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CONTINUING THE STATUS QUO IN RESOLVING THE CYPRUS CONFLICT – THE SOLUTION WITH NO END IN SIGHT

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ABSTRACT

The article deals with the persistence of the status quo concerning the conflict's solution on the island of Cyprus. It draws attention to the phenomena that the long-term unsuccessful process of negotiations, talks, and plans' creation brings. After analysing many resources and various strategies, the author compares different views and suggests the reasons for the persistence of unresolved conflict. The Cyprus conflict can be resolved in the form of several scenarios. The currently induced state's persistence can be considered a plan that is only a forced state and only delays the required solution. However, this situation is likely to persist for a long time.

KEYWORDS: Cyprus, Cyprus conflict, conflict resolution, stalemate situation, status quo

1. Introduction

The violent division of the island of Cyprus by the operation of Turkish armed forces in July and August 1974 brought with it a subsequent hectic migration of its population. These events have caused a number of hardships and caused many material and psychological damage. In a relatively short time after the aforementioned events, negotiations on resolving the conflict began, but despite a number of negotiations and efforts to resolve the differences, no settlement has yet been resolved.

The settlement of the Cyprus conflict has a long-term character (more than 48 years) and is still relevant today. The unresolved disputes on the island of Cyprus affect not only the situation on the island itself, but also the situation in the whole of the Eastern Mediterranean. This affects not only the local but also the regional and international political scene. Not only local actors but also regional, international and global actors are involved in the processes of its solution, which further complicates the situation. Probably the influence of external actors means that the settlement of the Cyprus conflict has not yet been resolved. Although there are often positive moments in the conflict resolution process, the negotiations have still not reached a successful conclusion.

The settlement of the Cyprus conflict is possible in the form of several possible scenarios. An extreme solution, on the one hand, could be the reunion of the island in the form of the creation of a unitary state, and an extreme solution, on the other hand, could be the definitive division of the island in the form of the creation of two separate unitary states. Given the events to date and the conflict potential between community relations on the island, the creation of a unitary state can be considered a utopian idea.

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On the contrary, the creation of two separate unitary states has considerable potential for implementation, but such a negative solution is not a solution to the conflict between these communities, but its transfer to another dimension. A compromise solution could be the creation of a united states in the form of a federation, which has usually been the case (albeit unsuccessfully) of previous attempts. It is the federal structure of the state that seems to be the most functional choice for the coexistence of ethnically, linguistically and/or culturally diverse communities. However, stability can only be achieved by establishing and adhering to an agreement between them.

The persistence of the current status quo can be considered as a scenario that only delays the solution. In fact, such a solution is not a solution and is only a forced state.

This paper aims to draw attention to the phenomena that the long-term unsuccessful process of negotiations, talks and plans brings. At the same time, it was necessary to carry out long-term monitoring of the social and political environment on the island of Cyprus, and at the same time it was necessary to pay attention to other stakeholders involved in the events on the island or influencing events on the island. It was necessary to collect and study various documents and materials originating either from Greek and Greek-Cypriot or Turkish and Turkish-Cypriot sources. In addition, due attention had to be paid to resources coming from the environment of external players influencing the settlement of the Cyprus conflict as well as neutral players.

The analysis of individual processes and the comparison of different views on them has led to deductions that indicate the reasons for the persistence of the unresolved conflict. An analysis of the development of the situation on the island after the armed conflict in 1974 clearly suggests that the root of the problem must be seen comprehensively. Political and security considerations need to be considered, but at the same time, economic and many other related issues must be taken into account. Any solution will have to consider all factors such as historical heritage, ethnicity, nationalism with its paradoxes, fear, misunderstanding, concessions and willingness or unwillingness. Omitting any of them would jeopardize the solution and lead to further problems.

2. Basic Characteristics of the Status Quo in Cyprus

A state called Republic of Cyprus (RoC) was established on the island of Cyprus in 1960, which was the name of the country that represented the territory of the whole island. The escalating conflict between the two Cypriot communities (Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots) has been tried since 1964 by the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP). Despite these efforts, the conflict has not been resolved. The situation culminated in a Turkish military operation on the island in 1974.

