e-meeting, Nicosia, 13 January 2021. Interview, researcher, e-meeting, 18 January 2021.

short, there is, as the Secretary-General put it, a “strong perception among both Cypriots and independent observers that negotiations, and the peace process more broadly, have been far removed from the public.”<sup>473</sup>

Observers of Cypriot society interviewed have explained these features in terms of how the society is organised, the general apathy of the society towards the talks, especially in the south (“The discontent doesn’t translate into a dynamic push to change part of the society”),<sup>474</sup> and the opposition of the majority of the political elite towards reunification: “Here people are following the political parties and their leaders; it is a very conservative way of having democracy.”<sup>475</sup> And “there is no understanding of the non-governmental sector in the government.”<sup>476</sup> Therefore, the authorities on both sides are not very supportive of NGO communities, especially those working on a solution for Cyprus or those who do not support the type of settlement favoured by the authorities. One interlocutor even said that “those who go outside the main narrative are threatened and viewed as disloyal.”<sup>477</sup> The fact is that “bicomunal groups don’t get much publicity and aren’t able to change the perceptions of both communities.”<sup>478</sup> Their activities are “feel-good efforts that do not penetrate enough the society.”<sup>479</sup> Moreover, “most issues discussed between civil society organizations on both sides are informal and find difficult to reach the leaders’ table.”<sup>480</sup> As one Greek Cypriot interlocutor explained, “there is a wall that separates those engaged in civil society and the others”; it is always the same people who meet, and they meet in Nicosia.<sup>481</sup> The work of UNFICYP in this area is considered by the RoC government as “going outside its box,” which “it doesn’t like.”<sup>482</sup> French scholar Mathieu Petithomme summarised the situation as follows: “Activists in favour of rapprochement do not represent the majority of the population, but constitute ‘active minorities’, which have certainly changed consciousness and public debates in the South as in the North, but which come up against strong political obstacles, weight of nationalism and conservatism, to relatively compartmentalized media spheres and cultural references.”<sup>483</sup>

Interlocutors have also explained this situation by the fact that civil society organisations have only developed more recently (after 2004, even if they existed before),<sup>484</sup> and that they have

473 S/2018/610, 14 June 2018, “Report of the Secretary-General on Progress towards a settlement in Cyprus,” para. 16.

474 Interview, researcher, e-meeting, Larnaca, 21 December 2020.

475 Interview, diplomatic representation, e-meeting, Nicosia, 02 December 2020.

476 Interview, Greek Cypriot researcher, Nicosia, 16 June 2021.

477 Interview, UN staff, e-meeting, 27 November 2020.

478 Interview, researcher, Athens, 15 November 2018.

479 Interview, professor, e-meeting, 07 July 2021.

480 Interview, peace activist, e-meeting, Lefkoşa, 02 December 2020.

481 Interview, Greek Cypriot lawyer, e-meeting, 02 December 2020.

482 *Ibid.*

483 Introduction of the special issue of *Cahiers balkaniques* on “Politique et sociétés à Chypre aujourd’hui,” n°46, 2020, pp. 16-17. For a comprehensive and historical account of bicomunal NGOs, see the article by Alexandre Lapierre in the same issue, “The role of associations and NGOs in promoting community relations in Cyprus,” pp. 95-124.

484 However, civil society in Cyprus is older than this (1990s), as explained by Alexandre Lapierre in his comprehensive and historical account of bicomunal NGOs (“The role of associations and NGOs in promoting community relations in Cyprus,” *Cahiers balkaniques*, n°46, pp. 95-124). See also Gilles Bertrand, “Les mobilisations des acteurs sociaux en faveur

been until now rather fragmented: “Having an impact on the island is quite a challenge because of the attitude and the fragmentation of the civil society, of the authorities and because of capacities.”<sup>485</sup> The last time there was a mass movement in civil society was in the north and before the referendum on the Annan Plan. One observer considered (too harshly perhaps) that there is “no effective civil society partners on the island; no grassroots civil society activism; that there are great individuals but they have hard times working together.”<sup>486</sup> Another added that “some of these organizations are looking at foreign actors to help them do something,” but there is little intercommunal work.<sup>487</sup> In 2018, the Secretary-General was rather pessimistic on the relations between both sides: “Despite the opening of the first crossing in 2003 and six others thereafter, as well as multiple efforts over the years to promote meaningful contact and strengthen intercommunal relations, sustained cooperation between the communities remains limited. Several generations have now lived and grown up apart.”<sup>488</sup>

The UN can help in promoting the work of civil society organisations as well as strengthening them, but it cannot serve as an instrument to change society.

It is hard for UN missions to be effective with only a fragmented civil society in place, and as pointed out by one interlocutor, “negotiations cannot change a society,” and therefore, civil society would be included in the negotiations once the society has evolved.<sup>489</sup> The UN can help in promoting the work of civil society organisations as well as strengthening them, but it cannot serve as an instrument to change society. The fact is also that the technical committees put in place in 2008 and 2015 (see box 10) in the framework of the negotiations could have helped civil society organisations have a stronger impact and be better organised. However, their work has been hampered by insufficient empowerment from the political leadership and the politicisation of the issues they have been mandated to address. Their members are, on the contrary, “waiting to be instructed by their leaders to do something.”<sup>490</sup> Another interlocutor even said that “if you want to ensure that something does *not* get done, make it the responsibility of a technical committee,” and added that “the ones that are effective are those that benefited from the exceptional commitment of their members who give their time for free.”<sup>491</sup> Most experts say

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d’une réconciliation à Chypre face à l’impasse des négociations officielles,” *Cahiers de recherche du Groupe de recherches et d’études sur la Méditerranée et le Moyen-Orient* (GREMMO), n°9, 2001, p. 63-75; Benjamin J. Broome, “Reaching Across the Dividing Line: Building a Collective Vision for Peace in Cyprus,” *Journal of Peace Research*, 2004, 41(2), p. 191-209. The EU funding to a number of NGOs in the context of the EU membership and the Annan Plan changed the scale of their work.

485 Interview, UN staff, e-meeting, 27 November 2020.

486 Interview, diplomat, e-meeting, 31 March 2021.

487 Interview, diplomatic representation, e-meeting, Nicosia, 02 December 2020.

488 S/2018/676, 6 July 2018, “Report of the Secretary-General on the UN Operation in Cyprus,” para. 30.

489 Interview, lawyer, e-meeting, Nicosia, 15 January 2021.

490 Interview, diplomat, Nicosia, 14 June 2021.

491 Interview, researcher, Nicosia, 14 June 2021.

that the technical committee on Cultural Heritage (“because doing up churches and mosques is popular, and because they get big EU grants”) and Crime and Criminal Matters (as “almost everything they do is under the radar, and because UNPOL facilitates it very well”) are the most efficient.<sup>492</sup> One interlocutor considered that in this, “the UN should push the technical committees to work properly,”<sup>493</sup> although that is not entirely under the purview of the UN. In his July 2021 reports, the Secretary-General considered that the technical committees “are significantly underutilized,” but have nevertheless “encouraged the leaders to empower [them] and to give them the political support required to achieve results, in particular those that can play a role in addressing key aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic’s impact, such as health, economic and commercial matters, crisis management, gender equality and humanitarian affairs.”<sup>494</sup>

The UN should push the technical committees to work properly,” although that is not entirely under the purview of the UN.

#### 5.4.2. The Challenge for the UN to Engage More Widely and Outside the “Nicosia Bubble”

Despite these constraints, the Secretary-General in his reports has pointed out that “both communities continue to express the desire for a peace process that is more inclusive, transparent and representative of the people”<sup>495</sup> In his 2020 report, the Secretary-General explained that “the majority in both communities believe that closer cooperation between the sides on issues such as crisis management, cultural issues, women’s role in society, sports and environmental protection would be instrumental in bringing the two communities closer.”<sup>496</sup> Hence, UNFICYP’s civil affairs section has tried to have a programmatic approach to civil society by leveraging a number of global themes likely to draw the interest of Cypriots from both communities, especially the youth who “grapple with the past legacies and the present realities of a divided island”.<sup>497</sup> These themes are peace education, environment, youth and entrepreneurship, gender and the role of women, and LGBT rights. The Good Offices Mission has engaged in discussions and dialogue around the island with different interlocutors on a range of issues related to the peace talks and the future of Cypriots island-wide.<sup>498</sup> UNFICYP and the Good Offices have

492 *Ibid.*

493 Interview, researcher, Lefkoşa, 21 June 2021.

494 S/2021/634, 9 July 2021, para. 44 and S/2021/635, 9 July 2021, para. 57.

495 S/2019/37, 11 January 2019, “Report of the Secretary-General on UN operation in Cyprus,” para. 4.

496 S/2020/23, 7 January 2020, “Report of the Secretary-General on UN operation in Cyprus,” para. 6.

497 Cihan Dizdaroğlu, “The Perceptions of Cypriot Youth Matter,” *FES Briefing*, 2020.

498 See S/2021/634, 9 July 2021, “Report of the Secretary-General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus,” para. 26-32.

been organising or supporting activities around those themes for Cypriots to share experiences and build trust around issues they care about, including by connecting potential donors with civil society representatives. In the second half of 2019, before the pandemic, UNFICYP supported 487 intercommunal events that brought together 9,945 participants from both sides. In 2020-2021, during the Covid-19 pandemic, “in response, the mission strengthened its capacity to facilitate online connections and sought creative ways to continue to support dialogue and cooperation across the divide. UNFICYP maintained its engagement with women and youth representatives of civil society, also reaching out to new constituencies, with modest success.”<sup>499</sup>

### Box 17. The Home for Cooperation



© Alexandra Novosseloff, 2009

Located in-between crossing points at Ledra Palace, the Home for Cooperation is a lively community centre, providing diverse cultural and educational programmes for young people, activists, educators, and the general public. Built in the 1950s as a home, the building has been marked throughout the years by the history of Cyprus.

In 1964, barricades marking the separation of Nicosia into a Turkish-Cypriot and Greek-Cypriot sector were set up very close to the house. In 1974, the building was caught in the middle of crossfire before it was left half abandoned and devastated in the buffer zone. As the buffer zone became a symbol of confrontation, the Ledra Palace Hotel was the venue where politicians held meetings to discuss the “Cyprus problem”. In April 2003, as the Ledra Palace crossing became the first checkpoint to open, a new dynamic was created in communal and intercommunal life in the street.

499 S/2020/4, 8 January 2021, “Report of the Secretary-General on UN operation in Cyprus,” para. 23.



In 2005, the Association for Historical Dialogue and Research (AHDR) came up with the idea of transforming this building into a shared educational space to generate open dialogue on historical understanding and enhanced research methods in Cyprus. Thanks to the support of the UNFICYP, the European Economic Area Grants and Norway Grants (the major donors being Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein), the Home for Cooperation opened on 6 May 2011.

Originally conceived as an educational and research centre, the Home for Cooperation has organically grown into a unique community centre infused with the identities, energies and ideas of the people of Cyprus. Today, the Home for Cooperation is a hub running artistic and cultural programmes and contributing to the collective efforts of civil society in their engagement in peacebuilding and intercultural dialogue.



© Alexandra Novosseloff, 2009

Source: <https://www.home4cooperation.info>.

Throughout its activities, the UN endeavours “to bring an environment where members of the two communities can be themselves and mingle.”<sup>500</sup> A number of interlocutors have valued those efforts but have considered that many of these activities are Nicosia-centred, in particular due to the unique presence of the Home for Cooperation located in the buffer zone, a neutral zone that does not exist elsewhere in the country (see box 17). Both communities could consider building a second one in Pyla (the only village in the buffer zone), near the University of Central Lancashire Cyprus (UCLAN), which was built without the authorisation of UNFICYP, or in

500 Interview, UN staff, e-meeting, 27 November 2020.

Varosha/Maraş as its fenced-off area is opening up, and by transforming a building there into an intercommunal centre.

Throughout its activities, the UN endeavours “to bring an environment where members of the two communities can be themselves and mingle

Because it is difficult to reach out to people outside Nicosia, a number of interlocutors have also considered that overall, the role of the UN has been limited in bringing communities together. Observers have pointed out that peace-related civil society organisations are “ensnared in a third space of conflict resolution, literally speaking the UN buffer zone in Nicosia,” and “without relocating such peace movements from the periphery to the centre of society an important piece of the peace process is missing.”<sup>501</sup> According to one Greek Cypriot activist, “the UN hasn’t identified how to go out of the Nicosia bubble.”<sup>502</sup> According to a researcher, “the UN wants to show that something has been done and don’t see that all those organizations are led by the same people and are not very inclusive.”<sup>503</sup> One interlocutor explained that these organisations have been “very exclusive in their political views” (i.e. mostly left-wing) and have not reached out enough to the “unconvinced” or “made space for those whose have different opinions.” Hence, these “peace business actors” tended to “reproduce their own narratives.”<sup>504</sup> Interlocutors have told EPON it is always the same people coming to the various groups created by UNFICYP or intercommunal dialogues. Interlocutors acknowledge that they have struggled with getting the general public to engage in a constructive way (to organise “citizens assembly” or “dialogue groups”). Many also pointed out the limited funding at the disposal of the UN to help strengthen civil society, especially since the end of the funding provided by USAID to the UNDP in 2015, and only partially replaced by some EU funding to the UNDP programme in Cyprus (see section 5.6.1 for details on this cooperation).

A number of interlocutors regret that “all the work the UN does” with civil society “is not reflected on the negotiating table.”<sup>505</sup> There is certainly an issue over the information conveyed by the UN and how it explains its work to the general public. A poll conducted by researchers at the University of Kent in September 2019 after the Conference on Cyprus in Crans Montana shows that more than 60% of the population on both sides are “unfamiliar” or “somewhat

501 Birte Vogel and Olivier Richmond, “A Viable Peace Process Already Exists,” in James Ker-Lindsay (ed.), *Resolving Cyprus*, *op. cit.*, p. 267.

502 Interview, Greek Cypriot activist, e-meeting, Nicosia, 14 December 2020.

503 Birte Vogel and Olivier Richmond, “A Viable Peace Process Already Exists,” *op. cit.*, p. 267.

504 Interview, researcher, Nicosia, 14 June 2021.

505 Interview, journalist, e-meeting, 18 January 2021.

unfamiliar” with the Guterres framework.<sup>506</sup> “The civil society has been left out outside the process,” and “the UN should have used its influence towards more participation of civil society,<sup>507</sup> especially as civil society activists are increasingly stating that “the people at the negotiating table do not represent the people on both sides.”<sup>508</sup> This feeling has grown after the so-called failure of the April 2021 5+UN informal meeting in Geneva, as “there is a new social mobility at grassroots level from both communities.” The Turkish Cypriot MEP Niyazi Kızılyürek explained: “On the one hand Greek Cypriots are turning more and more against their own elites and perceived corruption, and on the other Turkish Cypriots are in a cultural war defending their identity against Turkey’s interferences.” Kızılyürek said both had met “in a new sense of common Cypriotness” that was voiced through groups fearing the window for a solution was closing.<sup>509</sup> Ultimately, the inclusion of civil society organisations has to come from the State who needs to fund them and give them a political space. UNFICYP found that “a majority of the Cypriots continued to not publicly engage on the matter” or express their “deep concern that the window for a solution to the Cyprus problem was closing,” contrary to the views of a few civil society organisations.<sup>510</sup>

Interviews with civil society have clearly highlighted that the leaders on both sides have overlooked their role in preparing the ground for a solution in Cyprus. The UN Missions should work in partnership with the two sides to devise a Track II process to be activated when negotiations resume so that the voice of civil society on both sides is better heard. New consultations could also be undertaken to improve the functioning of the technical committees and/or create new ones, such as one on Cypriot diasporas, as one interlocutor suggested. Some interlocutors have also pointed out the limited funding at the disposal of the UN to strengthen civil society.

In addition, the UN Missions in Cyprus could take the lead in suggesting the building of a new “Home for Cooperation” and helping NGOs find the necessary funding for this. These can be built in Pyla and Varosha/Maraş. Both cities should be considered places of cooperation leading a process of rapprochement between the two communities.

506 Neophytos Loizides, Edward Morgan-Jones, Laura Sudulich, Charis Psaltis, Raluca Popp, and Feargal Cochrane, “Citizen Preferences in the Design of Effective Peace Processes”, 2021, Conflict Analysis Research Centre (University of Kent) (see <https://research.kent.ac.uk/cpideps>; data available from research team).

