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## **Cyprus Issue: Background of the Conflict**

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### **1) Introduction**

It is widely recognized that international conflicts are certainly to remain a fundamental challenge for mankind. The Cyprus Issue has been on the agenda of the UN Security Council for over 40 years and since 1968 the two main actors of the conflict, which are Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, have been negotiating, on and off, in order to reach a mutually beneficial settlement. In general, conflict can be understood as an incompatible interaction between at least two actors, whereby one of the actors experiences damage, and the other actor causes this damage intentionally, or ignores it<sup>1</sup>. Without any doubt, only deep and comprehensive analysis of a conflict could support orientation for future action to resolve it. Particularly, in order to be able to transform Cyprus Issue one has to have a deep understanding of a historical background of the conflict, and be capable to understand and analyze the standpoints of above mentioned main actors which are directly involved into the issue.

This conflict report "Cyprus Issue: Background of the Conflict" has become of a vital importance for the moment and is devoted to a study of historical background of Cyprus Issue. It has to contribute to a better understanding of the official positions of its actors and thus has to pave the way for a resolution of a dispute between the ethnic Greek and Turkish population of Cyprus.

### **2) Position of the Republic of Cyprus**

Let me to start with the highlighting of a standpoint on the historical background of the Cyprus Issue of the Republic of Cyprus, which is recognized

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<sup>1</sup> Mason, Simon, Richard, Sandra. Conflict Analysis Tools, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Conflict Prevention and Transformation Division, SDC, COPRET, 2005.

as the sole legitimate state on the island of Cyprus by the whole international community, except Turkey.

Owing to its strategic position, Cyprus was colonized throughout its history by some of the most influential colonial powers in the Eastern Mediterranean. In 1878 Britain was the last power to occupy Cyprus, taking over the island from the Ottoman Empire. The Cypriots, Greeks and Turks alike, had for centuries co-existed peacefully in mixed villages, towns and places of work. Though the Greek Cypriots had always voiced their demand for national self-determination, it was a demand which, in the pre-World War II international environment, the colonial power did not satisfy. Prior to World War II, the policy of the leadership of the Turkish Cypriots could be summed up as opposition to the national aspirations of the Greeks. The first party of the Turkish Cypriot community, "KATAK" (Party for the Protection of the Turkish Minority), formed in 1943, supported the continuation of British colonial rule. The following year witnessed the foundation of the Turkish National Party, which drew its ideological inspiration from the Turkish Republic. What came to be known as the Cyprus Issue (Problem) appeared in the early post World War II years, which inaugurated the universal demand for self-determination and the ensuing crisis of the colonial system. In 1955, when all their demands for self-determination were ignored, the Greek Cypriots embarked upon a militant struggle to free the country from colonial rule. The British Government, unable to face the national liberation movement in Cyprus, began to exploit the Turkish factor and encouraged the intervention of Ankara. Turkey's declared policy toward Cyprus, which had until the early 1950<sup>th</sup> been one of support toward the colonial status quo, began to shift toward a policy of partition of the island along ethnic lines. The Turkish Cypriot nationalist leadership became in effect the instrument for the implementation of Turkey's policies in Cyprus. The Turkish National Party's policy shift was reflected in the adoption of the new name: "Cyprus is Turkish". What is more, officers from Turkey helped establish Turkish Cypriot clandestine organizations, "Volkan" and subsequently "TMT". Their members were recruited primarily from the ranks of the paramilitary security force formed by the colonial administration and made up exclusively by Turkish Cypriots, for the purpose of