Fighting between the warring parties was halted that year by a ceasefire, but peace has not been made between them to date. UN troops UNFICYP created among the positions of opposing forces on the Turkish and Greek side so-called Ceasefire lines which was the basis for the creation of the so-called UN Buffer Zone. This is also the so-called Green Line. A military status quo has been created, and this applies not only in the military but also in the civilian field.

Since 1974, the situation in Cyprus has generally stabilized, with the exception of sporadic tensions, and the opposing parties have generally respected this situation. The division of the island, combined with forced or voluntary migration, caused the population of the Greek Cypriot community to be concentrated in the southern part and the population of the Turkish Cypriot community in the northern part of the island.

The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) was proclaimed in the northern part of the island in 1983. On November 18, 1983, the UN Security

Council issued Resolution no. 541, which declared that the creation of the TRNC was in breach of the 1960 Treaties and was therefore an illegal act. No country other than Turkey has officially recognized TRNC to date. This is one of the reasons why we can often come across the designation of this territory in the variants: Northern Cyprus or North Cyprus or Turkish Cypriot-administered area or Area under Turkish occupation.

Greek Cypriots perceive the RoC as the only legitimate state with the right to administer the entire island, and see the TRNC as an illegal entity that was artificially created by occupying the northern part of the island using military force. Turkish Cypriots, on the other hand, view the TRNC as a state that was created legally after the necessary peacekeeping mission of the Turkish military and with legitimate authority to administer the north of the island.

The ongoing status quo is a temporary situation and is a really inappropriate scenario. It is not acceptable especially for the northern part of the island. It means isolating Turkish Cypriots, but the European Union's (EU) credibility also suffers. Among other things, the divided Cyprus is causing and will cause complications and tensions in Turkey's EU accession process. Greek Cypriots rely heavily on concessions from the TRNC, as the Turkish and Turkish Cypriot political groups themselves are also interested in joining the EU. The Greek-Cypriot political team has more room for manoeuvre.

The economic situation of both parts of the island is different. It is the building of economic interconnection of both parts of the island that would create the conditions to support stability and cooperation. Compensating for the differences created during the years of separation would be one of the essential pillars for ensuring the economic growth of the whole island. The processes related to the accession of the RoC to the EU and the euro area have created the preconditions for the development of its economy. The RoC created an evolving modern service economy, which foreshadowed that its inhabitants did not perceive the existence of the status quo so dramatically. Nevertheless, the unresolved Cyprus conflict limits the economic development of this part of the island as well.

The situation is opposite in the north of the island. The TRNC has suffered and suffers from international isolation, and its population is more sceptical of the status quo. Until April 23, 2003, the northern part of the island had limited connections with RoC and the rest of the world. The TRNC's economy has been subdued. The TRNC has been and still is highly economically dependent on Turkey. Perhaps the only developing sector was education (Theophanous, Tirkides & Pelagidis, 2008a).

The Greek Cypriots, who imposed an embargo on the TRNC after its independence, insist that the international isolation and the situation in the north of the island is the result of Turkish occupation. They consider TRNC isolation to be a legitimate way of protecting themselves. Otherwise, it would be a way to legitimize the existence of the TRNC (Theophanous, 2008). Part of the international isolation of the TRNC is the ban on commercial traffic through the seaports of Famagusta, Karavostasi and Kyrenia in the northern part of the island. The situation is similar with Erçan and Geçitkale airports, which Greek Cypriots consider illegal.

In addition, Turkey has closed its ports to Cypriot-flagged ships since 1987 and does not operate aircraft between the two countries. Turkey defends its decision by excluding the services sector from the customs union, which hinders free trade. With regard to the closure of its ports and airports, Turkey argues that, according to the customs union, it has no such obligation to ships and aircraft of any state. It refers to the interpretation of the decision of the Association Council, which created a customs union between Turkey and the EU. If the Council does not adjust its interpretation and no agreement is reached, the problem could

be resolved at the European Court of Justice or by arbitration (Akgün, 2012).