507 Interview, Focus Group on Youth, e-meeting, 10 March 2021.

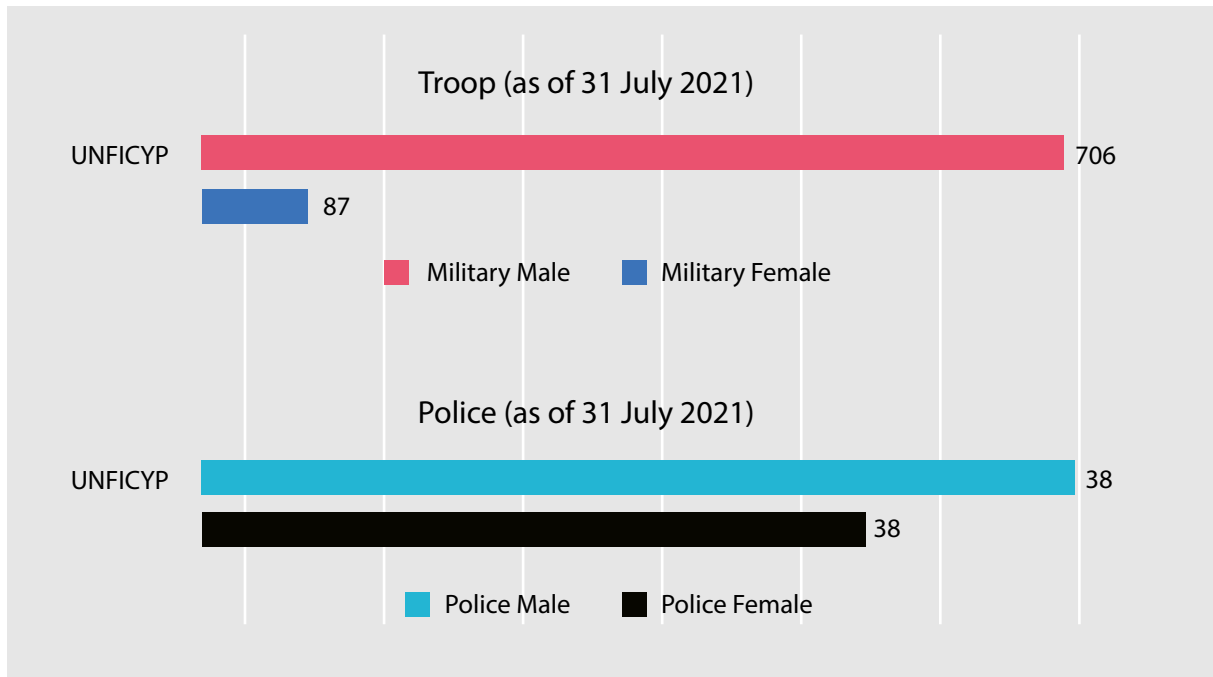
508 *Ibid.*

509 Helena Smith, “Greek and Turkish Cypriot leaders to hold talks on resuming peace process,” *loc. cit.*

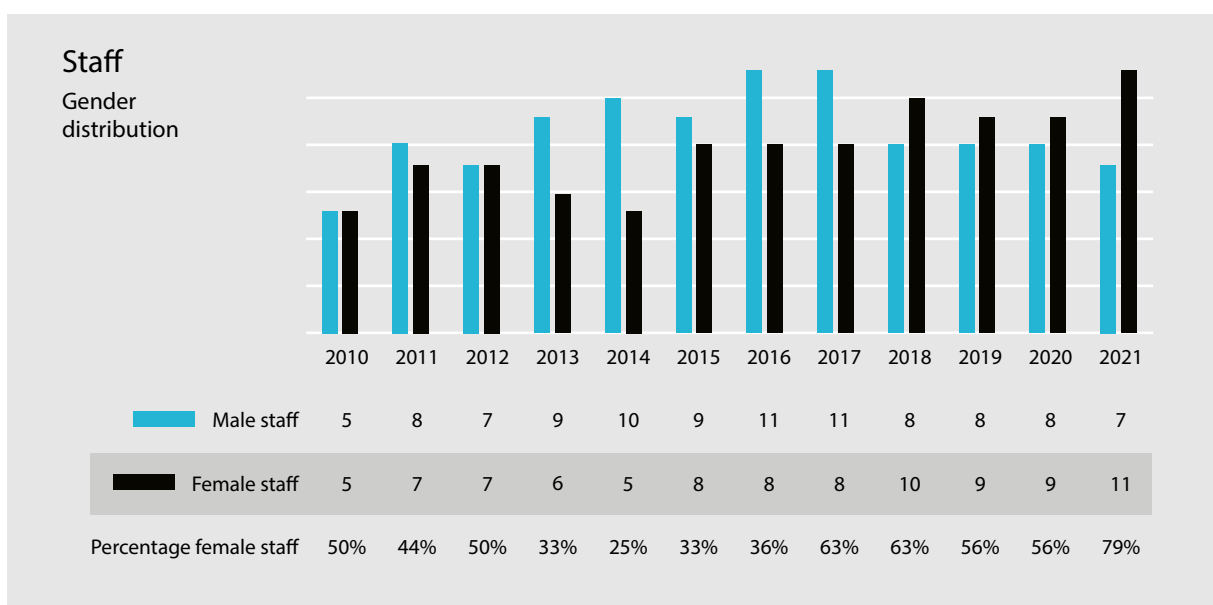
510 S/2021/635, 9 July 2021, “Report of the Secretary-General on the UN operation in Cyprus,” para. 5.

## 5.5. Women, Peace and Security: Advocating for Women’s Meaningful Participation in the Peace Negotiations

**Figure 15. Percentage of women in uniform in UNFICYP and the Good Offices Mission staff gender distribution**



### Office of the Special Advisor to the Secretary-General on Cyprus



Source: <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/gender>.

### 5.5.1. The UN Missions in Cyprus as WPS Champions Despite a Slow Start

The UN Missions in Cyprus have been slow to incorporate the provisions of Resolution 1325 and the broad women, peace, and security (WPS) agenda into their work. This is similar to other interposition missions, which have only recently incorporated WPS language into their Mission mandates when compared to their multidimensional mission counterparts.<sup>511</sup> As a consequence, information included in the Secretary-General's reports on the UN Missions in Cyprus about efforts to advance WPS has been sporadic over the last two decades. It was not until 2016 that the Secretary-General's reports started to include more comprehensive feedback on the implementation of WPS in the Missions in Cyprus. The 2019 Secretary-General's reports on Cyprus included WPS with a standalone paragraph examining "Gender and women, peace and security."<sup>512</sup>

Efforts to integrate gender perspectives across the Missions have also been hampered by limited resources. The first gender adviser was deployed to UNFICYP in 2017.<sup>513</sup> Prior to this, responsibility for gender rested with a dual-hatted civil affairs officer. There are gender focal points in the headquarters and sectors. The gender adviser currently sits in the office of the SRSG, ensuring the adviser can provide input and advice to senior Mission leadership. It is important to note that efforts to advance WPS and gender equality within Cyprus were taking place even though there was an absence of detailed direction from the Security Council in the mandates prior to 2018.<sup>514</sup> The work was being driven largely by civil society processes, including "Hands Across the Divide"<sup>515</sup> and the Gender Advisory Team.<sup>516</sup> Cypriot civil society has had a central role in efforts to progress WPS on the island on both sides, although as seen above, their efforts have continued to be marginalised to a large extent by their exclusion from many of the formal peace negotiations. This is despite the language in more recent Security Council resolutions encouraging the two leaders to engage with civil society actors.<sup>517</sup>

511 Lisa Sharland, *Women, Peace and Security Mandates for UN Peacekeeping Operations: Assessing Influence and Impact*, January 2021, International Peace Institute, p. 8.

512 See S/2019/37, 11 January 2019, "Report of the Secretary-General – United Nations operation in Cyprus."

513 Interviews with UN staff, e-meeting, 14 April 2020 and 27 November 2020. See also S/2018/676, 11 July 2018, "Report of the Secretary-General – United Nations operation in Cyprus," p. 6.

514 The mandate in 2018 included operative language that "stresses the importance of the full and effective participation of civil society and women in particular at all stages of the peace process and urges their involvement in the development and implementation of post-conflict strategies for sustainable peace; and further stresses the importance of the full and effective participation of youth." See S/RES/2398 (2018), para. 7.

515 See <https://unficyp.unmissions.org/unficyp-meets-hands-across-divide-discuss-women-peace-and-security-cyprus> and <http://www.peace-cyprus.org/womenbridges>.

516 The Gender Advisory Team "consists of civil society activists and scholars from both sides of the divide, who have extensive knowledge and hands-on experience on gender issues in their respective communities and elsewhere." See Atli Mine, Olga Demetriou, Umut Bozkurt, et al., "Women's Peace in Cyprus: Recommendations of the Gender Advisory Team (GAT) on Implementing UNSCR 1325 Provisions on Women, Peace and Security," *PRIO Cyprus Centre Report*, 2012, n°3, p. 7.

517 Interview with UNFIYCP official, e-meeting, 16 June 2021.



Despite these challenges, UNFICYP has often been highlighted as a champion of WPS among peacekeeping missions, mainly due to the high levels of women’s representation across the Mission. UNFICYP achieved near gender parity among international civilian staff in 2017, with women representing 48% of the international staff and 39% of national staff.<sup>518</sup> The current number of women serving in the police component is above average, with women representing 43.2% of the officials, higher than any other current peacekeeping mission. The representation of women in senior leadership positions within UNFICYP has been lauded by the UN as a significant step forward for women’s participation in peacekeeping missions. Some research has suggested that having women head the civilian, police and military components of a UN mission “had an outsized impact on the direction and public perception the mission” with more visible engagement with civil society organisations and “normalizing their participation in the military and other sectors traditionally exclusive to men”.<sup>519</sup>

UNFICYP has often been highlighted as a champion of WPS among peacekeeping missions, mainly due to the high levels of women’s representation across the Mission.

Women continue to lead in the military, police and civilian components of the Mission. Notably, UNFICYP has had the only three women Force Commanders of any UN peacekeeping mission in its 70-plus year history. Consequently, demonstrating progress in UNFICYP on WPS has tended to highlight women’s participation in the Mission, which is important and *may* have an impact on supporting WPS, but is unlikely to shift deep-seated patriarchal attitudes in the political leadership across Cyprus. This may also mean that other areas where the Mission has focused on furthering women’s participation across both communities—such as women’s engagement in intercommunal trust building around issues of peace and security—have tended to be underemphasised by different stakeholders when highlighting the Mission’s efforts to progress WPS.

### 5.5.2. Women’s Meaningful Participation Lacking in the Negotiations on the Future of Cyprus

The Security Council and UN Missions have continued to encourage both sides to increase the levels of women’s participation in the negotiations; however, progress has been minimal.<sup>520</sup> There have been several obstacles to women’s participation in the peace talks. According to Olga

518 S/2017/1008, 28 November 2017, “Strategic review of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus,” para. 28.

519 Robert U. Nagel, Kate Fin, and Julie Maenza, “Gendered Impacts on Operational Effectiveness of UN Peace Operations,” Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, May 2021, p. 26.

520 S/2021/631, 9 July 2021, “Report of the Secretary-General on Mission of the good offices in Cyprus,” para. 34.

Demetriou, these include historical, structural, political and psychological obstacles.<sup>521</sup> The two UN Missions have engaged in support and facilitate various processes to increase women's participation in the peace process, with the support of diplomatic missions in Cyprus at times.<sup>522</sup>

For some years, the UN has noted the absence of women in the framework of negotiations and consequently, their lack of overall representativeness. The Good Offices Mission facilitates the Gender Equality Technical Committee, which was set up in 2015 by the two Cypriot leaders upon the advice of the Special Adviser Espen Barth Eide in the context of the peace talks.<sup>523</sup> On 28 May 2015, the leaders agreed to the establishment of a Technical Committee on Gender Equality.<sup>524</sup> The mandate for the committee makes specific reference to Resolution 1325.<sup>525</sup> Among other things, the committee's mandate identified it as "a mechanism for bringing gender-specific and sensitive issues to the forefront and, in this context, and bearing in mind Resolution 1325, may also provide input as to what needs to be borne in mind from a gender perspective in the framework of the settlement."<sup>526</sup>

The Technical Committee on Gender Equality has drawn attention to gender-sensitive issues within the communities. For instance, it met virtually during the pandemic to examine the gendered impact of Covid-19 in the two communities and released a statement noting the upsurge in domestic violence towards women and girls.<sup>527</sup> The Security Council also made specific requests of the committee. For instance, in 2019, the Council called for the Technical Committee on Gender Equality "to meet and develop an action plan supporting women's participation in peace talks" in Resolution 2561. However, discussion continues on an action plan.

While the UN has encouraged leaders to more substantively engage women in negotiations, this has had mixed results. In its latest report on Cyprus, the International Crisis Group recommended the UN "invest more in unofficial channels, such as among women's groups, to challenge the decoupling of the two communities."<sup>528</sup> Women were represented in both negotiating teams between 2015 and 2017.<sup>529</sup> However, there has been limited traction. In the last few years, the Security Council has started to call upon the leaders to "ensure a meaningful role for, civil society engagement in peace efforts, in particular strengthening the participation of women's

521 Olga Demetriou, *Gender in the Cyprus Negotiations*, 2019, PRIO Cyprus Centre, p. 17.

522 For example, see the piece by the diplomatic heads of mission of Australia, Ireland, Netherlands and Sweden on 30 June 2021 at <https://medium.com/we-the-peoples/women-in-leadership-is-essential-for-cyprus-peace-building-process-1137dc9c9f8e>.

523 See <https://uncyprustalks.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/uploads/2015/09/2015-05-28-EBE-Joint-Statement.pdf>.

524 The new first lady on the Turkish Cypriot side was credited with the suggestion to create the technical committee in 2015. Several members of the Gender Advisory Team were also included on the technical committee, in recognition of their efforts. See Olga Demetriou, "Gender in the Cyprus Negotiations," *op. cit.*

525 S/2016/15, 7 January 2016, "Report of the Secretary-General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus," p. 3.

526 Olga Demetriou, "Gender in the Cyprus Negotiations," *op. cit.*, p. 27.

527 Statement by Technical Committee on Gender Equality, 6 May 2020, <https://unficyp.unmissions.org/domestic-violence-and-covid-19>.

528 "Ten Challenges for the UN in 2021-2022," *Special Briefing 6, Multilateral Diplomacy*, 13 September 2021.

529 See S/2016/822, 29 September 2016, "Report of the Secretary-General on Women and Peace and Security," para. 12; S/2016/15, 7 January 2016, "Report of the Secretary-General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus," para. 22.

organizations and youth in the processes, including by empowering the Technical Committee on Gender Equality to meet and develop an action plan supporting women's full, equal and meaningful participation in peace talks" (Resolution 2561, 29 January 2021). In his most recent report (July 2021), the Secretary-General acknowledged that broader activities by civil society focused on promoting women's active participation in the peace process "did not have an impact on the level of participation by women in the delegations" and urged the parties to ensure at least 30% women participation in future.<sup>530</sup> However, it is largely in the hands of the two leaders to implement. Diplomatic support for women's participation in the peace negotiations is one source of external pressure on the two leaders and may possibly support ongoing efforts to implement provisions in more recent Security Council resolutions.

The Technical Committee on Gender Equality has the potential to exert influence and connect leaders with civil society. As Olga Demetriou notes, it is focused on everyday problems but is also meant to have a role in a potential political solution. However, it has often failed to live up to expectations, with its roles and engagement as part of the peace process having mixed results.<sup>531</sup> Some concerns were expressed by members that the establishment of this committee has meant that issues related to gender equality or women's participation are not necessarily considered by any of the other technical committees. Instead, an isolated space has been created to discuss gender. The first task of the Technical Committee on Gender Equality was to prepare a gender plan for the federal government and a new constitution. Yet, they never received any feedback. The most important part of the work was neglected. Consequently, the committee focused on the minimum changes possible, not the maximum, which led some members to resign.<sup>532</sup> According to some members, gender equality was not afforded the same priority as other issues (cultural heritage, education, see section 5.4.1 for a general assessment of the work of the technical committees).

The UN's Good Offices Mission has supported the work of activists and scholars.<sup>533</sup> According to several UN staff members interviewed, UNFICYP and the Good Offices have raised the issue of women's participation in the peace talks on several occasions. However, one of the main impediments is a lack of appreciation for the value of women's voices at the table. In the words of one official, there is "no raised consciousness on the issue."<sup>534</sup> The Security Council has been pushing for the Technical Committee on Gender Equality to be more present in the substantive

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530 S/2021/631, 9 July 2021, "Report of the Secretary-General on Mission of the good offices in Cyprus," para. 34, 51.