fighting the national liberation movement in Cyprus. Aiming toward total influence amongst the Turkish Cypriots, the "TMT" waged a campaign of murderous terror against their co-nationals in the Trade Unions, the major institutions in which members of the two communities co-operated for common social and political causes. The "TMT" leadership therefore sought conflict with the Greeks as the strategy for partition. In 1958, following the eruption of inter-communal clashes and the proposal of a partitionist plan by the British government, the national liberation movement in Cyprus, led by Archbishop Makarios, accepted a solution of limited independence. The Turkish Cypriot leadership made full use of their constitutional privileges to block decisions of the government and render the administration of the young republic difficult and inefficient. In 1963, after the Turkish members of the House of Representatives had rejected the budget, President Makarios decided to submit to the Turkish Cypriot Vice-President for consideration, proposals for constitutional amendment. Despite the fact that his proposals aimed toward removing certain causes of friction between the two communities and of the obstacles to the smooth functioning and development of the state, the official Ankara opposed the amendments outright, even before their consideration by the Turkish Cypriots. The Turkish Cypriot leadership followed suit. In December 1963 armed clashes broke out in Cyprus. Immediately the Turkish Cypriot leadership openly called for partition, Turkish policemen and civil servants withdrew from their posts en masse and Ankara threatened to invade. Facing a very grave threat to the Republic's existence, the government tried to contain the revolt but could do little to prevent armed civilians of both sides from taking part in the clashes. Turkey found the pretext to impose its partitionist plans against Cyprus following the coup of July 15, 1974, perpetrated against the elected government of President Makarios by the Athens military junta. On July 20, 1974, claiming to act under Article IV of the Treaty of Guarantee<sup>2</sup>, the Turkish armed forces staged a full scale invasion against Cyprus. Though the invasion was in violation of all rules of international legality, including the UN Charter,

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<sup>2</sup> See Treaty of Guarantee. United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 382 (1960), No. 5475.

Turkey proceeded to occupy the northern part of the island and empty it from its Greek inhabitants. By the end of the following year, the majority of the Turkish Cypriots living in the areas left under the control of the Republic had also made their way to the part of Cyprus occupied by the Turkish army. Thereby, the policy adopted by Ankara 20 years earlier, of partition and forcible population expulsion, had been enforced<sup>3</sup>.

### **3) Turkey's Standpoint**

It is naturally, that the position of the official Ankara is different. It is clearly displayed on the official web-page of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey. In order to explain it in the best way I will provide it without any changes. In 1960, a partnership state between Turkish and Greek Cypriots was set up in accordance with the international agreements signed by the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot sides, as well as the Turkish, Greek and British governments. However, in 1963, only three years later, the Turkish Cypriots were ousted by force from all organs of the new Republic by their Greek Cypriot partners in clear breach of the founding agreements and the Constitution. The claim put forth thereafter by the Greek Cypriots to represent the "Republic of Cyprus" has been illegal, and has not been recognized by Turkey. The 1974 attempt by Greece to annex the island, through a coup attempt, was resisted by Turkey in accordance with the 1960 Treaty of Guarantee. Consequently, Turkish Cypriots set up their own Republic, while continuing the search for reconciliation<sup>4</sup>.

The so called "Ministry of Foreign Affairs" of a self-proclaimed in 1983 "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus", which is officially recognized only by the Republic of Turkey, gives us more detailed understanding of the background of the Cyprus Issue from this actor of the conflict. Particularly, it states that Cyprus was conquered and ruled by many civilizations throughout its history, namely the Assyrians, Egyptians, Persians, Romans, Arabs, Knights Templar, Lusignans, Venetians, Ottomans and the British. During the rule of the Ottoman Empire

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<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cyprus, [http://www.mfa.gov.cy/mfa/mfa2006.nsf/cyprus01\\_en/cyprus01\\_en?OpenDocument](http://www.mfa.gov.cy/mfa/mfa2006.nsf/cyprus01_en/cyprus01_en?OpenDocument)

<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/cyprus-issue- summary .en.mfa>.