Turkey has a diplomatic problem recognizing the Cypriot government as a representative of the whole island. By a statement dated July 29, 2015, it took a clear position towards the RoC. It has recognized the RoC, but only recognizes its sovereignty over the territory under the territorial jurisdiction of the Greek Cypriots – that is, in the southern part of the island. It does not recognize the demands made by the Cypriot (Greek-Cypriot) government for the administration of the whole territory of the island – in other words, its claims for the administration of the Turkish Cypriots and the territory of the TRNC. Turkey has stated that it will do so when the partnership is renewed on the island (Republic of Turkey – Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2005). Warnings are emerging about the unnecessarily and unjustifiably continuing isolation of Turkish Cypriots following the accession of the RoC to the EU. The fact is that this is a political decision that has no basis in international law. In this case, it is essentially an economic sanction against a non-recognized organization and such a case is not known in history (Brus et al., 2008).

A particularly important milestone in understanding the status quo was the partial lifting of the Green Line restriction unilaterally announced by the Turkish Cypriot leadership on April 23, 2003. As a result, thousands of Greek and Turkish Cypriots were able to cross (under certain conditions) to the opposite side of the border (Caner, 2015). The partial opening of the border meant a certain economic development for the TRNC. Many Greek Cypriots and tourists visited the country, bringing more money into the budget.

In the processes of resolving the Cyprus conflict, the so-called Annan plan played an extremely important role. The above-mentioned plan was perhaps the most detailed and comprehensive material closest to implementation. This is evidenced, for example, by the fact that a referendum was held on both sides of the island on April 24, 2004. The unification of the island in the form of a two-zone federal state was assumed. In a referendum, 65% of Turkish Cypriots supported the plan, but 76% of Greek Cypriots rejected it (Sozen & Özersay, 2007). Despite Greek Cypriots rejecting Annan plan, the RoC was accepted into the EU. And although Turkish Cypriots supported the Annan plan, the TRNC did not enter the EU. This was a significant encouragement for the Greek Cypriots, but it was a blow to the Turkish Cypriots.

In a broader political sense, in continuing after a partially free movement between the two parts of the island (April 23, 2003) the referendum on the Annan Plan (April 24, 2004) and the accession of the RoC to the EU (May 1, 2004) have brought an unprecedented change in status quo. However, the RoC government has not fundamentally changed its position on the existence of the TRNC and related matters.

The rejection of the Annan Plan in 2004 marked a significant slowdown in efforts to resolve the Cyprus conflict, both on the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot sides and on the UN side too. It was a slowdown, but it was not an absolute cessation of activities in this direction.

From the current point of view, the most significant activity in this area can be considered the last formal meeting among the stakeholders in June 2017 at the Swiss Congress Centre Crans-Montana. Unfortunately, the political, legal and security issues of conflict resolution are “minefields” in the search for solutions, even though the leaders of both sides and the guaranteeing powers *“have solved the most serious problems of unprecedented accountability”* (Christou, 2020).

Nevertheless, the mentioned talks were not successful. Tensions escalated during the negotiations, especially when discussing security issues. In addition, many other unresolved issues remained open, such as

attitudes towards the use of hydrocarbon deposits in the eastern Mediterranean. Paradoxically, seemingly resolved issues, such as the unification of the island on the basis of a two-zone, two-community federation with political equality.

In the end, all the participants considered that the negotiations had reached a point when continuation would not bring any further results. The nervousness and signs of fatigue of the participants would bring only counterproductive results. Unfortunately, for some, maintaining the status quo seems more viable and convenient than *"jumping into the unknown"* (Christou, 2020).

Although the formal negotiations in Crans-Montana were not successful, this did not mean negating the conditions for a settlement of the Cyprus conflict. This is evidenced, for example, by the informal meeting of the UN Secretary-General with the leaders of the two Cypriot communities, which took place in November 2019 in Germany.