531 "The Committee held its first meeting in August 2015 and initially met regularly. It carried out in-depth analyses of important and relevant gender issues and provided some recommendations to the leaders and their negotiators. Regrettably, however, their recommendations were not always mainstreamed into the deliberations at the negotiation table, and the impact of the work of the Committee on relevant substantive issues being negotiated remained quite limited." See S/2017/814, 28 September 2017, "Report of the Secretary-General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus," p. 9.

532 Interview, Focus Group on WPS, e-meeting, 25 February 2021.

533 Olga Demetriou, *Gender in the Cyprus Negotiations*, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

534 Interview with UNFICYP staff, e-meeting, 25 November 2020.

negotiations, at the table engaging and providing suggestions to the two leaders on considerations to take into account when designing a future settlement.<sup>535</sup>

Gendered conflict analysis has not featured heavily in efforts to support the peace process in Cyprus. The ‘gender’ issue has become a women’s issue rather than an issue owned across society.

According to some members of civil society, part of the challenge is that politics is not seen as a job for women in Cyprus.<sup>536</sup> In the view of some members of civil society, the UN is urging women to be active but then not being very supportive. It is often viewed as just a box-ticking exercise. There are few male allies and significant tokenism. On the other hand, some UN staff see problems with the women’s movement, which they contend is fragmented within each community, with different rivalries, like most other civil society organisations. According to one official, “women could be the vanguard of the peace process” and push leaders to make progress.<sup>537</sup> However, more unity is needed to support those efforts. Most of the reforms that have taken place around women’s participation in the negotiations have been due to external drive from stakeholders in the process, rather than at the behest of political leaders.

### 5.5.3. Women’s Concerns Not Prioritised in the Peace Process

Gendered conflict analysis has not featured heavily in efforts to support the peace process in Cyprus. The ‘gender’ issue has become a women’s issue rather than an issue owned across society. Men are trapped as well by gendered expectations and patriarchal attitudes on the island in a wider sense.<sup>538</sup>

The UN Missions are largely there to support and facilitate the political leaders. The leaders’ motivations have tended to be driven by patriarchal narratives in the context of the conflict, which are militaristic and encourage people to choose sides.<sup>539</sup> According to Maria Hadjipavlou, “women’s exclusion from public affairs in both Cypriot communities is deeply rooted in the patriarchal mentality.”<sup>540</sup> Furthermore, “indicators such as the pay gap, prosecutions for gender discrimination, gender-based violence, and trafficking place Cyprus in a dire position vis-à-vis

535 Interview, UNFICYP staff, e-meeting, 25 November 2020.

536 Interview, Focus Group on WPS, e-meeting, 25 February 2021.

537 Interview, UNFICYP official, e-meeting, 25 November 2020.

538 Interview, Focus Group on WPS, e-meeting, 25 February 2021.

539 Olga Demetriou, *Gender in the Cyprus Negotiations*, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

540 Maria Hadjipavlou, “A Gender Perspective,” in James Ker-Lindsay (ed.), *Resolving Cyprus*, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

other EU states.”<sup>541</sup> For women on the island, there are concerns about human trafficking and prostitution, as well as domestic violence, which has risen since the outbreak of Covid-19. There was a 58% increase in domestic violence incidents in the Greek Cypriot community and a 10% increase in calls for help in the Turkish Cypriot community.<sup>542</sup> Yet, as underlined in section 5.2.1, there are no specific provisions in the peacekeeping mandate for UNFICYP to address institutional issues or mechanisms related to sexual and gender-based violence.<sup>543</sup>

Women’s notions of security also differ from men. Researchers have pointed out that the frozen conflict “has deprioritized the feminist agenda.”<sup>544</sup> While there might not be significant armed violence which tends to be synonymous with high levels of conflict, there are “high levels of structural violence – especially gender-based violence.”<sup>545</sup> This has an impact on women’s security. Yet UNFICYP mandate includes limited acknowledgement of women’s need for protection, as much of this violence takes place in the domestic and private sphere, which is traditionally seen as beyond the domain of peacekeeping missions. For some women in civil society, there is a concern that UN leadership is not willing to raise the issues that are important to them. For instance, when the Technical Committee on Gender Equality raises the importance of the need for reconciliation and truth-telling to help people deal with trauma, according to several members of the committee, the UN did not want to discuss it.<sup>546</sup> Thus the healing process has been neglected.

The presence of two UN Missions in Cyprus does not help with the overall visibility of the UN on the island.

The delay in finding a settlement to the Cyprus problem is also having an impact on the economic livelihoods of women across the island. The gender-sensitive socioeconomic impact assessment requested by the Security Council and carried out by the Mission of Good Offices with the support of the World Bank found that “reunification would result in high incomes and increased gross domestic product growth for both communities, as well as an expanded set of opportunities that (...) could be shared more equally by men and women island-wide.”<sup>547</sup> Put differently, finding a solution to resolving the “Cyprus problem” could lift women and communities economically. However, economic issues are unlikely to be prioritised to the same extent as those relating to territory or power, in the same way that women’s concerns about peace and security continue to be pushed to the sidelines of the negotiations.

541 Olga Demetriou, *Gender in the Cyprus Negotiations*, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

542 S/2020/685, 13 July 2020, “Report of the Secretary-General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus,” p. 7.

543 Interview with UNFICYP official, e-meeting, 16 June 2021.

544 See presentation by Dr Nasia Hadjigeorgiou, “The Invisible Impact of Frozen Conflicts,” *op. cit.* See also Maria Hadjipavlou, “A Gender Perspective,” in James Ker-Lindsay (ed.), *Resolving Cyprus*, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

545 Maria Hadjipavlou, “A Gender Perspective,” *op. cit.*, p. 95.

546 Interview, Focus Group on WPS, e-meeting, 25 February 2021.

547 See <https://uncyprustalks.unmissions.org/launch-un-world-bank-gender-sensitive-socio-economic-impact-assessment-settlement-cyprus>.



Cypriot civil society has had a central role in efforts to progress WPS on the island on both sides. However, their efforts have continued to be marginalised. Efforts by the UN to increase women's participation in the peace process have had minimal progress due to a lack of willingness by the two leaders and political elite to include women in the peace process meaningfully. Diplomatic missions and the Security Council should continue to put pressure on the two leaders to substantially increase women's representation and meaningful engagement in any formal peace negotiations.

The Security Council should acknowledge the broad spectrum of different issues that contribute to women's insecurity on the island and explore mechanisms to protect them (e.g. in response to sexual and gender-based violence). Furthermore, the Council should encourage the two Missions to share information about the economic benefits of reunification—particularly for women in terms of gender equality—as part of their strategic communications with local communities.

## 5.6. Integration, Coordination and Partnerships

### 5.6.1. Integration and Coordination of the UN Presence in Cyprus

The presence of two UN Missions in Cyprus does not help with the overall visibility of the UN on the island. Often, the presence of the Special Adviser has drawn all the attention. In their absence, the UNFICYP SRSG has focused attention. Interlocutors spoke about “fuzziness” in what both Missions are doing, and at times, there has been some “rivalry over who gets credit for success in the technical committees or elsewhere.”<sup>548</sup> In the past few years, and in particular since the 2017 strategic review and the 2019 Office for Peacekeeping Strategic Partnership (OPSP) of the UN Department of Operations internal report, the UNFICYP has improved its coordination mechanisms internally as well as with the Mission of Good Offices. Both Missions share some capacities or support one another, such as the public information section, gender adviser, Joint Mission Analysis Center (JMAC) and the CPAS, procurement, information systems (IT), and budget officer. But the Mission of Good Offices and UNFICYP are still backstopped separately from New York; therefore, they have two separate reporting lines, one to the Department for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) and one to the Department of Peace Operations (DPO).

In 2017, the Strategic Review suggested the creation of a mechanism by which “more regular and structured interaction, meetings and information-sharing” between UNFICYP and the Office of the Special Adviser on Cyprus could occur since UNFICYP has no dedicated political office. This would “improve mutual cooperation between the two entities,” and “ensure a common approach” by the two structures in their support to some of the technical committees.<sup>549</sup>

<sup>548</sup> Interview, researcher, e-meeting, Nicosia, 17 June 2020.

<sup>549</sup> S/2017/1008, 28 November 2017, “Strategic review of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus,” para. 19.

Indeed, a senior management team is organised monthly to coordinate activities of the UN family, including UNFICYP, the Good Offices, International Organization for Migrations (IOM), UNHCR, UNMAS, and UNDP. There are also regular “Monday meetings” between the SRSG and the coordinator of the Good Offices; a senior management group is held every Wednesday between all heads of components and sections of UNFICYP; a triple cross-component coordination group is chaired by the UNFICYP senior adviser (who is the civilian Chief of Staff of the Mission) to provide strategic and operational advice to the sectors; and coordination meetings at the sector level ensure integration between the components. The transfer of the UNFICYP’s three international civil affairs officers from the Mission’s headquarters to the existing Sector Civilian Activity Integrated Offices, along with five Cypriot national staff, has strengthened integration among the three components, as well as liaison and engagement capacity vis-à-vis respective interlocutors at the sector level.<sup>550</sup>

The result is that the integration and coordination between the various components and with the Good Offices Mission have improved significantly. Still, there is a need for more joint work between the two Missions, drawing on various expertise, and for them to strategise together.

The result is that the integration (between civilians, police and military) and coordination between the various components and with the Good Offices Mission have improved significantly (“where the two mandates intersect, the two teams do work together”). Still, there is a need for more joint work between the two Missions, drawing on various expertise, and for them to strategise together. A number of interlocutors also considered that the political-military integration should be further strengthened, taking advantage of the dimension of UNFICYP. Some voices were raised in favour of improved internal sharing of information, in particular on key mission documents. UNFICYP struggles, like most peacekeeping operations, from a deficit in the flow of information, even if the CPAS has helped share analyses across the Mission: “there is a need for better information sharing on substantive issues.”<sup>551</sup> It also struggles in the absence of a Mission Planning Unit or Mission Planning Officer, a capacity that the leadership of UNFICYP considers a crucial deficit. Finally, like other peace operations, the UN Missions in Cyprus has a lack of well-organised and predictable personnel rotation.

Since 2015, the coordination of the two Missions with the rest of the UN system has been limited due to the shrinking of these entities. From 1998 to 2005, the UN had managed the Bi-Communal Development Programme with the task of funding projects of common interest for Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots. About 300 organisations and 220 projects benefited

550 S/2018/676, 11 July 2018, “United Nations operation in Cyprus – Report of the Secretary-General,” para. 8.

551 Interview, UN staff, Nicosia, 16 June 2021.

from the programme, which was later replaced in 2005 by the UNDP Action for Cooperation and Trust (UNDP-ACT).<sup>552</sup> UNFICYP also had to replace the UNDP-ACT, the USAID-funded arm of UNDP, which closed in December 2015 when USAID withdrew funding. UNDP-ACT was more heavily involved in civil society programmes than the EU-funded UNDP Partnership for the Future (UNDP-PFF) (now simply UNDP). A number of interlocutors among activist organisations have expressed their disappointment over the departure of UNDP-ACT. The UNDP programme that remains in Cyprus (funded primarily by the EU) is very active in supporting, in particular, the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage.<sup>553</sup>

Integration has improved greatly between the two UN Missions and among UNFICYP's three main components. Still, there is a need for more joint work between the two Missions, drawing on various expertise, and for them to strategise together. Taking advantage of the dimension of UNFICYP, the political-military integration should be further strengthened, and internal sharing of information should be improved. UNFICYP leadership and staff have pointed to the absence of a Mission Planning Unit or Mission Planning Officer as a crucial deficit. EPOC recommends that such assets be granted to UNFICYP, as in other ongoing peace operations.

### 5.6.2. External Partnership with the EU, a Discreet Actor on the Island

The EU and UN are the main international actors present on the island. The EU's most consistent role has been its supporting one to the UN effort in the context of talks (in which it has an observer status), as well as its funding of most UNDP activities and the CMP. However, the EU's political role has been elusive or complicated. It has been difficult for the EU to be a real political partner for the UN, even though it stands ready to appoint a Personal Representative of the President of the European Commission, and if it provided a technical European Commission team to the Good Offices in Nicosia during the talks in 2017. Even if "the Cyprus problem is clearly an EU problem,"<sup>554</sup> as acknowledged by Josep Borrell, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the UN is the organisation leading the political process, with the EU relegated to assisting the facilitator. One interlocutor described the division of labour between the two institutions as "the UN holds the auspices; the EU holds the money."<sup>555</sup> One interlocutor even considered that the EU "has been a passive viewer of what is happening,"<sup>556</sup> and another that it has not taken "the Cyprus problem seriously enough."<sup>557</sup>

552 See Gianfabrizio Ladini, "Peacebuilding, United Nations and Civil Society: The Case of Cyprus," *The Cyprus Review*, Fall 2009, 21(2), pp. 37-61.

553 The UNDP-ACT's final press release is available at <https://www.cy.undp.org/content/cyprus/en/home/library/action-for-cooperation-and-trust/final-report.html>; see also <https://www.cy.undp.org/content/cyprus/en/home/operations/projects/partnership-for-the-future.html> and <https://www.cy.undp.org/content/cyprus/en/home/about-us.html>.

554 Josep Borrell, "Time to engage again for peace in Cyprus," 08 March 2021.

555 Interview, former EU staff, e-meeting, 18 June 2020.

556 Interview, Greek Cypriot lawyer, e-meeting, 02 December 2020.

557 Interview, researcher, e-meeting, 17 June 2020.

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The fact is that following the RoC's entry into the EU in May 2004, the de facto "Europeanization of the conflict did not bring any improvements."<sup>558</sup> The EU was placed in a peculiar situation in which the whole island joined the EU but the *acquis communautaire* was suspended in the North, although more than 65% of Turkish Cypriots voted in the 2004 referendum to be part of a European future. For a number of inhabitants of the northern part of Cyprus, that "outcome was a slap in the face for the Turkish Cypriots who voted for the UN-sponsored peace plan but found themselves shut out of the EU."<sup>559</sup> The fact that the EU accepted a divided island among its members made it de facto hostage of the unsettled issues in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, and "with no link between European integration and the resolution of the Cyprus issue, the EU never provided reasons for the Greek Cypriots to contribute to reunification."<sup>560</sup>

The UN is the organisation leading the political process, with the EU relegated to assisting the facilitator, "the UN holds the auspices; the EU holds the money."

The EU is politically absent but operationally very present on the island, enabling many bicomunal projects within the UN family. Through two main instruments and a small EU Programme Support Office located in the northern part of Nicosia, the EU is also a major actor in helping the north reduce its economic gap with the south and in trying to regulate trade between the two communities. This includes the Green Line Regulation, which regulates trade between Greek and Turkish Cypriots, and the Financial Aid Regulation, which aims at the financial and technical assistance of Turkish Cypriots and their preparation for the implementation of EU law in the case of a reunification.<sup>561</sup> However, the EU has to undertake these activities in a dis-

558 Hasan Özertem, "Back to 'the Tradition,'" *op. cit.*, p. 18.

559 Birol Yeşilada, "Quo Vadis Cyprus?" *loc. cit.*, p. 27.

560 George Kyris, "How and Why the European Union Still Matters," in James Ker-Lindsay (ed.), *Resolving Cyprus*, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

561 Between 2006 and 2020, €591 million has been allocated for operations under the Aid Regulation to support projects in areas such as agriculture, environment, infrastructure, civil society or community development. See [https://ec.europa.eu/info/overview-funding-programmes/aid-programme-turkish-cypriot-community\\_en#eu-aid-programme-for-the-turkish-cypriot-community](https://ec.europa.eu/info/overview-funding-programmes/aid-programme-turkish-cypriot-community_en#eu-aid-programme-for-the-turkish-cypriot-community). On the role of the EU in Cyprus, see also <https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/ht0420250enn.pdf>. According to Hasan Özertem, the economy of the north has diversified over the last two decades and become more dynamic, "but still there is a big gap in per capita income between the TRNC (\$12,649, TRNC Statistical Institute 2019) and the RoC (\$27,858, World Bank 2019)." "Back to 'the Tradition,'" *op. cit.*, p. 12.

creet way, so that interacting with the people in the north does not constitute a first step towards their recognition, or for it not to be accused of “solidifying the pseudo state.”<sup>562</sup> Towards people in the north, the EU’s main challenge is “to overcome a trust deficit,”<sup>563</sup> as the Turkish Cypriots feel abandoned by the EU after placing their hopes in it. They see it as a partial stakeholder (the head of the EU delegation in Nicosia has been for years a Greek national, soon to be replaced by a Greek Cypriot national),<sup>564</sup> and TRNC authorities have also questioned the EU’s presence in the latest informal talks.<sup>565</sup> A number of interlocutors have considered that to be more effective, the Green Line Regulation should see a volume increase and that the EU has a great role to play in bringing the two sides towards greater cooperation.<sup>566</sup> As underlined by the Secretary-General’s report in 2020, “increased cross-island trade, together with deeper economic, social, cultural, sporting and other ties and contacts, would promote trust between the communities and help to address the concerns of the Turkish Cypriots regarding isolation.”<sup>567</sup>

A number of interlocutors have considered that, without sharing much detail on the modalities, there should be a closer relation between the UN and EU teams. This could be the case in shaping bicomunal projects around common interests, such as the protection of the environment, for example, or in devising CBMs. Of course, the EU sees itself as potentially able to take over from UNFICYP after a settlement, with an EU police mission or EU rule-of-law mission, as it has done in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo.