between 1571 and 1878, the Greek Orthodox faith was restored and the Archbishop was acknowledged as the leader of the Greek Orthodox community, which attained the right to administer its own affairs under the millet system of the Ottomans. The Greek War of Independence in 1821 gave rise to Greek nationalism in Cyprus, resulting in the revival of Hellenistic “megali idea” that also paved the way for the Greek Cypriot demand for “enosis” – union with Greece. In 1878, the Britain assumed the administration of the Island, although it remained de jure part of the Ottoman Empire until World War I. In 1914, however, Cyprus was annexed by Great Britain and was formally declared a Crown Colony later in 1925. Pursuant to their demand for enosis, the Greek Cypriots started rioting against the British presence in Cyprus, which culminated in the burning of the British Governor’s House in 1931. On 1 April 1955, the Greek Cypriot terrorist organization, “EOKA”, was founded with the aim of advancing enosis through armed struggle and annexing Cyprus to Greece. The Turkish Cypriots, as co-inhabitants of Cyprus, refused the annexation of the island to Greece and rightfully sought equal say over the future of Cyprus. Unfortunately, the Greek Cypriot armed attacks against the British were also directed toward Turkish Cypriots, which, as a result, led to the deterioration of relations between the two communities. By 1959, the situation on the island became intolerable to both Turkish Cypriots and the British administration. In 1959, a compromise was reached by Turkey, Greece and Britain through the London and Zurich agreements, and the Republic of Cyprus was established in 1960 as a bi-communal state based on partnership between Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots. Through this compromise, Cyprus gained its independence, while Britain retained two military bases on the Island. The 1960 Republic of Cyprus recognized the political equality of Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots as the co-founding partners of the new republic. The Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus was designed, in effect, as a functional federation. At the international level, the Republic of Cyprus became a member of the United Nations (UN) and maintained one legal personality. The 1960 partnership, however, lasted only

three years. With a view to initiating the Akritas Plan<sup>5</sup>, which put forward a deliberate campaign for changing the state of affairs created by the Constitution and ultimately realizing the ideal for enosis, the Greek Cypriots proposed amendments to the Constitution, known as the "Thirteen Points" that entailed usurping the rights of Turkish Cypriots and degrading their equal co-founder status to that of a minority on the island. The disagreements between the two communities pertaining to the Constitution and other inter-communal matters consequently led to the tragic events of 1963 during which many Turkish Cypriot civilians lost their lives. At this point, the Greek Cypriots forcibly seized the partnership Republic of Cyprus, ejected all Turkish Cypriots from state organs and unilaterally amended the fundamental articles of the Constitution. In the wake of inter-communal havoc, Turkish Cypriots were forced to live in small and confined enclaves corresponding to only 3% of the territory, which consequently led to the physical separation of the populations in the capital city of Nicosia by the demarcation of the Green Line. After their expulsion from the partnership republic of 1960, the Turkish Cypriots established administrative mechanisms to regulate day-to-day affairs. Initially, they formed a General Committee that functioned until 27 December 1967. Subsequently, a new administration was established, the Provisional Cyprus Turkish Administration, which was renamed as the Cyprus Turkish Administration on 21 December 1971. Regardless of these developments, the period between 1963 and 1974 was marked by deprivation, isolation, inaccessibility, fear and insecurity for Turkish Cypriots. On 15 July 1974, the Greek military junta, in collaboration with "EOKA", staged a coup d'état to achieve enosis. Even Archbishop Makarios, in his address to the UN Security Council on 19 July 1974, defined the Greek coup as "an invasion which violated the independence and sovereignty of the Republic." With the imminent danger of further bloodshed on the island, Turkey militarily intervened on 20 July 1974 under Article IV of the Treaty of Guarantee of 1960<sup>6</sup>, removing the threat of further violence and even greater loss of life on the island. At the inter-

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<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/akritas-plan.en.mfa>.

<sup>6</sup> See Treaty of Guarantee. United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 382 (1960), No. 5475.

communal talks held on 2 August 1975 in Vienna, the Voluntary Exchange of Populations was agreed, and Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots were respectively transferred to the north and the south of the island<sup>7</sup>.

#### 4) **UN's Point of View**

In 1964, as a result of the acceleration of the inter-communal conflict in Cyprus, the situation was debated at the UN Security Council, leading to the adoption of resolution no.: 186 dated 4 March 1964<sup>8</sup>, which called for the creation of an UN Peace Keeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP). Much more lately the UN Secretary General's Good Offices and the Office of his Special Adviser were set up as well with the purpose to support the conduct of negotiations between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders. In general, the official position of the above mentioned UN institutions on the background of the Cyprus Issue is as follows.

