

The Issue of the Division of Cyprus

The Cyprus Dispute has seemingly defied the ability of the UN for several decades. The culmination of a number of factors, including a feud between Greece and Turkey, historical British colonial rule and a build-up of violence and tension, any resolution to this issue would be of great political and historical significance. In brief, the situation in Cyprus is that of division. Following tension across ethnic lines during the 1960s, Turkey invaded and occupied the northern half of the island. As peace talks have routinely stalled, the conflict has never truly found an end. The Greek Cypriots of the south generally wish to see the whole island returned to their hands, and the Turkish Cypriots of the North wish to see the division made official, their land recognised as a state and the UN buffer zone removed.

1931 saw an open revolt in the name of 'enosis', or union by Greek Cypriots, leading to half a dozen deaths, and 2000 arrests. A reserve police force made up of Turkish Cypriots was created to enforce restrictions on the Greek people. 10 figures, believed to have caused the riots, were exiled. After WW2, they were allowed to return, and an Assembly was proposed to create a new constitution. These moves were viewed as too little by the Greek Cypriot military and the Cypriot Orthodox Church. Many Greek Cypriots refused the offer, as they solely desired 'enosis'. Turkish institutions and Turkish Cypriots had a contrasting goal of 'taksim': dividing the island between the Greeks and Turks. This task was supported by the newly-formed paramilitary group TMT in order to counter the 'enosis' supporting paramilitary group EOKA. Disruption, civil unrest, and violence became near commonplace, and so work to strike a compromise was accelerated. Instead of internal talks in Greece or Turkey, discussions were moved to London where representatives of both countries and halves of Cyprus could discuss freely, resulting in the 1960 Cyprus constitution and its relating agreements.

The Constitution consists of almost 200 Articles, has been amended nearly a dozen times and stands as the governing document of Cyprus. Although it was designed to maintain peace and a sense of justice, it is confusing, complex and has ultimately led to ongoing trouble. Its important provisions include a power-sharing agreement, in that the President was to be Greek, and the Vice-President, Turkish. It also enforces a 7:3 ratio of Greeks to Turks and, importantly, the ideas of enosis and taksim were to be outlawed.

The relating agreements included the Treaty of Guarantee, banning Cyprus from political union with another state and allowing Greece, Turkey or Britain to act in order to 're-establish the state of affairs created by the present Treaty'. The Treaty of Alliance ensured independence from Britain and provided specific limits as to Greek and Turkish troops on the island. The Treaty of Establishment maintained British presence on the island in Dhekelia and Akrotiri, and defined Cypriot citizenship.

As indicated by arrangements, Cyprus was to be an autonomous republic. A House of Representatives with a seven-to-three ratio, was to be elected with universal suffrage. Legislation would require a simple majority and the President and VP both held veto powers. A Supreme Constitutional Court, would be made of one Greek Cypriot and one Turkish Cypriot and directed by a judge from an unbiased nation.

Rehashed debates soon caused disruption. Greek Cypriot leader, Makarios, set forward a thirteen-point proposition intended to dispense with obstructions to the working of the government. Turkey at first rejected it. A couple of days later, fighting began between communities in Nicosia. This spread over the island. In the meantime, the power-sharing government crumbled. The Greek Cypriots contend that the Turkish Cypriots pulled out of the government. The Turkish Cypriots

maintain that they were forced out. On 27 December 1963, a peacekeeping power, the Joint Truce Force, was assembled by Britain, Greece and Turkey.

At the same time, the Security Council also recommended that the Secretary-General designate a mediator to take charge of formal peace-making efforts. In July, Dean Acheson, presented a plan to unite Cyprus with Greece. In return for acceptance, Turkey would receive a sovereign military base on the island. The Turkish Cypriots would also receive minority rights. Makarios rejected the proposal, arguing that giving Turkey territory would be a limitation on enosis and give Ankara too strong a say in affairs.

On 21 April 1967, a coup in Greece forced control to the military. Only months later, in November 1967, Cyprus saw its most extreme episode of inter-communal violence since 1964. Benefiting from the shortcoming of the Greek Cypriots, the Turkish Cypriots announced their own temporary government on 28 December 1967. Makarios quickly announced the new organisation unlawful. In May 1968, inter-communal talks began under the sponsorship of the Good Offices of the UN Secretary-General. Once more, little advancement was made. After three rounds of talks, in September 1970, the Secretary-General reprimanded the sides for the absence of development. A final round talks again failed to make progress before they ended in 1974.