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562 Interview, former EU staff, e-meeting, 18 June 2020. Therefore, officials from TRNC and EU meet in neutral buildings, and the EU prioritises non-state actors as alternative interlocutors, such as the Turkish Cypriot Chamber of Commerce.

563 Interview, UN staff, Nicosia, 22 June 2021.

564 Even if the Cyprus file has consistently been “managed” from Brussels, previously under the European Commission President’s office, and currently under High Representative/Vice-President (HRVP) Borrell’s office.

565 Evie Andreou, “EU role in Geneva talks hangs in balance,” *Cyprus Mail*, 20 April 2021.

566 Interview, member of civil society, Nicosia, 18 June 2021.

567 S/2020/23, 7 January 2020, “Report of the Secretary-General on UN operation in Cyprus,” para. 61.





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# 6. Impact and Constraints Over the Effectiveness of the UN Presence in Cyprus

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In 2015, the Secretary-General summarised the role and effectiveness of UNFICYP in these terms: “UNFICYP continues to play an important role on the island by exercising authority in the buffer zone and contributing to keeping the peace and resolving various issues that affect the daily lives of individuals in both communities. Its ability to play this role, however, depends by and large on the commitment of the two sides to refrain from challenging its authority and legitimacy in the buffer zone.”<sup>568</sup> Indeed, a peacekeeping operation can be effective in many various ways, but it cannot enforce any solution on a country. What is true for the peacekeeping element of the UN presence in Cyprus is also true for the peacemaking element, which requires significant leverage to succeed. In other words, if the UN Mission has an impact on the ground in preventing a recurrence of the conflict, the impact has been limited by a number of factors and constraints that need to be taken into account. As one ambassador in Nicosia explained: “It is hard for the UN to overcome all this unwillingness,” and at the same time, “it is the task of the Secretary-General or of the UN more generally to never give up.”<sup>569</sup> Another interlocutor concurred: “A search for diplomacy will never stop; it is always a coma or a semi-colon, never a full-stop.”<sup>570</sup> These constraints relate to the nature of the conflict, the attitude of the parties,

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568 S/2015/517, 2 July 2015, “Report of the Secretary-General on the UN operation in Cyprus,” para. 51.

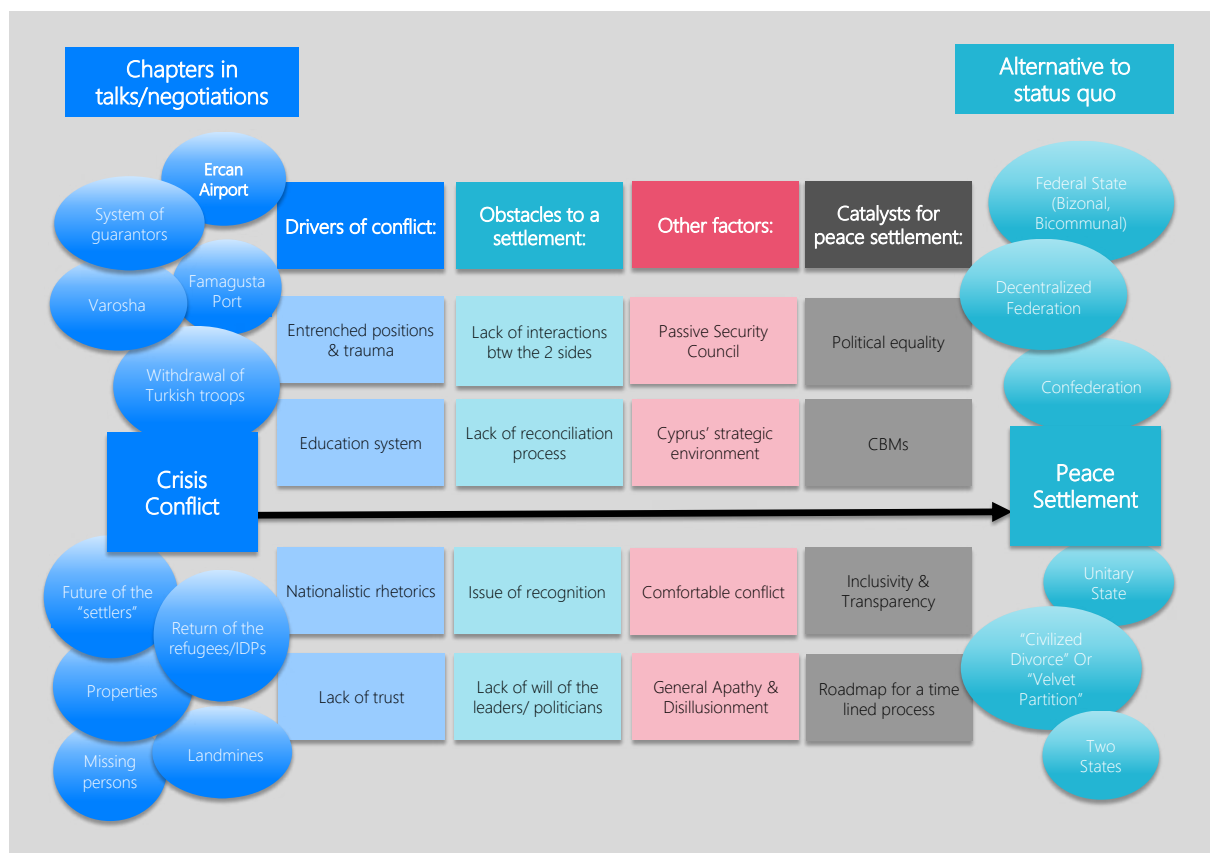
569 Interview, diplomat, Nicosia, 14 June 2021.

570 Interview, formal TRNC official, Lefkoşa, 21 June 2021.

and the involvement of regional and international actors, which have limited the effectiveness of the UN and the ability of the Organization in devising a cohesive political strategy. They also prevented the parties from reaching a solution for the future of the island.

“It is hard for the UN to overcome all this unwillingness,” and at the same time, “it is the task of the Secretary-General or of the UN more generally to never give up.”

Figure 16. Summary of the “Cyprus problem” as analysed by EPON



*Elaborated by Alexandra Novosseloff.*

## 6.1. Strategic Impact of the UN Presence in Cyprus

EPON interlocutors were all asked two main questions: 1) What has been the major impact of the UN presence on the island? and 2) If the UN leaves tomorrow, what would happen? For scholars or researchers, the UN has stabilised the security situation and maintained the status quo over the years. It has kept the peace on a troubled island, but in the form of a “negative



peace” (the absence of war) that manages a conflict but does not (or cannot) solve it. As underlined by Susan S. Allee, a former UNFICYP senior official, “while on the political side Cyprus has been a roller coaster of crescendo and diminuendo replete with drama, for the most part the peacekeeping since 1974 has been a success – if success is defined as conflict management not conflict resolution.”<sup>571</sup> This kind of peace has created a status quo that is a double-edged sword because its perpetuation transforms the conflict into a “comfortable” one. Nicholas Sambanis explained in 1999, UNFICYP, “is a blessing because the absence of war in Cyprus since 1974 allows proponents of UN peacekeeping to claim UNFICYP as a success. It is a curse because the lack of a political settlement (...) since UNFICYP’s deployment has fueled speculation that UNFICYP’s success has removed the parties’ incentives to negotiate a settlement.”<sup>572</sup> For Susan S. Allee, “UNFICYP’s peacekeeping success had become ‘part of the problem’ as it minimised consequences for the Cypriot leaders of their ‘intransigence’”. Paradoxically, UNFICYP was created with the explicit objective of generating conditions that would facilitate a peace process.”<sup>573</sup>

It has kept the peace on a troubled island, but in the form of a “negative peace” (the absence of war) that manages a conflict but does not (or cannot) solve it.

The majority of EPON interlocutors considered that the UN has prevented more bloodshed from happening since it was deployed in 1964. Among those who disagreed, their answers to the two questions above varied according to which side of the island they are. Cypriots in the South tend to find UNFICYP a necessary evil that acts as a buffer between them and the Turkish army. Cypriots in the North tend to think that the Mission is part of the problem and biased as it was legitimated in 1964 by a government that did not have any Turkish Cypriot representation. Both sides also answer differently to the question of what would happen if the UNFICYP would leave, from “nothing” to “major chaos,” as detailed in the two sections below.

### 6.1.1. A “Routinization” of the Conflict while Keeping the Idea of Reunification Alive

The UN has been over the years a stabilising element in a divided, militarised, and polarised island, and stability has been the main achievement of the UN presence acknowledged by the majority of EPON’s interlocutors. Indeed, the UN is a facilitator, honest broker, and independent witness that needs to keep the conflict at the lowest level of insecurity possible, as this serves

571 Susan S. Allee, “UN Blue: An Examination of the Interdependence Between UN Peacekeeping and Peacemaking,” *loc. cit.*, p. 102.

572 Nicholas Sambanis, “The United Nations operation in Cyprus,” *loc. cit.*, p. 79.

573 Susan S. Allee, “UN Blue: An Examination of the Interdependence Between UN Peacekeeping and Peacemaking,” *loc. cit.*, p. 90.

its mediation and facilitation efforts. This prevention role is acknowledged by both sides, as there is a “need for an external actor to keep the peace, to make sure there is peace until there is a solution.”<sup>574</sup> In the end, “the UN is the only reason there is no conflict on the island.”<sup>575</sup> As former Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akinci said: “Without UNFICYP, the buffer zone could easily turn into a chaotic situation.”<sup>576</sup>

This kind of peace has created a status quo that is a double-edged sword because its perpetuation transforms the conflict into a “comfortable” one.

The first function assigned to UNFICYP in 1964 was “to use its best efforts to prevent a recurrence of fighting,” primarily in its area of operation, which has been the buffer zone since 1974. As summarised by Jan Asmussen, “before 1974, UNFICYP contributed to the prevention of long-term ethnic violence on the island. After that it prevented small shooting incidents over the ceasefire lines developing into an all-out war.”<sup>577</sup> One interlocutor confirmed that in the 1960s, “the UN managed to avoid a civil war in Cyprus.”<sup>578</sup> Many Greek Cypriots consider that without the UN, Turkey would have occupied the buffer zone. However, a number of Turkish Cypriots interlocutors differ in their assessment as they consider that “the peacekeeping on the island is the result of the Turkish presence,” or Turkish “Peace Force.”<sup>579</sup> Ergün Olgun, the current Turkish Cypriot negotiator, considered that “no violence has happened on the island since 1964-65 because of the presence of the Turkish army that deters the recurrence of violence.”<sup>580</sup> Nevertheless, this does not undermine the major role of UNFICYP in maintaining peace and security on this very militarised island by preventing numerous minor incidents from raising tensions and further upsetting the political process. The last casualty that occurred in the buffer zone was in 1996.

574 Interview, Focus Group on Youth, e-meeting, 10 March 2021.

575 Interview, urbanist, e-meeting, Famagusta, 17 December 2020.

576 Interview, Lefkoşa, 21 June 2021.

577 Jan Asmussen, “UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP),” *op. cit.*, p. 209.

578 Interview, researcher, e-meeting, 15 February 2021.

579 Interview, former TRNC negotiator, e-meeting, Nicosia, 01 December 2020.

580 Interview, e-meeting, Lefkoşa, 14 February 2021.



### Box 18. View of UNFICYP in 1993

Each side has its own perspective on the future of UNFICYP. The Greek Cypriot side perceives that, for as long as the current situation on the island remains unchanged, it has a vital interest, including for security reasons and mindful of the demographic changes that have taken place in the northern part of the island, in seeing UNFICYP maintained at its current or greater strength. The Turkish Cypriot side often says that it has no great objection to UNFICYP remaining on the island, but nor does it particularly desire its continued presence, as security and stability on the island are assured by the large-scale presence of Turkish forces.

There can be no doubt that, were UNFICYP to be withdrawn, the present buffer zone, which makes up 3 per cent of the island, would be a vacuum that each side would want to fill, at least in part. This, combined with the very close proximity of the cease-fire lines in certain sensitive locations, would give rise to incidents which, without the presence of UNFICYP, would quickly escalate out of control and could result in a conflict, with significant consequences for the security of both communities, and indeed of the region. This would also eliminate any hope of progress in my mission of good offices.

*Source: S/26777, 22 November 1993, "Report of the Secretary-General in connection with the Security Council's comprehensive reassessment of the United Nations Operation in Cyprus," para. 101.*

On the political front, the mere presence of the UN has kept the dialogue between the two sides ongoing, even when it has momentarily failed: "If UNFICYP hadn't been here, we would not have talked to each other: UNFICYP has been a facilitator. And as long as there is a process going on, there is hope."<sup>581</sup> The UN has prepared the ground for a future settlement by facilitating dialogue between the two sides and observing the ceasefire line, even if major constraints have prevented a comprehensive settlement being reached. A number of interlocutors have said that if the UN leaves, there will be a hard border, something that would seal the division of the island. Thus the presence of the UN has kept the idea of reunification alive, even if facts on the ground have moved the island towards division.

The presence of the UN has kept the idea of reunification alive, even if facts on the ground have moved the island towards division.

However, this stability has a downside. As a Greek Cypriot interlocutor said: "The UN has done a good job at routinizing the conflict in a non-violent way."<sup>582</sup> A researcher added: "The UN has cemented the Cyprus problem."<sup>583</sup> Indeed, the majority of interlocutors have clearly stated that

581 Interview, lawyer, e-meeting, Nicosia, 01 December 2020.

582 Focus group with Greek Cypriot researchers and civil society activists, e-meeting, Nicosia, 18 December 2020.

583 Interview, researcher, e-meeting, 18 January 2021.

UNFICYP has served to perpetuate the status quo, which is a comfortable or “luxury one by international standards.”<sup>584</sup> It is particularly favoured by the Greek Cypriots. This attitude has constituted over time a constraint in the talks on the future of the island: “The fact that the conflict is comfortable actually increases the potential cost and inevitably decreases the willingness to engage in status quo-changing activities.”<sup>585</sup> The level of uncertainty is considered too high in case of a deal, in particular for the Greek Cypriots; therefore, the status quo is safer, as what each community currently has is comfortable. As a Greek Cypriot professor said, “there are very few reasons why Greek Cypriots would want to give up what works well for them.”<sup>586</sup>

### 6.1.2. The Strong Attachment to a Comfortable Status Quo

The majority of people on both sides of the dividing line are very comfortable with the relatively stable situation, a status quo which is now part of normality, “an imperfect reality,”<sup>587</sup> which is sometimes referred to as the Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement (BATNA).<sup>588</sup> The main English-speaking Cypriot newspaper described the status quo as “normalized and the majority of Greek Cypriots have not only come to terms with it, but want to preserve it at all costs.”<sup>589</sup> The outcome of the status quo is that Nicosia is not a frontline anymore, compared to the tense situation there until the end of the 1990s. This is most probably an effect of the opening of the crossing points but also the stabilising effect of the presence of Blue Berets.

UNFICYP is a buffer within the buffer zone that provides a system of security to manage the conflict but does not resolve it. This is where the maintenance of the status quo becomes a vicious circle or a trap.

“UNFICYP is a comfort blanket for the Greek Cypriots,” said a former UN envoy; it is “a reassurance that the Turkish army won’t do anything, even if they have no intention to do so.”<sup>590</sup> UNFICYP is a buffer within the buffer zone that provides a system of security to manage the conflict but does not resolve it. This is where the maintenance of the status quo becomes a vicious circle or a trap: “The UN is expected to maintain the status quo, not to change the situation, and as long as the continuation of the status quo will be an alternative, Greek Cypriots will

584 Interview, researcher, e-meeting, 15 April 2020.

585 Constantinos Adamides, “A Comfortable and Routine Conflict,” *op. cit.*, p. 10.

586 Interview, e-meeting, Larnaca, 14 December 2020.

587 International Crisis Group, “Divided Cyprus: Coming to Terms on an Imperfect Reality,” *Europe Report* n°229, 14 March 2014.