According to the UNFICYP official data<sup>9</sup>, on 15 July 1974, the National Guard, under the direction of Greek officers, staged a coup d'état against the Cyprus government headed by President Makarios. In view of the seriousness of the matter in relation to international peace and security and in view of the UN involvement in Cyprus, the UN Secretary-General requested the president of the UN Security Council on 16 July, 1974 to convene a meeting of the Council. On 20 July, 1974 the Turkish government, invoking the Treaty of Guarantee of 1960<sup>10</sup>, launched an extensive military operation on the north coast of Cyprus, which resulted eventually in the occupation of the main Turkish Cypriot enclave north, of Nicosia and areas to the north, east and west of the enclave, including Kyrenia. The UN Security Council met on the same day and adopted resolution no.: 353 (1974)<sup>11</sup>, by which it called upon all parties to cease firing and demanded an immediate end to foreign military intervention, requested the

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<sup>7</sup> "Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus", <http://mfa.gov.ct.tr/cyprus-negotiation-process/historical-background/>

<sup>8</sup> See 1964-03-04-SC-Resolution-186, <http://162.243.184.203/1964/03/04/security-council-resolution-on-cyprus-186-wednesday-march-4-1964/>

<sup>9</sup> UN Peace Keeping Force in Cyprus, <https://unficy.unmissions.org/events-summer-1974>.

<sup>10</sup> See Treaty of Guarantee. United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 382 (1960), No. 5475.

<sup>11</sup> See 1974-07-20-SC-Resolution-353, <http://162.243.184.203/1974/07/20/security-council-resolution-on-cyprus-353-saturday-july-20-1974/>

withdrawal of foreign military personnel present otherwise than under the authority of international agreements, and called on Greece, Turkey and the United Kingdom to enter into negotiations without delay for the restoration of peace in the area and constitutional government in Cyprus. The UN Security Council also called on all parties to cooperate fully with UNFICYP to enable it to carry out its mandate – thus indicating that UNFICYP was expected to continue to function despite the radically changed circumstances. The ceasefire called for by the council was announced for 16:00 hrs, local time, on 22 July, 1974. But fighting resumed on 23 July, 1974 especially in the vicinity of Nicosia International Airport, which, with the agreement of the local military commanders of both sides, was declared a UN protected area and was occupied by UNFICYP troops. The UN Secretary-General reported to the Council on the breakdown of the ceasefire, and sent messages to the prime ministers of Greece and Turkey and to the acting president of Cyprus, expressing his great anxiety and requesting measures to ensure observance of the ceasefire. The Council on 23 July, 1974 adopted resolution no.: 354 (1974)<sup>12</sup>, reaffirming the provisions of resolution no.: 353 (1974)<sup>13</sup> and demanding that the parties comply immediately with paragraph 2 of that resolution, which called on them to stop firing and refrain from action, which might aggravate the situation.

## **5) Conclusion**

The Conflict Report was set out to explore the historical background of Cyprus Issue as well as to understand more clearly the standpoints of the main actors of the conflict. It showed, particularly, that despite of the conflicting and polarized positions of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot on the future political developments in Cyprus of those days, both parties agreed on the fact that interethnic relations of the two communities were characterized by their peaceful coexistence up until 1925 when Britain assumed the administration of

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<sup>12</sup>See 1974-07-23-SC-Resolution-354, <http://162.243.184.203/1974/07/23/security-council-resolution-on-cyprus-354-tuesday-july-23-1974/>

<sup>13</sup> See 1974-07-20-SC-Resolution-353, <http://162.243.184.203/1974/07/20/security-council-resolution-on-cyprus-353-saturday-july-20-1974/>

Cyprus and formally declared it a Crown Colony. It means that there were other global actors of the conflict including Great Britain and its strong ally – the USA as well as the Soviet Union, which contributed much to the conflict development in order to protect their own global interests in the Mediterranean region<sup>14</sup>. This once again demonstrates the need for a clear definition and more careful study of all the most and least actors to the conflict, all links among them as well as their standpoints and real interests in order to transform any conflict and reach further a mutually acceptable solution for the actors.

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<sup>14</sup> See O'Malley Brendan, Craig Ian. *The Cyprus Conspiracy. America, Espionage and the Turkish Invasion*. I.B.Tauris, London - New-York, 2009.