The informal meeting resulted in a statement by both leaders about their motivation and sense of urgency in resolving the Cyprus conflict and reaffirming the determination of both parties to work together to reach a comprehensive and lasting agreement in this regard. It is clear that both consider the current status quo unsustainable for the future. At the same time, the Secretary-General undertook to expand his efforts to meet the terms of reference at the earliest opportunity (UN, 2019). Although a subsequent meeting took place in Geneva in April 2021, no agreement was reached (Newbehay, Kambas & Gumrukcu, 2021). At the 76th session of the UN General Assembly in New York in September 2021, the Cypriot President (Anastasiades) and the Turkish President (Erdoğan) also negatively commented on the other side of the conflict in connection with the negotiations (UN Audiovisual Library, 2021).

3. Management of the Island in the Continuing Status Quo

The stalemate does not support the creation of conditions for the unification of Cyprus, in which local self-government would develop within one country (whether as a unitary state or a federation) in a unified regime. Naturally, the local government in the relevant part of the island is currently governed by the relevant legal provisions. As a result, local government is evolving within a relevant political reality. In the RoC, the influence of the EU institutions enters the processes, but this does not happen in the TRNC, and the differences between them increase even more.

During the pre-accession processes to the EU, the RoC took the necessary steps and implemented the required legal provisions. It was a process of harmonizing its laws so that they were in line with EU law. The result has been (and is) a process of change in all areas of government, from commercial law to health or social security.

The TRNC has not gone through this process and is not going through it. All aspects of life in it are influenced by the ubiquitous dominance of Turkey. A special chapter is the ownership relations of the occupied Greek Cypriot real estate. This creates many legal and economic complications. A fundamental problem is the legitimacy of various processes in connection with its use, reconstruction or change of "owner".

The RoC functions as a unified (unitary) state. Its president, government and parliament exercise independent governance. Naturally, they take into account EU and euro area membership. In addition, they are bound by various international agreements and, last but not least, they are affected by cultural and economic ties with Greece.

The TRNC internally operates as a unitary state, but only recognized by Turkey. Its president, government and parliament exercise control over the northern part of the island. In essence, they have no international

obligations due to its international non-recognition. Due to their economic dependence on Turkey, their important decisions are subject to approval (minimum consultations) from Ankara.

The continuation of the status quo (and the resulting system of administration of the island) has a major impact on the "Three Fundamental Freedoms" (freedom of movement, freedom of settlement, freedom of acquisition of property), which result from the so-called High-Level Agreements of 1977 and 1979. The three fundamental freedoms have several dimensions: political, economic, social and cultural. Greek Cypriots consider these fundamental freedoms to be inalienable human rights (Gürel & Özersay, 2006). The stalemate prevents the discussion of the three fundamental freedoms and does not provide opportunities to put them into practice.

Some progress has been made only on freedom of movement. Until April 23, 2003, movement across the Green Line was extremely limited. Selected members of both communities had the opportunity to meet only at the Ledra Palace (in Nicosia) during inter-community negotiations, in the mixed village of Pyla in the buffer zone and at foreign embassies. In addition, there were truly isolated cases of meetings that were organized by government agencies, either for the purpose of round table discussions, seminars, etc.

The situation changed on April 23, 2003. In the first months after the opening of several border crossings (currently seven), the visits by the other side were relatively frequent. Some crossed the border out of curiosity and some out of nostalgia and effort to look at the places of their original home. The post-referendum period meant a reduction in the intensity of border crossings. For some, it may have been enough to visit the "old places" a few times, and some responded to the unfavourable political atmosphere caused by the Greek Cypriots' rejection of Annan plan. In the following years, the numbers of Greek Cypriots crossing the border gradually decreased to stabilize at around 600,000 per year. Paradoxically, the numbers of Turkish Cypriots exceed them and have stabilized at an average of more than 1,100,000 per year. They travel mostly for work, shopping or visiting (Caner, 2015).