588 Constantinos Adamides and Costas M. Constantinou, “Comfortable Conflict and (II)liberal Peace in Cyprus,” *loc. cit.*

589 “Our View: Everyone knows that UNFICYP has an expiry date,” *Cyprus Mail*, 19 July 2020.

590 Interview, former UN staff, e-meeting, 16 March 2021.

always favour it.”<sup>591</sup> The more one side is satisfied with the status quo, the less incentive there is to find a solution that will inevitably have some cost. The absence of casualties renders the status quo acceptable, and “the political cost of bringing the negotiations to a standstill is negligible.”<sup>592</sup> Without any pressure from the international community and a sense of urgency from the situation on the ground, the status quo has created apathy. The result is that “the lack of resolution has become a part of Cypriots’ lives to the degree that it is not a variable that influences their daily routines or long-term plans.”<sup>593</sup> And “for Cypriots under the age of 45, partition, however ‘abnormal’ it may be, is a physical reality with which they have become accustomed to since childhood. Time favours the absence of change.”<sup>594</sup> In such a context, political leaders are too afraid of the political cost and the electoral implications of breaking the status quo.<sup>595</sup> A Greek researcher also explained that Cypriots do not want to live through another mess, and “Bosnia-Herzegovina is very much alive in the minds of Greek Cypriots,” so the instinctive choice is the status quo.<sup>596</sup>

If UNFICYP was to be dismantled, it would create “a negative status quo,” as “the Greek Cypriot would feel very vulnerable”.

According to the majority of interlocutors, if UNFICYP was to be dismantled – an option that they all consider unlikely – there would be more incidents happening along the Green Line, as the two armies will be in direct contact across it. As one interlocutor summarised: “If the UN leaves, there will be no eyes of the international community on the ground. There will be a direct confrontation and a border with Turkey.”<sup>597</sup> One Turkish Cypriot scholar explained that “border incidents by right-wing groups from both sides at the Green Line could easily spark an armed conflict that could get out of hand.”<sup>598</sup> A former Turkish Cypriot leader considered that “if the UN leaves, there won’t be any military strife, but many entangled problems.”<sup>599</sup> There would be at least “a major security gap for the Greek Cypriots, and this without any Turkish soldier having a foot on their side,”<sup>600</sup> and “no war would break out but we would face severe instability.” In other words, it would create “a negative status quo,” as “the Greek Cypriot would

591 Interview, former TRNC negotiator, e-meeting, Nicosia, 01 December 2020.

592 Odysseas Christou, “The Prospects of a Federal Settlement,” in James Ker-Lindsay (ed.), *Resolving Cyprus*, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

593 James Ker-Lindsay (ed.), *Resolving Cyprus*, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

594 Mathieu Petithomme, “L'évolution des représentations du conflit et de la réconciliation à Chypre du nord: vers une impasse définitive?” *Pôle Sud*, 2017, n°46, p. 115.

595 Interview, researcher, Nicosia, 14 June 2016.

596 Interview, researcher, Athens, 15 November 2018. One Turkish Cypriot interlocutor pointed out that “a similar view exists in the North regarding the presence of the Turkish army.” Interview, e-meeting, 04 August 2021.

597 Interview, journalist, e-meeting, Nicosia, 30 November 2020.

598 Interview, scholar, e-meeting, 04 August 2021.

599 Interview, former Turkish Cypriot leader, e-meeting, Nicosia, 01 December 2020.

600 Interview, researcher, e-meeting, The Hague, 02 December 2020. Muzaffer Ercan Yilmaz also explained that “the major difficulty affecting policy making for years has been each side’s conviction that the other side has irredentist ambitions. The mutual fear of becoming victim again, being attacked one more time by the other side, perpetuates a hostile vigilance and an unwillingness to take risk.” (“The Cyprus Conflict and the Annan Plan: Why One More Failure?”)

feel very vulnerable.”<sup>601</sup> In this context, “the removal of UNFICYP is like choosing the nuclear option.”<sup>602</sup> Indeed, some interlocutors questioned whether the ultimate card of the withdrawal of UNFICYP could be used, and they came to the conclusion that very few Member States would be willing to use that card, which the parties are aware of. For the time being, “UNFICYP is a small price to pay to keep the peace.”<sup>603</sup> In that case, some also considered that the UN and the “international community” have a responsibility in motivating the other side to move forwards and in accepting a solution: “The UN has to work itself out of the job,” but it doesn’t control all the parameters as “effectiveness is also an effect of political will by the parties.”<sup>604</sup>

The UN has to work itself out of the job,” but it doesn’t control all the parameters as “effectiveness is also an effect of political will by the parties.

UNFICYP has been a very effective prevention mission in that it helped prevent a relapse of the conflict (except in 1974, as no peacekeeping operation can ever engage in fighting at the strategic level against a military intervention of a State). At a very low cost, it has kept the situation stable, and prevented any significant loss of life or flare-up of the conflict, and has ensured that the situation around the line of separation does not impact any higher-level negotiations between the sides negatively.

However, this success on the peacekeeping side has become part of the problem for peacemaking efforts by creating a comfortable status quo that is not conducive to conflict resolution. This status quo has become normalised, “an imperfect reality” in which the parties refrain from seeking change, and which becomes synonymous with risk and uncertainty. In the long run, this situation has become a trap for the Cypriots and the UN as a whole.

## 6.2. Constraints on the UN Missions in Achieving their Mandate

In implementing their mandates, UN missions often evolve in a political straitjacket, facing a number of constraints that, over time, limit or even undermine their actions or activities, something that their partners or outside commentators tend to overlook. As underlined by Constantinios Adamides and Michalis Kontos, there is “a rather distorted perception of what the United Nations is supposed to do and have little understanding – let alone sympathy – of its

601 Interview, former UN staff, e-meeting, 16 March 2021.

602 Interview, researcher, e-meeting, London, 18 January 2021.

603 Interview, former UN staff, e-meeting, 03 February 2021.

604 Interview, UN staff, e-meeting, New York, 15 January 2021.

limitations and restrictions when it comes to resolving the Cyprus conflict.”<sup>605</sup> The fact is that, despite relentless efforts by the UN towards stability and helping the parties devise a plan for reunification, it has stepped on three main stumbling blocks: the issue over recognition, the (un)willingness of the parties to make compromises and reach a solution, and the lack of inclusivity in the peace negotiations that have, over time, disconnected them from the Cypriot society. As one diplomat bluntly said: “The Cyprus problem is disconnected from people’s daily lives.”<sup>606</sup>

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### 6.2.1. The Issue of Recognition

Interlocutors have unanimously considered that the issue of recognition lies at the heart of the Cyprus problem, is one of the reasons behind the failure of conflict resolution in Cyprus, and prevents any form of genuine engagement with people in the North. Because the Greek Cypriots do not want to accept the Turkish *fait accompli* of July 1974, to undermine its importance or to simply contribute to forgetting this major event, the RoC interprets any interaction with or sign of support to Turkish Cypriot institutions as “recognizing” or conveying legitimacy to the illegally constituted regime in the north. The RoC has been very sensitive on that issue, and some interlocutors say “oversensitive.” They have “an understandable but too absolute obsession with righting the wrongs of the Turkish invasion of 1974.”<sup>607</sup> The Greek Cypriot authorities have considered that any formal relation from an international or a bilateral entity could strengthen the profile of the TRNC (only recognised by Turkey) and lead to a recognition of its existence, which is unacceptable for them as the RoC is the only recognised state on the island, including by resolutions of the Security Council. One has to add that this recognition issue also concerns the Greek Cypriot side as Turkey does not recognise the RoC.

The recognition issue has been shaping the methodology and progress of the negotiations (the leader-led process by which one talks to a person rather than to a non-recognised entity), the choice made for the mode of adoption of any solution (i.e. the referendum that avoids going through an unrecognised Parliament on one side), the relationships of the sides with the UN,

605 Constantinos Adamides, Michalis Kontos, “Re-engaging the United Nations?” *loc. cit.*

606 Interview, diplomat, e-meeting, Nicosia, 31 March 2021.

607 International Crisis Group, “Can Gas Save Cyprus? The Long-Term Cost of Frozen Conflicts,” *Commentary/Europe and Central Asia*, 22 March 2013.



and the contents of the initiatives and programmes that can be devised (with the impossibility of including the civil society of a non-recognised state in the process). The UNFICYP MoU is signed with the “Cypriot authorities”, referring to the “State and local, civil, and military authorities of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus.”<sup>608</sup> As a result, the UN recognises one party as a legitimate state and the other as a community. UNFICYP is evolving in a unique interposition case between a fully sovereign State and an unrecognised entity organised like a state (the UN experienced a similar situation in Abkhazia from 1993 to 2009 with its Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG)). The Greek Cypriots are, therefore, “closely monitoring the UN for it not to recognize the TRNC, even inadvertently.”<sup>609</sup> As explained by George Kyris, they have used “their membership of the organisation to shape the engagement of the UN towards fitting their objectives in the conflict,” and they think that collaboration with the Turkish Cypriot authorities risks upgrading their status.<sup>610</sup> Just like Cypriot interlocutors, “the UN has therefore been trapped in the politics of recognition.”<sup>611</sup>

For some interlocutors, “this issue of recognition has in fact stopped the peacemaking.

A number of interlocutors from both sides and researchers have explained that in this context, the RoC has dedicated considerable effort to limit the room for manoeuvre of all actors wishing to interact with officials in the north, including the UN, EU and diplomatic representations. This attitude frustrates the Turkish Cypriots, who are also inhabitants of the island. It also frustrates them as the UN cannot do much about that situation. Therefore, they developed a sense of mistrust, criticising a perceived “imbalanced approach” by the UN. TRNC authorities have pushed for having an exchange of letters with UNFICYP and an MoU, but the RoC has opposed this on the grounds that this could be a first step towards recognition. For some interlocutors, “this issue of recognition has in fact stopped the peacemaking,”<sup>612</sup> and pushed the Turkish Cypriots closer to Turkey as the only country willing to recognise their (political) existence. As pointed out by James Ker-Lindsay, “it undermines trust between the two parties and makes the breakaway territory even less inclined to want to find a settlement,”<sup>613</sup> something that is reflected in today’s push for a “two-state solution.” The end result may be “turning the TRNC into a Turkish protectorate,” and having “a crimeanization of Northern Cyprus,” although the Turkish Cypriots would prefer the “Taiwan model.”<sup>614</sup>

608 S/5634, 31 March 1964, “Report by the Secretary-General on the UN Operation in Cyprus: Exchange of letters constituting an agreement between the United Nations and the Government of the Republic of Cyprus concerning the status of the UN Peace-keeping Force in Cyprus.”

609 Interview, UNFICYP official, e-meeting, 26 November 2020.

610 George Kyris, “Sovereignty and Engagement Without Recognition: Explaining the Failure of Conflict Resolution in Cyprus,” *Ethnopolitics*, 2018, 17(4), pp. 426-442.

611 Interview, researcher, e-meeting, 22 January 2021.

612 *Ibid.*

613 James Ker-Lindsay, *The Cyprus Problem in An Era of Uncertainty*, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

614 Interview, researcher, e-meeting, 22 January 2021.

The Secretary-General has acknowledged that this attitude and policy of isolation of Greek Cypriots towards Turkish Cypriots have prevented the leaders of the two sides from meeting outside the negotiating table, making a settlement all the more difficult to achieve. He has, therefore, considered that “concerns about recognition should not in themselves constitute an insurmountable obstacle to increased cooperation.”<sup>615</sup> To find a solution, some researchers have put forward the concept of “engagement without recognition,” by which the parties would “open up channels of communication in a way that explicitly respects the sovereignty of the internationally recognised state but also acknowledges the value of ensuring that the seceding territory is not isolated.”<sup>616</sup> As underlined by James Ker-Lindsay, “the Cyprus Government needs to accept that a degree of interaction is not only necessary, but desirable as it helps to build a climate of trust.”<sup>617</sup> So far, the RoC authorities have maintained their position, although a number of their counterparts and researchers have stated that “implicit” or “accidental recognition” does not exist in international law. Some interlocutors have, therefore, come to the conclusion that this issue of recognition may be in fact “an excuse not to deal with the north,”<sup>618</sup> and have stated that the problem is that the Greek Cypriots “get away with the excuse of recognition every time.”<sup>619</sup> This is the reason why many consider that there is a need to work on the issue of recognition and building trust before working on the end state of reunification and the type of reunified state to create.

EPON is of the view that the Greek Cypriot authorities need to depart from an excessive focus on recognition and allow space for the Turkish Cypriots, whom they should consider partners, to break the vicious circle of mistrust and set the peace negotiations on a new, healthier footing. Such an attitude would also break the path of increasing reliance of the Turkish Cypriots towards their patron. Recognising the existence of the people living on the other side does not mean allowing their political recognition as a state. The Security Council should encourage, or even put pressure on, the authorities of the RoC to work on the basis of “engagement without recognition” to resume negotiations on a sounder basis and have them move forward. The advice of Jean Monnet, who said that to solve intractable problems, it is sometimes necessary to change the context, may be helpful here. The Security Council should think of a change in attitude as a prerequisite for negotiations to resume.

### 6.2.2. The Issue of Consent and Willingness of the Sides in the Absence of a Roadmap for Peace

During EPON interviews, a number of interlocutors questioned why the UN has not been more vocal or forceful after the failure of successive negotiations and more hands-on in a number of initiatives. They have also expressed a wish for more engaged action from the UN. But the

615 S/2019/562, 10 July 2019, “Report of Secretary-General on the UN operation in Cyprus,” para. 55.

616 James Ker-Lindsay, *The Cyprus Problem in An Era of Uncertainty*, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

617 *Ibid*, p. 24.

618 Interview, former UN police officer, e-meeting, 1 April 2020.

619 Interview, journalist, e-meeting, 18 January 2021.

consent of the parties and their willingness to move forward in the peace process has often been a constraint for the UN in Cyprus, and for most observers, “the most basic missing ingredient in Cyprus has been goodwill.”<sup>620</sup> Moreover, the UN presence in Cyprus is in a unique position where its peacekeeping element is deployed with the consent of the host state (a sovereign State and Member of the UN), while its peacemaking element needs to treat both sides equally, even if their strength is different. This feature conveys different expectations, interlocutors, capacities and ways to implement the respective mandates of the two Missions.

A number of interlocutors have pointed to the lack of benchmarks on the implementation of UNFICYP’s mandate and on the lack of accountability mechanisms attached to the negotiations.

The UN’s impartiality, a “key attribute that keeps channels of communication open,” has been instrumentalised by both sides.<sup>621</sup> As the Secretary-General explained in one of his 2018 reports: “The *de facto* division of the island, which has persisted for decades, has been characterised by the lack of direct communication between the opposing forces, police services and civilian authorities; UNFICYP is the sole interlocutor between them. In addition to its patrols, the Mission passes messages daily, decreasing tensions by ensuring that disagreements and disputes are resolved quickly and at a technical level, whenever possible.”<sup>622</sup> Even more recently, the Secretary-General recalled that “with its current mandate, which does not provide it with any executive authority, UNFICYP must rely on the cooperation of its interlocutors to prevent tensions in and around the buffer zone.”<sup>623</sup> Some interlocutors feel that “UNFICYP has been baby-sitting the two sides” and that in some ways prevents them from talking to each other more directly. One interlocutor considered: “it is high time that the sides realize that UNFICYP won’t do the work for them forever.”<sup>624</sup> The sides should not be comfortable with the situation. And ultimately, the UN is playing that role because the Greek Cypriots do not want to recognise the Turkish Cypriots as a proper interlocutor.

UNFICYP has been described as a “very risk-averse mission.”<sup>625</sup> For some interlocutors, the UN is also responsible for how it has been treated as a go-between and scapegoat, being tested each time and during each negotiation<sup>626</sup> because it has been unable to devise an accountability system. Quite a number of interlocutors have pointed to the lack of

620 Robert Holland, “The Catalytic Role of Regional Crisis,” in James Ker-Lindsay (ed.), *Resolving Cyprus, op. cit.*, p. 124.

621 Interview, UN staff, e-meeting, 26 November 2020.

622 S/2018/676, 11 July 2018, “United Nations operation in Cyprus – Report of the Secretary-General,” para. 5.

623 S/2020/23, 7 January 2020, “Report of the Secretary-General on UN operation in Cyprus,” para. 12.

624 Interview, journalist and activist, e-meeting, 18 January 2021.

625 Interview, diplomat, e-meeting, 31 March 2021.

626 Interview, journalist and activist, e-meeting, 18 January 2021.

benchmarks on the implementation of UNFICYP’s mandate and on the lack of accountability mechanisms attached to the negotiations.