Turkey invaded on 20th July 1974. Following resistance and a failed ceasefire, the second invasion commenced in August. This time, resistance was not as strong, and Turkish forces moved across the width of the island, occupying 40%. Refugees in both halves were estimated at 150,000. Although discussions and talks lobbied for the withdrawal of troops, the separation between the two communities was cemented by the UN buffer zone established to prevent military conflict.

The United Nations has had a presence in Cyprus since the formation of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) in 1964. This was due to the significant amount of violence, specifically the inter-communal violence between Turkish and Greek Cypriots. Preventing fighting was its primary aim, with the goal of restoring normal, peaceful conditions quickly, but this was not to happen. The Greek Cypriot coup d'état and ensuing Turkish invasion saw the remit of the peacekeeping force expand to preventing war. Its deployment was moved to maintain the UN Buffer Zone, and it has remained there ever since. Although its presence has appeared to be largely affective in maintaining order, it's position may be at risk; a UN report showed that almost \$3 billion had been spent maintaining the UNFICYP. Its removal or reduction has been hinted by Ban Ki-moon, former Secretary-General of the UN, who previously claimed that the presence of the UN cannot be taken for granted.

The UN buffer zone is a rarity. Stretching the width of the island, the Green Line has served to ensure that any dispute can take place in a safe, agreeable locations, and that military activities can be kept to a minimum. Acts considered aggressive are discussed and controlled by UN peacekeepers. The stationing of troops in a foreign country in already poses a challenge for international diplomacy, but the situation in Cyprus is much harder to resolve.

In response to the Cypriot military coup, Turkey staged the first leg of its invasion in 1974 under the defence of the Treaty of Guarantee which gives the right of intervention to Greece, Turkey and Britain. Although a ceasefire was ordered, Turkey violated this. This isn't to suggest that the Turkish forces are the only ones to have broken conventions; it is documented that the Turkish Cypriot enclave, Limassol, was the site of arson, rape and indiscriminate shooting after it surrendered to the Cypriot National Guard. Both sides took prisoners of war and established POW camps. The UN Security Council has challenged the invasion and occupation based on the premise that the Treaty of Guarantee stipulates that any intervention should be in order to re-establish the previous

order. Occupying half the country is not justified, and the establishment of a de facto partition is not necessarily in the best interests of Turkish Cypriots. This was condemned in Resolution 367.

Turkey was found guilty by the ECHR in 1974, 1976 and 1983 of human rights abuses. The initial issue was defined as: displacing people, ill treatment, and depriving people of liberty, life and possessions. This was later expanded to include repeated violations of the ECHR. This included the general removal of rights and failure to secure freedoms, the trying of civilians in military court, and counts of rape and torture by Turkish soldiers. Some argue there is a legal case to suggest the occupation of the north is a case of ethnic cleansing. Turkish Cypriots are also victims of violence. The UN described the Martha, Santalaris and Aloda massacre committed by EOKA B as a crime against humanity. It has been reported that Turkish villages have suffered raids, and the Cypriot National Guard committed a number of atrocities in Limassol.

The most successful attempt to resolve this conflict was the Annan Plan. The proposal was to establish a united Cypriot Republic, covering the whole of the island, bar British controlled regions. Although the two regions were to maintain a level of independence, they would be joined with a federal government. All three branches of the federal government were to be split between the two communities and to alternate in their functions. It also proposed a new constitution, as well as constituent constitutions for the two regions, swathes of new constitutional and federal laws as well as national features such as a flag and national anthem. Most importantly, it allowed the right to move between the two communities. Following years of revision, the agreement was set to a referendum across Cyprus. The results confirmed that the plan would not be implemented. Almost all involved were disappointed. The Security Council, EU, UK, US and countries globally released statements expressing regret and disappointment that the deal had not found enough popular support. The single most important objection was that it didn't consider the view of the Cypriots. It was a top-down approach that didn't adequately understand the wishes of the people.

Points to consider:

1. How can the UN protect the lives and rights of those on both halves of the island?
2. Where do the 1960 treaties and Constitution stand today following the wake of the Annan Plan?
3. What should happen to the UN buffer zone and British controlled regions, as well as the regions of the island suffering from segregation? Should the island unify?
4. Who should be held responsible for those who have died or been injured throughout the dispute?
5. How can Cyprus take steps to de-militarise?
6. Should the property and possessions lost from the 1974 invasions be returned or compensated?

Useful links:

<https://historyguild.org/how-cyprus-became-divided/>

<https://unficyp.unmissions.org/about-buffer-zone>

https://commission.europa.eu/about-european-commission/departments-and-executive-agencies/structural-reform-support/green-line-regulation_en