In principle, the status quo severely restricts or restrains the freedom of settlement and the freedom of acquisition of property in both Cypriot communities. Resolving the Cyprus conflict by creating a federation is possible provided that the individual entities (i.e. Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots) meet two basic conditions: they resolve the territorial delimitation of the individual entities and agree on a division of power in the context of the federation. Federalism is not only a matter of state structure but also a matter of political philosophy.

A balance is needed between the need for the Union and respect for the autonomy and interests of its members. The federation consists of the central federal government and the individual federal states. It is an architectural model involving a union of political entities with differing views on exclusive sovereignty. The federal states enjoy sovereignty as the source of their primary power, define federal constitutional aspects, and have exclusive jurisdiction on their respective peripheries (Theophanous, 2021).

From this it can be deduced that the problem of freedom of settlement, freedom of acquisition of property by the federation cannot be solved. In order to address these freedoms, it is therefore necessary to look for other tools – tools that are unrelated to the administration of the island.

The coexistence of Cypriot communities in the context of a federation of federal states with different sovereign powers (apart from the powers of the central federal government) presupposes a definition of the powers of these entities. All the more so as the entities concerned need to define competencies also in relation to activities

where joint action is required (e.g. promotion of common interests and representation at international level).

Resolving the Cyprus conflict by moving from the current status quo to the federation would be a challenge for both parties. Given the membership of the RoC in the EU and the declared interest of the inhabitants of the TRNC in integration into this organization, it can be assumed that this would be a greater challenge for the northern part of the island. However, changes to the decision-making mechanisms related to the management of the island would fundamentally affect both communities. Although the system of managing the entire territory of the island is a frequent topic of talks and negotiations, practical issues related to it are not currently "forced" to address.

4. Economic Aspects of the Continuing Status Quo

The characteristics of the stalemate suggest that it is largely influenced by economic indicators. As already indicated, it is affected by three important milestones (April 23, 2003, April 24, 2004, May 1, 2004).

Perhaps the most problematic economic aspect of inter-community relations on the island is property settlement. In essence, it is a matter of resolving the property ownership of those Cypriots (or their heirs) who found themselves on the other side of the island during the hectic migration in 1974, thus preventing them from accessing and managing their property.

Although the original owners (Greek Cypriots living before the division of the island in the northern part of Cyprus) were forced to leave their property as a result of the Turkish intervention, they still consider themselves the owner. As such real estate has essentially become unsettled, the RoC Government considers it illegal to dispose of it under TRNC's terms. It does not allow it to be treated by anyone other than the owner of the relevant property. The Turkish Cypriots, living before the division of the island in the southern part of the island, are in a similar situation, usually leaving their property due to fear for their lives and settling in the northern part of the island.

An interesting situation arose after the negative stance in the referendum on Annan plan. Greek Cypriots have individually intensified their efforts to return their property. The owners have instigated a number of lawsuits, making the Cypriot conflict more complex. Several Greek Cypriot cases have reached the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. Many convictions have officially confirmed the rights and claims of Greek Cypriots in the northern part of the island, but their enforcement has often become impracticable (not accepted by the TRNC) (Williams & Gürel, 2011).

Cypriot politicians are calling for a legitimate settlement of the property settlement. The aim is not to jeopardize inter-community talks and negotiations. Given that there are no official plans to address the issue of property issues, some islanders (both Greek and Turkish Cypriots) have decided to act individually within the contemporary possibilities. In this context, several real estate transactions have already taken place on both sides of the island, and the government cannot fully stop such efforts. Individual activities in this direction further complicate an already complex situation (Theophanous, 2008).

Another divisive economic aspect of inter-community relation is the fact that the RoC currently has its own fiscal and the TRNC its own fiscal and economic policies. None of them show any signs of potential possibilities for their connection to the federal arrangement.