After the Conference on Cyprus in Crans Montana, the UN did not hold the parties accountable for blocking the negotiation. The Mission of Good Offices “should be more open in what is going on”: “for the sake of being objective, it is concealing on who’s responsible for the blockage,” and “of course it is easier to criticize a breakaway entity than a sovereign state.”<sup>627</sup> “The Council never publicly pointed out the Greek Cypriots after the failure of Crans Montana.”<sup>628</sup> The problem is that, as emphasised by a diplomat, “the Mission doesn’t have the support of member states to turn the pressure up on either of the parties.”<sup>629</sup> Many interlocutors considered that the incentives are not strong enough for the two communities to find common ground, as seen in previous sections of the present report.<sup>630</sup>

That it is very difficult for the UN to navigate a peace process where the parties are not constructive and view a “compromise” with great reluctance.

The fact is that it is very difficult for the UN to navigate a peace process where the parties are not constructive and view a “compromise” with great reluctance – a word with a negative connotation in Greek and Turkish culture.<sup>631</sup> Parties to a conflict are not always interested in solving their conflict, despite pressure from the international community and the UN negotiators. A number of interlocutors have admitted that the “UN’s ability of success has to do with the positioning of the parties,”<sup>632</sup> which itself has to do with a profound lack of trust between sides that has cemented the positions over the years. In the end, in a paradoxical way, “the two sides have used the UN forum to reinforce their own incompatible positions” (i.e. “the Greek Cypriot always reaffirming their posture as the legitimate Cyprus government; the Turkish Cypriots always insisting that they cannot be seen as a political minority” in a Cypriot state), which “the UN has in effect endorsed.”<sup>633</sup> Here the question raised is about how the UN could have changed those positions without being accused of too much interference into the “internal affairs” of the two sides. Some interlocutors have indeed questioned the validity of the positions or the extreme demands of the parties. The other issue is that the host state of any peacekeeping mission has a tendency to consider that the UN should first and foremost support the policies and positions of the government in place. Cyprus is no exception to this trend, which can flourish when the

627 Interview, journalist, e-meeting, 18 January 2021.

628 Interview, former UN staff, e-meeting, April 2020.

629 Interview, diplomat, e-meeting, 31 March 2021.

630 Interview, EU official, e-meeting, 30 April 2020.

631 Assertion by Ayla Gürel and Harry Tzimitras, “Gas Can Become the New Lost Opportunity,” in James Ker-Lindsay (ed.), *Resolving Cyprus*, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

632 Focus group with Greek Cypriot researchers and civil society activists, e-meeting, Nicosia, 18 December 2020.

633 Michael Moran, “Conceptual Obstacles to a Settlement,” in James Ker-Lindsay (ed.), *Resolving Cyprus*, *op. cit.*, p. 204.

Security Council is divided or does not invest political capital in driving the parties in the conflict towards resolution. In this context, the only protection of the UN is its impartiality and its ability to ensure that its initiatives are balancing acts between preserving the legitimacy of the RoC and engaging the Turkish Cypriot community on equitable terms.<sup>634</sup>

These constraints have also limited the work of the UN towards more inclusiveness of the peace process. Activists have considered that “the UN should have been insisting, adamant and careful. The UN could have used its leverage to make sure that the civil society is more involved.”<sup>635</sup> Nevertheless, other interlocutors have indeed acknowledged that “the UN cannot impose its inclusivity agenda” to the Cypriot-owned process, and “since the process is leader-led, it would be up to them to lead in fostering bicomunal relations, not the UN or anyone else,” something that the two leaders have been very reluctant to do.<sup>636</sup> “The UN should be more actively involved, but if the two sides don’t show the necessary goodwill, there is not much the UN could do;” in the end, “the UN cannot create miracles.”<sup>637</sup> The fact is that, except in 2004, the UN has never been able to set the pace of the negotiations. Some interlocutors still consider that the UN would need “to support civil society to self-organize.”<sup>638</sup>

The issue of consent of the host state is a recurrent impediment to the effectiveness of the UN’s peace operations. Cyprus is no exception. If the lack of consent can somehow be navigated in peacekeeping, it becomes very difficult in peacemaking, especially when the UN is merely a facilitator and the parties view “compromise” with great reluctance. In this context and despite all the constraints, a number of interlocutors have nevertheless regretted the reticence of the UN and its reluctance to take bold decisions or make the parties accountable for holding back the negotiations. One of the problems is that the UN on the ground in Nicosia is limited by the apathy of the Security Council in New York. However, devising benchmarks and an accountability mechanism attached to the negotiations could be a way for the Security Council to exit the comfortable status quo into which the sides have settled themselves.

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634 Andreas Theophanous and Odysseas Christou, “The Cyprus Question and the Role of the UN: An Overall Assessment,” *Journal of Modern Hellenism*, n°30, p. 86.

635 Podcast Nicosia Uncut, Episode 24: “Responding to our listeners’ feedback,” 15 May 2021.

636 Interview, researcher, e-meeting, 04 May 2021; interview, UN staff, Nicosia, 14 June 2021.

637 Interview, formal TRNC official, Lefkoşa, 21 June 2021.

638 Interview, former UN staff, Nicosia, 16 June 2021.



## 7. The Way Forward for the UN Presence in Cyprus: Moving from Peacekeeping to Peacebuilding?

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Whatever the context, the Security Council has renewed the mandate of UNFICYP every six months since March 1964, and the Secretary-General has continued the Mission of the Good Offices (despite a few periods when there was no SASG or dedicated special political mission).<sup>639</sup> From a certain perspective, the UN is the only stakeholder that cannot give up in pushing the sides to keep negotiating, no matter how many times they have failed to come up with a solution. Nevertheless, the long UN presence in Cyprus is raising a number of questions related to the achievements and effectiveness of a peacekeeping mission and of a mediation and facilitation role for the UN in the peace process in a context where longevity has somehow not captured the interest of the peacekeeping research community. The research community is more focused on multidimensional missions and their efforts to protect civilians from violent conflict (which tend to draw more attention and funding interest) than on researching possible ways for resolving an intractable conflict. If long-term missions have their own features, they also share a number of constraints with sister operations by being highly dependent on political conditions, interpretations of the mandate, and the degree of support they enjoy from national, regional and international stakeholders. Time has created a number of additional constraints for the UN as well as the frozen nature of the conflict, which trigger wider questions related to crisis

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639 Gilles Bertrand calculated that since 1964, only 16 years have passed without some sort of dialogue, talks or negotiations, “the longest continuous period without any negotiations being three years (1993-1996).” “Chypre: trop de négociations ont-elles tué la négociation?” *loc. cit.*, p. 1.

management and the role of the UN in such situations that would require further research. The questions include:

- Can a conflict be resolved without pressure or any sense of urgency? As one Greek Cypriot interlocutor put it: “The drama of Cyprus is that it doesn’t have any drama.”<sup>640</sup> Can the parties be satisfied with a sort of “routinization of the conflict,” a conflict without victims, or a “negative peace”? Is such a conflict easier to solve than a conflict with casualties?
- Can a conflict be resolved without leverage in the hands of those who want to help, such as the UN or the “international community” more generally? Can a conflict be solved without accountability and some type of sanction on the parties who have continued to fail in the negotiations? As one interlocutor stated: “For a conflict to remain unresolved, one side’s intransigence is enough.”<sup>641</sup>
- Is time on the side of the resolution of a conflict, as “the status quo is not static, and time is not in favour of a solution”?<sup>642</sup> Can a conflict be put on hold for an indefinite number of years? Is a status quo a stable way to envisage a form of conflict resolution or does it increase the division of its stakeholders? What about generational attitudes, or are these likely to worsen in future? After so many years of conflict, do the sides really know what they want to achieve?
- Time is the greatest issue at the heart of frozen conflicts: is it working for or against a (re)solution? As one interlocutor put it, “time hasn’t helped, except for creating realities on the ground,”<sup>643</sup> realities that the “international community” does not seem to want to acknowledge, even they complicate the solution. In Cyprus, 2024 will mark 50 years – half a century – since the island was divided. Time is working in favour of a final partition, as many interlocutors agreed. This questions whether new realities created by factors on the ground can be acknowledged without risking a greater *fait accompli*? Can a conflict be left to the mercy of the time? Can it remain unsettled?
- In this context, one can wonder whether the lack of a settlement or solution is actually “the” settlement in the form of what Jan Pospisil calls “an unsettlement”?<sup>644</sup> Both parties agree not to settle. However, to acknowledge this formally would be too costly politically and too risky, as seeking agreement on some aspects can re-ignite tensions and make the situation worse. Keeping the status quo without reaching a final settlement is, therefore, a political choice both sides seem to agree on (as well as their regional and international backers and supporters). Unsettlement is the settlement, as “formalized political unsettlement is often the only available alternative to an absence of political settlement because

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640 Interview, Greek Cypriot activist, e-meeting, Nicosia, 14 December 2020.

641 George Kyris, “Sovereignty and Engagement Without Recognition,” *loc. cit.*, p. 442.

642 Interview, lawyer, e-meeting, Nicosia, 15 January 2021.

643 Interview, former UN staff, e-meeting, 03 February 2021.

644 Jan Pospisil, *Peace in Political Unsettlement: Beyond Solving Conflict*, 2018, Springer, 240 pages.

a transformed settlement with settled institutional arrangements is not possible.”<sup>645</sup> But can an organisation like the UN accept unsettlement as a new form of conflict resolution?

- Can a conflict be solved through one major peace agreement, a comprehensive take-it-or-leave-it package? The Dayton Agreement, for example, has shown that if it has stopped the war in ex-Yugoslavia, it has not dealt with the root causes of that conflict. On the contrary, could the “international community” favour a series of small settlements that could help build peace in an incremental manner? This questions whether a conflict can be solved only by a peace agreement without any more structural programmes related to peacebuilding attached to it, and not after it.
- Can efforts to advance gender equality and WPS be progressed when there is a lack of genuine commitment from political leaders in a peace process? While the UN has encouraged the leaders to more substantively engage women in negotiations, this has gained limited traction. Until those with the power to negotiate enable women to meaningfully participate in the peace process and consider the perspectives of women in an inclusive manner, resolution of the conflict or efforts to resolve the Cyprus problem are unlikely.

Can time create a new window and give an opportunity to solve the “Cyprus problem” or will time indefinitely protract the conflict because of a “Cyprus fatigue”? As years go by, fewer people will be interested in a solution, and by losing interest, people think that all solutions have been exhausted. In such a context, the UN wishes to maintain a balance between moving forward while not increasing uncertainty or risking clashes that would create new insecurity. Can it be possible to move the island away from the status quo while not moving it away from certainty? Can peace be made without paying a certain price and willingness to make concessions?

## Can a conflict be resolved without pressure or any sense of urgency?

A number of interlocutors have considered that the UN should be careful in a context of great (regional) uncertainty if it changes the tools that have had some success on the ground. But a number of interlocutors have also considered that the UN and Cyprus are arriving at a fork in the road, a defining moment either going towards real negotiations – “the likelihood of success getting lower and lower”<sup>646</sup> – or at a definitive partition of the island, as Cypriots have been living apart for quite a long time and they feel more safe that way. “It is hard to envisage the future with somebody you don’t really know; substantial interactions are not really happening beyond Nicosia.”<sup>647</sup> As one TRNC official said bluntly: “Continuation of 53 years old negoti-

645 Christine Bell and Jan Pospisil, “Navigating Inclusion in Transitions from Conflict: The Formalized Political Unsettlement,” *Journal of International Development*, July 2017, 29(5).

646 Focus group with Greek Cypriot researchers and civil society activists, e-meeting, Nicosia, 18 December 2020.

647 Interview, Greek Cypriot lawyer, e-meeting, 2 December 2020.

ating process is finished. If we can't be partners, we should learn to be good neighbours."<sup>648</sup> It is increasingly likely that UNFICYP will be "a mission manning a line of effective permanent partition."<sup>649</sup> There is a change from one generation to the next, and the new generations only experienced the trauma of the separation from what their parents and grandparents told them. Some also consider the other side in a more neutral way and with which it could be possible to build new connections. However, only 10% of the current population remember how it was when the island was unified. Soon, unification will become a foreign concept. A second generation of Cypriots is now living under division, and the UN has always been here. In the end, a 46-year-old status quo could be considered "a long preparation for the acceptance of partition by the Greek Cypriots."<sup>650</sup>



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Can it be possible to move the island away from the status quo while not moving it away from certainty?

From these more pessimistic perspectives, could there be a final effort to make peace? Can the UN still accompany a movement that would help the two communities move forward without risking a greater divide between them? Despite entrenched positions, how could there be a last chance for peace negotiations and peacebuilding? Below are a few recommendations on how the UN could restructure itself in a minimal way, building on the spirit of the Guterres reforms, while taking bolder decisions in convincing the sides to change a few parameters of the negotiations.

648 Interview, TRNC official, e-meeting, Lefkoşa, 30 June 2021.

649 James Ker-Lindsay, "The UN Force in Cyprus after the 2004 Reunification Referendum," *loc. cit.*, p. 418.

650 "Our View: Everyone knows that UNFICYP has an expiry date," *loc. cit.*

**Figure 17. Triangle of UN conflict management and resolution**

*Elaborated by Alexandra Novosseloff.*

## 7.1. The UN Presence in Cyprus: Upgrading to Building Peace

During EPON’s more than 80 interviews, a number of interlocutors have highlighted the contradictions of the different UN mandates in Cyprus and their missing element: keeping the peace, making the peace, but forgetting to build peace. Women interlocutors on both sides plainly stated: “We want the UN to build peace and not only to keep it.”<sup>651</sup> A number of interlocutors from civil society have regretted that UNFICYP was not more of a peacebuilding mission: “The peacebuilding element of the triangle is missing.”<sup>652</sup>

It is increasingly likely that UNFICYP will be “a mission manning a line of effective permanent partition.”

It is always a cumbersome process to change the format of a peace operation, especially when it has been part of the national political landscape for decades and local elites are familiar with

<sup>651</sup> Interview, Focus group on WPS, e-meeting, 25 February 2021.

<sup>652</sup> Interview, researcher, e-meeting, Lefkoşa, 16 December 2020.



its procedures and activities and have a sense of controlling them. The Security Council has also been generally reluctant to engage in a process that would require extra work and negotiations among its Members. However, it may be needed to show that the purpose of the UN is not to remain in a country permanently. Below are a few suggestions for change that would require limited diplomatic efforts from the Council but could show its resolve to have the Cyprus question move forward.

“We want the UN to build peace and not only to keep it.”

The first issue where change could be made is related to the nature of UNFICYP. A number of interlocutors have questioned why it is still a “Force” and not considered an observation or monitoring mission that corresponds with its nature. Interlocutors in and outside the UN have considered that the name of the Mission should be changed, and that the word “Force” in particular should be removed: “Something needs to be changed; like this it is a too old-fashion[ed] force.”<sup>653</sup> Fewer interlocutors have considered that the Force should be reduced as it has been stretched thin since 2004. EPON considers that the idea of transforming UNFICYP would be first and foremost to change its name to reflect the current type of mission and the fact that the head of the Mission is a civilian.<sup>654</sup> In his report, the Secretary-General already noted what he calls a “UN operation in Cyprus” and not a Force. The last strategic review has considered that the only element to strengthen in UNFICYP is its “observation and liaison component,”<sup>655</sup> as part of the military component. As UNFICYP would change its name, it could at the same time be restructured to merge with the Mission of Good Offices, especially as the position of special adviser is likely to remain vacant. This would strengthen the political analysis of UNFICYP and give better visibility to the UN as a whole. The new mission could be named the UN Observation or Monitoring Mission in Cyprus (UNOMIC or UNMMIC). It could still serve in the capacity of special adviser and receive support from New York headquarters. Reconfiguring UNFICYP this way would also streamline a unique reporting line to the DPO.

