

Iowa High School Model United Nations  
Political and Security Committee  
The Sovereignty of Cyprus  
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## **Background**

“Divided since 1974, Cyprus stands out as one intransigent conflict that has implications for regional and global security” (Müftüler-Bac, 1999). The Cyprus conflict has maintained a high priority on the foreign policy agendas of Turkey, Greece, the United States of America, United Kingdom and Russia for the past four decades. It is an experimental case for the United Nations’ effectiveness in dealing with interethnic struggles and intransigent conflicts.

The Zürich and London Agreements proclaimed Cyprus an independent state from the United Kingdom on August 16, 1960. The uniqueness of Cyprus’ constitution reflected the recognition of two ethnic groups: the Turkish Cypriots (35% of the population) and the Greek Cypriots (65% of the population). The constitution granted the Turkish Cypriots political rights far greater than an ethnic minority. Additionally, the constitution placed limits on the absolute independence of the new republic by granting rights and responsibilities to external guarantor states such as Greece, Turkey, and the United Kingdom (Peace and Security, 2007). The Turkish Cypriot ethnic community typically remained in the northern area of the island, though both ethnic groups were geographically intermingled.

Following the recognition as an independent state, many Greek Cypriots wished to revive unification ties to Greece. Growing dissatisfaction among right-wing Greek nationalists precipitated an attempted coup d’etat against President Makarios in July 1974. In response, Turkey invaded 38% of the island. In conjunction with the invasion, Turkey partitioned the island and displaced nearly 200,000 Greek Cypriots living in the northern region. In August 1974, Turkey proposed a confederate system, but talks collapsed after Turkish planes attacked Nicosia (C.I.A., 2008). Over the next decade, Turkish Cypriots gained more political and military strength eventually to form a separate state, the “Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC),” in November 1983 (C.I.A., 2008). The United Nations Security Council immediately declared it an illegal action and called for withdrawal of Turkish troops. The United Nations (UN) does not recognize the TRNC presently. Furthermore, Turkey does not recognize the existence of the Republic of Cyprus, thus in violation of multiple UN Resolutions.

Cyprus entered the European Union (EU) in 2004 as a divided country. Prior to entry, UN-brokered discussions between leaders of the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities attempted to arrange an agreement in order to unite the island. These talks ended when the Greek Cypriot rejected the 2004 UN settlement plan (CIA 2008). European Union countries recognize the Republic of Cyprus and officially treat the north as a militarily occupied region.

## **What has been done/Past UN Actions**

As cited in Article 2, paragraph 7 of the UN Charter, “Nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the jurisdiction of any state or shall require the Members to submit to matters to settlement under the present Charter” (1945). The predominant view of governments was that sovereignty was absolute. However, the Security Council has justified intervening within a state only when there is a threat to international peace and security, even when there has been a gross infringement on

human rights (Taylor, 1999). This relates to the question of sovereignty of Cyprus due to the hesitancy of the UN becoming involved with the interethnic and intransigent conflicts.

Following failed peace attempts, United Kingdom and Cyprus representatives requested urgent action by the Security Council. In March 1964, the Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 186 and recommended the establishment of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) (Peace and Security, 2007). The mandate of UNFICYP was originally defined "...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 to return to normal conditions" (Peace and Security, 2007).

The coup d'état of 1974 and formation of TRNC prompted UNFICYP to encourage the Security Council to adopt Resolution 541 in November 1983. This resolution declared the TRNC illegal and requested the removal of Turkish troops.

The Security Council adopted Resolution 1475 in 2003 in anticipation of Cyprus' entry to the EU. This Resolution gave full support to Secretary-General Annan's plan (S/2003/398) of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot negotiations.

The most recent UN action follows a review of the original UNFICYP mandate, force levels, and concept of operations of UNFICYP. Secretary-General Annan, in his report (S/2004/786) dated September 2004, recommended the Security Council reduce the military facet of the mission to 860 troops, down from the current 1,224 troops.

### **Possible Solutions**

Although the situation in Cyprus is presently calm, the distrust between the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot have persisted in the absence of a viable political process, as has the military presence and concomitant perception of threat (Peace and Security, 2007).

Müftüler-Bac (1999) proposes the future of Cyprus will be determined by the following factors: (1) Turkish concerns and motivations over its security of the Turkish Cypriotic community must be met, (2) Greek concerns over the perceived Turkish threat to their own security and commitment to a united Cyprus must be addressed, (3) Whether America will commit to stability and security in NATO's southeastern flank, (4) The role of Russia's attempts for an increased role in the Mediterranean and the Middle East, and (5) The emerging domestic policies in Greece, Turkey and Cyprus.

Mindfulness of the strong ties to Greece and Turkey is needed to understand the complex conflict. It is this committee's primary charge to address the broken communication between the Cypriotic communities. It is also necessary to determine how best to address the security concerns of both the Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots. Finally, UNFICYP should enter this committee's discussion on the sovereignty rights of Cyprus.

### **Questions to consider**

1. Do the two ethnic groups have sovereignty to declare independence from each other?
2. How do the domestic policies of Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus influence the conflict?
3. How should the security concerns of the Cypriotic ethnic communities be addressed?
4. Is UNFICYP a continued military necessity?
5. What are the long-term implications of UNFICYP?

## **Consulted/Recommended Sources**

Central Intelligence Agency. (2008). *World factbook: Cyprus*. Retrieved January 31, 2008, from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cy.html>.

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