In preparation for entry into the euro area, the RoC managed to meet all relevant criteria, including the fiscal deficit. Nevertheless, it still has a lot of work to do to rationalize public spending. As the TRNC was not admitted to the euro area, similar

criteria did not need to be met. The budget deficits are still high and almost fully funded by Turkey. If any positive solution to the Cyprus conflict is to be found, the TRNC will need considerable time and effort to simplify fiscal policy and adapt its economy accordingly (Theophanous, Tirkides & Pelagidis, 2008b).

Since 1974, both parts of the island (both RoC and TRNC) have developed different approaches to economic development. Until April 23, 2003, both economies developed completely independently and separately. There was no connection or sign of cooperation between them. After this date (respectively after the date of April 29, 2004) there was a certain interconnection of the economies of both parts of the island. For trade between both sides of the island, the so-called Green Line Trade Regulation is used (Hatay, Mullen & Kalimeri, 2008). However, the volume of goods traded under this regime is small and can in no way be considered as a substitute for the unification of these economies or a basis for their subsequent integration.

Despite massive changes, the public sector has a dominant influence on the TRNC economy. At the same time, Turkey continues to have a very large economic influence in this part of the island. However, government incentives for economic activity are not sustainable and sustainable economic growth cannot be expected without the involvement of the private sector in economic projects. Economic stimuli from Turkey would only increase the TRNC's economic (and political) dependence on Turkey. The integration of its economy with the economy of the southern part of the island would de facto mean integration into the economic environment of the EU and thus create the potential for sustainable economic prosperity.

Economic prosperity is significantly affected by tourism, which is one of the most important sectors on the island (especially after 1974). It is thanks to this sector that Cyprus can show its economic growth and development. The political situation and the specific socio-economic conditions meant that, before 2003, tourism did not reach its potential in the northern part of the island. After 2003, but especially after 2004, tourism began to develop there as well.

In addition to Greek Cypriots crossing the Green Line, more and more tourists are spending time and spending their money in the TRNC. These are tourists from Turkey, tourists from countries other than Turkey who have chosen TRNC as a tourist destination, or tourists who visit RoC and spend a short time in the northern part of the island.

After April 2003, after the referendums in April 2004 and after the accession of the RoC to the EU, the TRNC also has a much better prospects for tourism growth. Nevertheless, the stalemate is causing significant constraints that would be largely eliminated by the settlement of the Cyprus conflict. It is highly likely that a settlement of the Cyprus conflict would lead to a significant improvement in tourism conditions with positive economic results for the whole island.

Prices are an important economic aspect that fundamentally affects inter-community relations. Until April 2003, there were huge price differences at all levels in both economies. After April 2003, there was a gradual level of interconnection in this area. The free movement between the two sides of the island, but also the accession of the RoC to the EU, contributed to this.

Although significant differences in prices still exist on both sides of the island, they have fallen sharply. In particular, differences in restaurant service prices and retail prices decreased. On the contrary, differences in land prices increased (Kyriacou & Çilsal, 2013). This development indicates the potential for economic convergence in the event of a settlement of the Cyprus conflict on the principles of mutual integration.

However, this potential is undermined in the context of gas explorations in the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) of Cyprus.

Especially external actors in the mentioned processes and in the processes of using the benefits from gas fields in the mentioned region complicate the situation in the convergence of economies. Turkey, Russia, the USA, the EU (as well as some of its members) have a specific position in this. The Greek Cypriot gas sector was indeed influenced by both systemic and unit-level factors. Especially Russian gas interests in Cyprus are influenced by variables of Russian-EU, Russian-US, Russian-Turkish and Turkish-Greek Cypriot relations. It has not only economic impacts but also it is forming a sensitive geopolitical situation (Kacsiba, 2021).

5. Immigration in the Continuing Status Quo

The influx of Turkish settlers into the TRNC has persisted since 1974. Many of the settlers from Turkey have been married with Turkish Cypriots and have children. A lot of them live in Greek Cypriots 'houses (Panayiotides, 2019). This causes many problems in the long term, whether from the point of view of international law or from the point of view of property rights. The continuous influx of settlers from Anatolia to the TRNC, in liaison with the Turkish troops present, is seen on the Greek-Cypriot side as transforming the country into a more or less Turkish province. The intensity of their influx was influenced by various events and facts, such as stalemate, change of conditions after April 23, 2003, referendum on Annan plan, or RoC's accession to the EU.