A second element where the pressure of the Security Council should be applied is on the idea it supported in some recent resolutions: the establishment of a military commission around the UNFICYP Force Commander which represents all parties, including the Guarantors. The military commission would help defuse daily tensions and build a military-to-military relationship between stakeholders who do not currently know one another. More direct contact between the parties would be conducive to creating a better atmosphere, and it would not lead to any recognition of the Turkish Cypriot “authorities.” The UN has long-term experience in

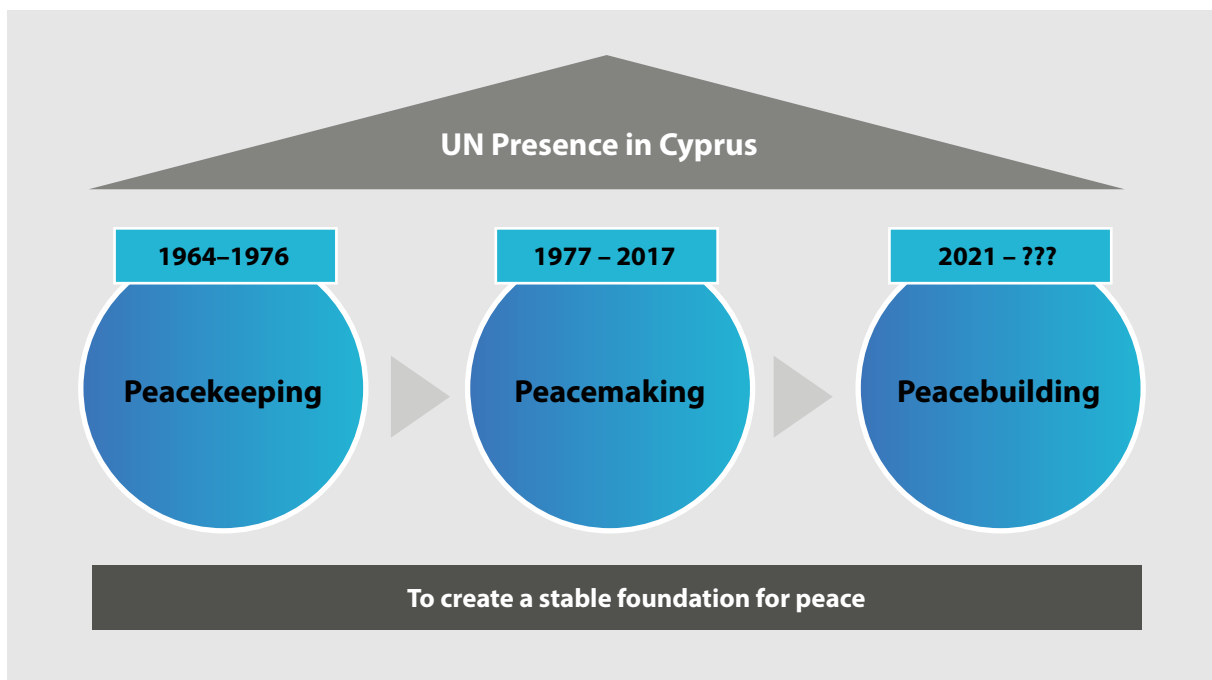
653 Interview, former UNFICYP official, e-meeting, April 2020.

654 The idea of transforming UNFICYP into a non-armed observation mission or a “military observer group” has been put forward by the Secretary-General in the past, during the Mission’s review in 1990 and in 2004. See S/21982, 7 December 1990, “Note by the Secretary-General – Report of the Secretariat Review Team on the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus,” Annex, paras. 55-58; S/2004/756, 24 September 2004, “Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations operation in Cyprus,” para. 38.

655 S/2017/1008 (28 November 2017), “Strategic review of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus,” para. 57.

organising military tripartite commissions, such as between Georgia and Abkhazia between 1993 and 2009 (UNOMIG), and since 2006-2007 between Israel and Lebanon along the Blue Line (UNIFIL). In both cases, the military tripartite commissions were the sites where the two parties could interact despite the lack of political recognition and diplomatic relations between them. The Tripartite Military Commission created in UNIFIL to help prevent misunderstandings and de-escalate tensions could serve as a model, and a workshop could be organised by UNFICYP to explain its functioning and relevance in a context where the two main actors do not recognise each other.

**Figure 18. The path of the UN presence in Cyprus**



*Adapted by Alexandra Novosseloff.*

Beyond the fate of UNFICYP and the Mission of the Good Offices, EPON interlocutors indicated that they want the UN to do more in helping the Cypriots build a culture of peace, to reconcile, and work on common issues affecting the whole island in countering the discourse that has persisted for years and which prevents the sides from meeting. “We expect from the UN to be doing more in building trust between communities,” said a young Cypriot, who added that “UN initiatives should be better advertised.”<sup>656</sup> As in many other conflicts, people want the UN to do much more than it actually can or break some of the self-imposed barriers because of its status as an intergovernmental body or its role as a simple facilitator. People expect a third phase in the activities of the UN: after successfully keeping the peace, but “failing” in making peace, they expect the UN to do more in building peace. A senior UN staff member qualified

<sup>656</sup> Interview, Focus Group on Youth, e-meeting, 10 March 2021.

peacebuilding as a deserted landscape currently because of an absolute lack of resources to devise programmes and activities in that field.<sup>657</sup> Local interlocutors wish “UNFICYP to be upgraded to promote the peace,”<sup>658</sup> help build cooperation.

Towards that goal, strategic communication should first and foremost be strengthened to convey what the UN family has already done and is doing in that field. Second, the idea would be to give greater coherence to the peacebuilding element, in line with Guterres’ reforms. UNFICYP should continue to strengthen its civilian pillar, while developing its work with UNDP and the country team that cannot be fully integrated into the Mission. The objective of this third missing element of the UN presence in Cyprus would be to carry out the groundwork necessary to build trust and peace in a new way, give more visibility to peace dividends, and better support civil society and the emerging social mobility at grassroots level from both communities seen during the Geneva conference in April 2021.<sup>659</sup> There is a need to create a culture of cohesion and collaboration (some would say a culture of reunification) and to develop new mindsets<sup>660</sup> on bringing the two communities together physically and mentally.<sup>661</sup> The CMP could be asked to have a role in a truth and reconciliation agenda. A number of recent studies have underlined that “reconciliation is not something that can only happen once a peace settlement has been reached.”<sup>662</sup> Considering that peacebuilding should be about the conflict status and not the wealth of the country, Cyprus could be introduced to the Peacebuilding Commission and funding could be sought from the Peacebuilding Fund to work on structural issues such as education and reconciliation. Whether this is unrealistic, given the current general opposition of the RoC to civilian activities undertaken by UNFICYP, needs to be considered.

Peacebuilding is part of the life cycle in conflict resolution and should be treated as such in the case of Cyprus. There is a need to build the foundation for peace and push the leaders towards it. A review of the peacebuilding pillar could be conducted, with the objective of rationalising the various activities already undertaken in that field, enhancing their visibility, and emphasising their structural dimension in order to raise the Cypriot peace process to a new level. The review could look at how the Peacebuilding Fund could be used to contribute towards structural activities related to education, the role of the media, and reconciliation.

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657 Interview, UN staff, Nicosia, 22 June 2021.

658 Interview, Focus Group on Youth, e-meeting, 10 March 2021.

659 “Ahead of Geneva talks, Cypriots march for peace,” *Reuters*, 24 April 2021.

660 Interview, member of an NGO, Nicosia, 16 June 2021.

661 Interview, former EU staff, e-meeting, 18 June 2020.

662 Conciliation Resources, “Reconciliation in Focus – Approaching Reconciliation in Peacebuilding Practice,” March 2021, 38 pages.

The time has come to reconfigure the UN presence in Cyprus. EPON considers that UNFICYP could at least change its name to UN Observation or Monitoring Mission in Cyprus (UNOMIC or UNMMIC) to reflect the civilian nature of its leadership better. By the same token, the Mission of Good Offices could close and transfer its political advisers to the “new” UN Mission. Such restructuring would, therefore, strengthen elements that have been considered key by interlocutors in and outside the current Missions, that is, monitoring and political analysis. In parallel, the Security Council should put more pressure on the Greek Cypriot side, in particular, to establish a military commission that could gather around the UNFICYP Force Commander representative of all parties, including the Guarantors, as it has called for in past resolutions.

*Beyond the restructuring of the two UN Missions, the Secretary-General and the Security Council, with the Peacebuilding Commission, could initiate a reflection on how to help the Cypriots build a culture of peace and work towards their reconciliation better. A review of the “peacebuilding pillar” present in Cyprus could be envisaged with the objective of rationalising the various activities already undertaken in that field, enhancing their visibility, and emphasising their structural dimension to raise the Cypriot peace process to a new level.*

## 7.2. Changing the Parameters and the Methodology of Negotiations

After more than 50 years of negotiations, “everybody has the feeling that they have done everything they could to solve the issue, and that the onus is on the other side.”<sup>663</sup> The UN has oscillated between mediating, facilitating and convening without finding an effective formula (if there is one), being instrumentalised by the parties, or being accused of failing the negotiations. The “Cyprus problem” is often referred to as “stubbornly immune to all peacemaking initiatives,” as “the diplomats’ graveyard,” and even as a “world nuisance.”<sup>664</sup> In 2003, the Secretary-General said that “given the intractability and the variable geometry of the issues it is not far-fetched to describe it as a diplomatic ‘Rubik’s cube’.”<sup>665</sup> The problem is that “emotion supersedes rationalism” in trying to find a solution,<sup>666</sup> and “the likelihood of a reunification decreases with every failed attempt and the passing of time.”<sup>667</sup>

In protracted conflicts, no silver bullet exists, and there is always a difference between what the international stakeholders are pursuing and the facts on the ground that local actors face. The latter often makes the former irrelevant by persisting with its accepted formula. On the other hand, it is difficult for the international community to move away from an agreed formula, even if everyone would agree in private that the formula is unrealistic. For that reason, negotiations

663 Interview, EU staff, e-meeting, 30 April 2020.

664 James Ker-Lindsay, *The Cyprus Problem*, *op. cit.*, pp. 118–119.

665 S/2003/398, 1 April 2003, “Report of the Secretary-General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus,” para. 4.

666 Interview, researcher, e-meeting, 15 December 2020.

667 Hubert Faustmann, “Hydrocarbons can fuel a settlement,” in James Ker-Lindsay (ed.), *Resolving Cyprus*, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

often lag behind the evolution of the conflict. Facts on the ground have changed the parameters, and now “we are starting to live in an illusion.”<sup>668</sup> The latest report of the Secretary-General on UNFICYP clearly considered that “changes to the status quo observed by the mission, subtle in some areas, overt in others, continue to heighten tensions between the two sides, moving the parties further apart and possibly affecting the efforts towards a sustainable, mutually acceptable solution.”<sup>669</sup> At least, there is a need to find a way to “escape from zero-sum game approaches – where security for Turkish Cypriots meant insecurity for Greek Cypriots and vice versa – to solutions that improve security simultaneously for all Cypriots would be vital.”<sup>670</sup>

In Cyprus, since the failure of the Annan Plan, the conflict has transformed itself, with people on both sides taking things into their own hands. The reality on the ground has changed the idea of a BBF in Cyprus to a two-state solution and the main obstacle to that solution has also been “the absence of sufficient desire on the part of the two Cypriot communities for federation” and the fact that it has always been their second-best option.<sup>671</sup> Moreover, “every unsuccessful meeting suggests that BBF is not possible,”<sup>672</sup> and gives “opponents to reunification a victory.”<sup>673</sup> As the one-state solution is gaining ground in Palestine, the two-state solution is increasingly supported by one side in Cyprus, the Turkish Cypriots and Turkey, a position that contributed to the outcome (many would say “failure”) of the last 5+1 informal meeting in Geneva. The idea of partition is gaining popularity, and not only on the Turkish Cypriot side: “In private, many Greek Cypriots have their doubts about efforts to reunite the island. In moderate circles, some appear to have concluded that the north is all but lost for good and that maybe it is time to open up discussions on a formal separation.”<sup>674</sup> A number of observers have considered that the next presidential elections in the south in 2023 could trigger “a last effort before partition”<sup>675</sup> – something that a scholar noted “has been heard before each presidential election.”<sup>676</sup>

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668 Interview, former UN staff, e-meeting, 03 February 2021.

669 S/2021/635, 9 July 2021, “Report of the Secretary-General on the UN operation in Cyprus,” para. 58.

670 Ioannis N. Grigoriadis, “Cyprus Negotiations Thwarted by Issues on Security and Guarantees – How Can the Peace Process Be Revived?” *SWP Comments*, 28 July 2017.

671 Tozun Bachcheli and Sid Noel, “A Bizonal Federation is not viable,” in James Ker-Lindsay (ed.), *Resolving Cyprus, op. cit.*, pp. 39–40.

672 Interview, former TRNC official, Lefkoşa, 21 June 2021.

673 Interview, member of civil society, Lefkoşa, 21 June 2021.

674 James Ker-Lindsay, *The Cyprus Problem, op. cit.*, p. 111.

675 Interview, lawyer, Nicosia, 15 June 2021.

676 Interview, scholar, e-meeting, 13 August 2021.



**Table 5. Solutions that have emerged in half a century of negotiations**

STATUS QUO TOWARDS A "CIVILISED DIVORCE" OR "VELVET PARTITION" (First preferred solution by the Greek Cypriots)	UNITARY STATE (Second preferred solution by the Greek Cypriots)
CONFEDERATION	FEDERAL STATE (BIZONAL, BICOMMUNAL) (Solution promoted by the UN)
TWO STATES (Preferred solution by the Turkish Cypriots)	DECENTRALIZED OR "LOOSE" FEDERATION (Solution suggested by N. Anastasiades)
ESTABLISHMENT OF A GRADUAL FEDERATION?	

*Elaborated by Alexandra Novosseloff.*

Below are a few elements that could be put forward and which also could prove that the negotiating process is worth continuing. These recommendations are derived from the interviews EPON conducted:

- All convergences must be clearly acknowledged so that the next conference can focus on outstanding issues. There is an *acquis*, a body of work from past negotiations that should be put forward.
- In these conditions, there could be space for successive small negotiations instead of a "grand settlement," a series of smaller packages that constitute stages on a roadmap to a comprehensive solution. A number of interlocutors have emphasised that the leaders have never prepared the people for a settlement plan or explained in a very concrete way what a solution would look like for their daily lives. A journalist clearly stated: "People don't know what life would be like after a solution," and that "a joint communication campaign is lacking."<sup>677</sup> Could the advancement of these successive negotiations be based on a number of low-key CBMs affecting the daily lives of Cypriots and aimed at increasing their interaction? Could they provide a roadmap and benchmarks for assessing the willingness of the parties to work towards a solution?<sup>678</sup> A number of interlocutors have questioned the objectives and methods of the talks and negotiations that have occurred until now, which "give the illusion that a solution can happen overnight."<sup>679</sup> There is a need for both sides to prepare the ground better.

<sup>677</sup> Interview, journalist, e-meeting, 18 January 2021.

<sup>678</sup> Christos Yiangou, "Solving the Cyprus problem: An out-of-the-box approach," *loc. cit.* See also the Peace Polls website for a series of CBMs that could be approved by the two sides at <http://www.peacepolls.org/cgi-bin/generic?instanceID=16>.

<sup>679</sup> Interview, scholar, Famagusta, 18 June 2021.

- Building “a culture of engagement” to depart from the considerations about “implicit recognition”: “Addressing all these areas requires a fundamental change in the way in which the communities interact. Rather than focusing on why things cannot be done because they could suggest recognition or present a threat to claims of sovereignty, the emphasis needs to be on looking at how things can be done to counter the threats and challenges identified and facilitate an eventual settlement. There is a range of steps that can be taken to build a culture of engagement on the island. More needs to be done by the political leaders on both sides to defend the value of contacts between the two communities.”<sup>680</sup> The UN should help the leaders move away from a short-term approach to issues.
- Introducing a “Track II process,” because “when antagonistic positions stall Track I level negotiations, engaging citizens and experts in the search of new solutions on a specific issue can help deconstruct entrenched narratives. It is also an important tool to consider to legitimize significant decisions taken at the Track I level which impact the lives of citizens not ‘at the table’, and enhance potential solutions’ sustainability.”<sup>681</sup>
- Negotiations should work on objectives rather than mantras. The four key strategic objectives suggested by James Ker-Lindsay could gain consensus: building ties and trust; creating a viable future for the Turkish Cypriot community (“The Greek Cypriots have to understand that if they don’t want to have Turkey on their border, they have to lay a hand to their neighbours, the Turkish Cypriots”);<sup>682</sup> reducing Turkey’s influence in the north; and finding joint solutions to common problems.<sup>683</sup>

85.5% of Greek Cypriots and 67% of Turkish Cypriots wish for an end to the Cyprus problem in a way that assures political equality for Turkish Cypriots and security for Greek Cypriots from Turkish influence. 66.5% of Greek Cypriots and 63.6% of Turkish Cypriots wish for a mutually agreed upon accord that will result in a Bizonal Bicomunal Federation (BBF).<sup>684</sup> The 2021 poll indicates some optimism among the youth who wish to find a solution. The Mission of Good Offices also conducted a poll through which “a majority of respondents from both communities reconfirmed their aspiration for a mutually agreed settlement and also expressed the belief that it was imperative to reach one as soon as possible,” even if their expectations were low.<sup>685</sup> However, to reach an agreement for the island, a number of EPON’s interlocutors were of the view that there is a need for a healthier process and a more concrete outcome.

After 55 years as a politically separated nation and 45 years as a physically divided country, Cyprus’ intercommunal clashes have cemented in an unsolvable frozen conflict. Through its

680 James Ker-Lindsay, *The Cyprus Problem in An Era of Uncertainty*, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

681 Interpeace/SeeD, “[Breaking the pattern of deadlock in the Cyprus Peace Process – Lessons learned from the Security Dialogue Initiative in Cyprus](#),” Interpeace Peacebuilding in Practice Paper, n°5, September 2019, Geneva.

682 Interview, UN staff, e-meeting, New York, 20 January 2021.

683 James Ker-Lindsay, *The Cyprus Problem in An Era of Uncertainty*, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

684 “[Youth and Politics in Protracted Conflicts: A comparative approach on hope for a settlement and return of IDPs](#),” Hellenic Observatory of the London School of Economics, April 2021, p. 9.

685 S/2021/634, 9 July 2021, “Report of the Secretary-General on his mission of good offices in Cyprus,” para. 38.

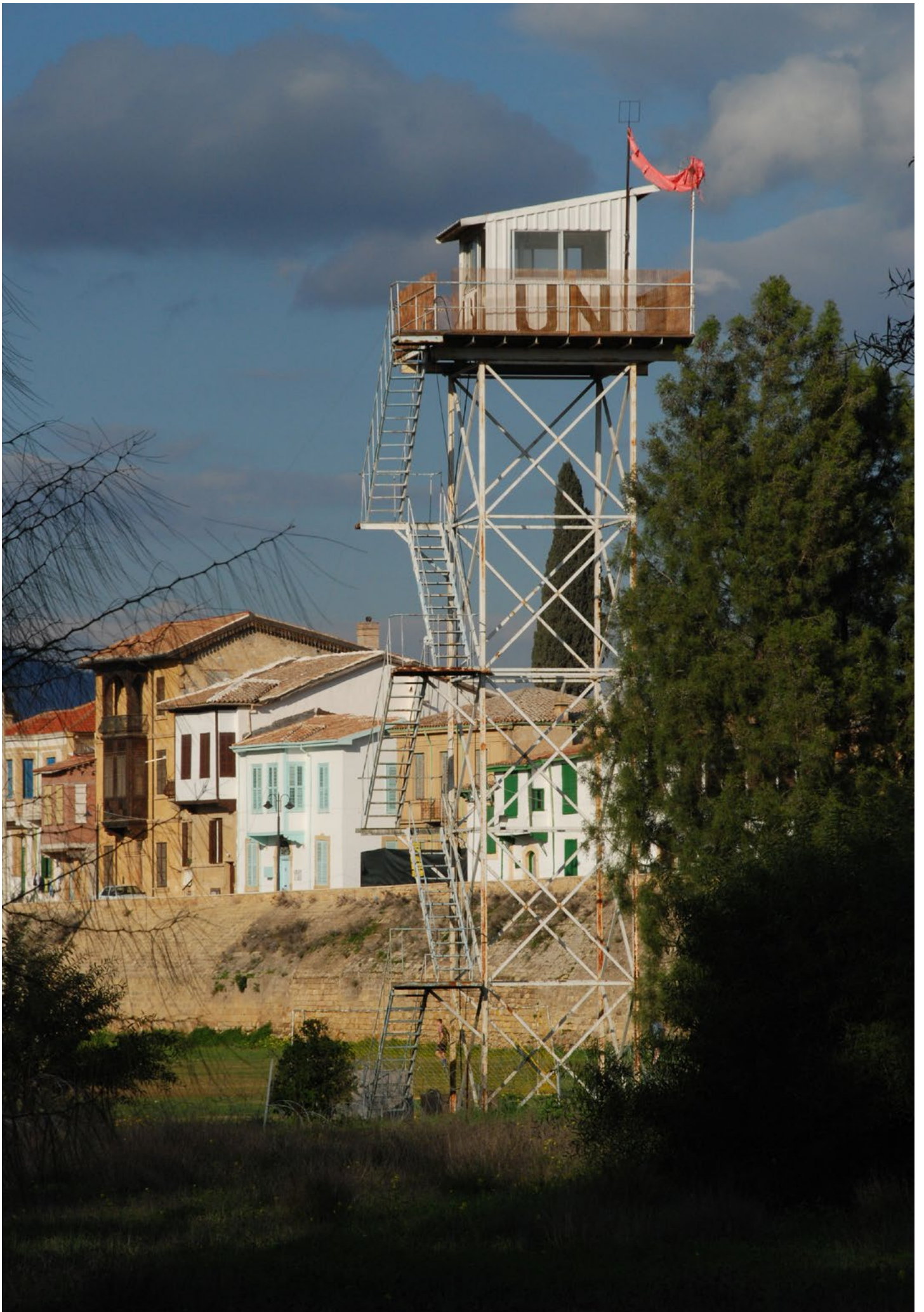
long-term presence, the UN is one of the key players in the Cyprus problem, facilitating more than 40 plans or talks on a possible settlement for the island. It has faced “Cyprus fatigue”, inertia and apathy. The work of the UN is constrained by many constraints that prevent it from moving forward as quickly as people on the ground would wish. The protracted conflict has created a state of exception and an abnormal situation on both sides that has allowed corruption to thrive as the rule of law has been diminished or considered a minor issue compared to the conflict. There is a need to move towards a more structural approach to solving conflict through peacebuilding and sustaining peace for the relationship and ties between the two communities to be improved. As the Secretary-General underlined in his latest report, “given the passage of time and the risk that the communities drift ever-further apart, fostering cooperation on issues that affect the daily life of Cypriots is fundamental.”<sup>686</sup> There is a need to create a dependency on peace, and not on the comfortable conflict, to develop a trade rapprochement that eases the relationship, devise transformative initiatives, bring back the negotiations to Nicosia, be more transparent, and create a Track II that includes civil society and give a more dynamic turn to renewed negotiations. For all this to happen, there needs to be a will to move forward and away from the past and to envisage the other as a partner. The alternative could only be a hard border in the middle of an island too small to be divided.



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686 S/2021/635, 9 July 2021, “Report of the Secretary-General on the UN operation in Cyprus,” para. 57.





# Annexes

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- List of UN Special Advisers of the Secretary-General, Special Representatives of the Secretary-General, and Force Commanders of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus
- Major reports of the Secretary-General on Cyprus between 1964 and 2021
- The Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network (EPON) Project Summary



# Annex 1: List of UN Special Advisers of the Secretary-General, Senior Officials, Special Representatives of the Secretary-General, Heads of Mission, and Force Commanders of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus

Date	Mediator, Special Advisers of the Secretary-General, UN Senior Officials	Date	Special Representatives of the Secretary-General, Heads of Mission	Date	UNFICYP Force Commanders
March – September 1964	Mr. Sakari Severi Tuomioja (Finland), died	March - June 1964			General Gyani (India)
September 1964 - December 1965	Mr. Galo Plaza Lasso (Former President of Ecuador), re-signed (S/7054)	September 1964 - January 1967	Mr. Carlos A. Bernardes (Brazil)	June 1964 - December 1965	General K. S. Thimayya (India – died in Cyprus)
5 January 1967 – 20 February 1967	Mr. P.P. Spinelli (Director General of the UN Office in Geneva), Acting (Italy)	December 1965 - May 1966			General K. S. Thimayya (India – died in Cyprus)
February 1967 - June 1974	Mr. Bibiano Fernandez Osorio Tafall (Spain)vv	May 1966 - December 1969			Lieutenant-General Martola (Finland)
July 1974 - October 1975	Mr. Luis Weckmann-Muñoz (Mexico)	December 1969 - December 1976			Lieutenant-General Dewan Prem Chand (India)
October 1975 - 15 Dec 1977	Mr. Javier Perez de Cuellar (Peru)	December 1976 - March 1981			Major-General James Joseph Quinn (Ireland)
December 1977 - May 1978	Mr. Remy Gorgé (Switzerland), vActing then Deputy Special Representative	May 1980 - December 1984			
May 1978 - April 1980	Mr. Reynaldo Galindo Pohl (El Salvador)				
	Mr. Hugo J. Gobbi (Argentina)				

Date	Mediator, Special Advisers of the Secretary-General, UN Senior Officials	Date	Special Representatives of the Secretary-General, Heads of Mission	Date	UNFICYP Force Commanders
May 1980 - December 1984		Mr. Hugo J. Gobbi (Argentina)		March 1981- April 1989	Major-General Gunther G. Greindl (Austria)
December 1984 - 1988		Mr. James Holger, Acting (Chile)		April 1989 - April 1992	Major-General Clive Milner (Canada)
February 1988 - March 1993		Mr. Oscar Camilion (Argentina)		April 1992 - July 1994	Major-General Michael F. Minehane (Ireland)
May 1993	Mr. Joe Clark, Special Representative for Cyprus (former Prime Minister of Canada)	April 1993	Mr. Gustave Feissel (USA), Deputy Special Representative, resident in Cyprus	August 1994 - February 1997	Brigadier-General Ahti Toimi Vartiainen (Finland)
August 1994 - May 1996	Mr. Joe Clark becomes Chief of Mission of UNFICYP, his deputy, Gustave Feissel, assuming this function when he is absent			February 1997 - December 1999	Major-General Evergisto Arturo de Vergara (Argentina)
May 1996 - April 1997	Mr. Han Sung-joo (former Foreign Minister of the Republic of Korea)			September 1999 - May 2000	
April 1997 - April 1999	Mr. Diego Cordovez (Ecuador), Special Adviser on Cyprus, resigned	June 1998	Mr. Gustave Feissel (USA), HoM & DSRSG		
		September 1999 - May 2000	Mr. James Holger (Chile), Acting		

Date	Mediator, Special Advisers of the Secretary-General, UN Senior Officials	Date	Special Representatives of the Secretary-General, Heads of Mission	Date	UNFICYP Force Commanders
May 2000 - May 2004	Mr. Álvaro de Soto (Peru), resident (leaving Cyprus for Western Sahara between May and December 2003)	September 1999 - May 2000	Mr. James Holger (Chile), Acting	December 1999 - December 2001	Major-General Victory Rana (Nepal)
		June 2000 - December 2005	Mr. Zbiniew Wlosowicz (Poland)	December 2001 - December 2003	Lieutenant-General Jin Ha Hwang (Republic of Korea)
		January 2006 - March 2008	Mr. Michael Moller (Denmark)	January 2004 - January 2006	Major-General Hebert Figoli (Uruguay)
		March - May 2008	Ms. Elizabeth Spehar (Canada), Acting	March 2006 - March 2008	Major-General Rafael Jose Barni (Argentina)
		May 2008 - April 2010	Mr. Taye-Brook Zerihoun (Ethiopia)	April 2008 - Dec 2010	Rear Admiral Mario Sánchez Debernardi (Peru)
July 2008 - February 2014	Mr. Alexander Downer (former Foreign Minister of Australia), resigned	June 2010 - June 2016	Ms. Lisa Buttenheim (USA)		
		August 2014 - August 2017	Mr. Espen Barth Eide (former Defense and Foreign Minister of Norway)	June 2016 - December 2021	Ms. Elizabeth Spehar (Canada)
August 2016 - October 2018	Major General Mohammad Humayun Kabir (Bangladesh)				
Since 2018	Ms. Jane Holl Lute, senior UN official (United States)	June 2016 - December 2021	Ms. Elizabeth Spehar (Canada)	January 2018 - December 2020	Major General Cheryl Pearce (Australia)
				Since March 2021	Major General Ingrid Gjerde (Norway)

## Annex 2: Major reports of the Secretary-General on UNFICYP and the Good Offices

Date	Reference	Title and reference to
12 March 1964	S/5593	First report of the Secretary-General on the organization and operation of the UN peace-keeping force in Cyprus
31 March 1964	S/5634	Report by the Secretary-General on the UN Operation in Cyprus: exchange of letters constituting an agreement between the UN and the Government of the RoC concerning the status of the UN peace-keeping force in Cyprus
11 April 1964	S/5653	Note by the Secretary-General: Aide-mémoire concerning some questions relating to the function and operation of the UN peace-keeping force in Cyprus
29 April 1964	S/5671	Report by the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the operations of the UN peace-keeping force in Cyprus
26 March 1965	S/6253	Report of the UN mediator on Cyprus to the Secretary-General ("Report Galo Plaza") – first UN mediation attempt
6 December 1974	S/11568	Report by the Secretary-General on the UN Operation in Cyprus (for the period 23 May to 5 December 1974) after the Turkish intervention
18 February 1975	S/11624	Special report of the Secretary-General on developments in Cyprus
2 April 1980	A/35/161	Report of the Secretary-General on the Question of Cyprus
1 December 1983	S/16192	Report by the Secretary-General on the UN Operation in Cyprus (for the period 1 June to 30 November 1983), following the proclamation of TRNC
7 December 1990	S/21982	Note by the Secretary-General – Report of the Secretariat Review Team on the United Nations Peace-keeping Force in Cyprus
15 October 1991	S/23144	Report of the Secretary-General on Financing of the United Nations Peace-keeping Force in Cyprus
21 August 1992	S/24772	Report of the Secretary-General on his Mission of Good Offices in Cyprus and a set of ideas on an overall framework agreement on Cyprus
1 July 1993	S/26026	Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the confidence-building measures (CBMs)

22 November 1993	S/26777	Report of the Secretary-General in connection with the Security Council's comprehensive reassessment of the United Nations Operation in Cyprus
1 April 2003	S/2003/398	Report of the Secretary-General on his Mission of Good Offices in Cyprus
20 April 2004	S/2004/302	Report of the Secretary-General on Cyprus
28 May 2004	S/2004/437	Report of the Secretary-General on his Mission of Good Offices in Cyprus
24 September 2004	S/2004/756	Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations operation in Cyprus (review of UNFICYP after the failure of the Annan Plan)
24 November 2010	S/2010/603	Report of the Secretary-General on his Mission of Good Offices in Cyprus
4 March 2011	S/2011/112	Assessment status of the negotiations in Cyprus
12 March 2012	S/2012/149	Assessment report of the Secretary-General on the status of the negotiations in Cyprus
28 September 2017	S/2017/814	Report of the Secretary-General on his Mission of Good Offices in Cyprus after the Geneva and Crans Montana conferences
28 November 2017	S/2017/1008	Strategic review of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus
14 June 2018	S/2018/610	Report of the Secretary-General: Progress towards a settlement in Cyprus

*Created by Alexandra Novosseloff*



## Annex 3: The Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network (EPON) Project Summary

Peace operations are among the most important international mechanisms for contemporary conflict management. However, their effectiveness remains the subject of confusion and debate in both the policy and academic communities. Various international organizations conducting peace operations, including the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU), and the European Union (EU), have come under increasing pressure to justify their effectiveness and impact. Although various initiatives are underway to improve the ability to assess the performance of peace operations, there remains a distinct lack of independent, research-based information about the effectiveness of such operations.

To address this gap, the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), together with over 40 partners from across the globe, have established an international network to jointly undertake research into the effectiveness of peace operations. This network has developed a shared methodology to enable the members to undertake research on this topic. This will ensure coherence across cases and facilitate comparative research. The network produce a series of reports that are shared with stakeholders including the UN, AU, and EU, interested national government representatives, researchers, and the general public. All the EPON reports are available via <https://effectivepeaceops.net>. The network is coordinated by NUPI. Many of the partners fund their own participation. NUPI has also received funding from the Norwegian Research Council and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to support the Network and its research, including via the UN Peace Operations project (UNPOP) and the Training for Peace (TfP) programme.

### Contact

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This report assesses the extent to which the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) along with the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary- General on Cyprus (OSASG) – also called the mission of the Good Offices – is achieving its mandate enshrined in Resolution 164 of March 1964. In 2024, the UN Missions in Cyprus will celebrate the 60th anniversary of their presence in the country, and it seems timely to analyse their impact and effectiveness over the years.

The EPON report looks for the first time at what the peacekeeping research community has called “legacy operations”, those born during the Cold War and still in place today. UNFICYP is the eighth peacekeeping mission created since 1948. The report looks also at the interaction between peacekeeping and peacemaking in the context of a frozen conflict, often referred to by researchers and scholars as the “Cyprus problem”. Cyprus is a unique case in international relations and peace operations. Its capital city is the only remaining divided capital in Europe and in the world. Cyprus is the only country in the world to have “Guarantors” with a right to intervene and station troops on a permanent basis.

The report acknowledges the role of prevention of UNFICYP to the extent that the people in Cyprus tend to forget that no cease-fire agreement exists between the parties. Peacekeeping has been successful at creating a comfortable status quo that peacemaking has yet been unable to break down. In this context, the lack of will from the parties to engage in a meaningful political process has limited the UN’s effectiveness.