The continuing influx of settlers has a negative impact on the possibilities for resolving the Cyprus conflict. The Turkish Cypriots themselves also feel some obstacles in coexistence with the settlers. Obviously, it is much more difficult for Greek Cypriots to agree to their presence. The difference in the view of their presence is evident only from the reporting (estimates) of their numbers. When the TRNC estimated in 2006 that there were about 116,000 settlers on its territory, the authorities of the Republic of Cyprus spoke of 180,000 (Theophanous, 2008).

The RoC government allowed the arrival of a foreign workforce in the early 1990s. Initially, the number of foreign workers was relatively small, but gradually increasing. With the accession of the RoC to the EU, the efforts of the citizens of Central and Eastern Europe to work on the island have increased. People from other regions also have the same effort. Some of them enter the island illegally. At the same time, many Turkish Cypriots are looking for and getting full-time or part-time jobs in the southern part of the island.

Over time, the RoC government began to perceive illegal immigration as a security issue (Klokkaris, 2016). The number of legal and illegal workers was gradually estimated at more than 100,000. The government reported that a large proportion of illegal immigrants came from the northern part of the island (some of whom came from Turkey). It assumes that this trend is not and will not be a temporary phenomenon (Theophanous, 2008).

The TRNC economy has developed significantly since 2003. As some of its citizens found work in the southern part of the island, they vacated their jobs and settlers from Turkey joined them. In essence, there was support for the influx of settlers, which is naturally contrary to the interests of the RoC government. Under the stalemate, this further complicates the settlement of the Cyprus conflict.

6. Security Aspects of the Continuing Status Quo

Security is one of the basic concepts we have encountered all our lives. The concept of security is becoming more and more frequent and significant. In fact, it is possible to state that humanity has encountered the concept of security throughout its existence. This is all the truer in Cyprus, as perceptions of security often differ from the Greek and Turkish Cypriots. That is why there is no

other solution than to try to reach a compromise. The UN has an irreplaceable place in this process.

The UN's competence in the field of security stems from the very essence of its origin and existence. Through the mission, UNFICYP has been carrying out its mission on the island since 1964. Naturally, the mission has undergone many changes during its existence. Today, peacekeeping operations are generally quite different from what they were decades ago. Their concept has changed into multidimensional operations involving the deployment of international military, police and civilian capabilities in support of a comprehensive peace agreement (Kompan & Hrnčiar, 2021). Today, they represent a highly complex, dynamic and demanding activity. The growing dynamics of development in crisis areas and a new understanding of security therefore require constant updating of procedures and very rapid application of new knowledge not only in the military field, but also in the field of political decision-making (Ivančík, 2013). This is no different in Cyprus.

Since the very establishment of the UNFICYP mission in 1964, its main objective has been to promote peaceful conditions that will allow for a just and lasting solution to the problem that has arisen. During its existence, the UNFICYP mission has undergone a number of changes. It underwent the most fundamental change since 1974. The UN Security Council adopted several resolutions in connection with the events of July and August 1974, which affected the functioning of UNFICYP. A substantial part of her efforts was focused on working in the buffer zone. Although this has fundamentally changed the way operational tasks are carried out, the essence of its existence in relation to security on the island has been preserved (UNFICYP, 2022).

The geographical location of the island, which is considered a crossroads between Europe and the Middle East and the bridge between East and West, plays an important role in the security of Cyprus. The international status of a potentially united island is the subject of much debate, as is the case in other countries in the region. The important fact is that Turkey and Greece are members of the NATO and Greece and Cyprus (RoC) are members of the EU. We must not forget the USA and Russia, which are also pursuing their interests in the region (Sülün & Tziarras, 2017). The paradox is that neither the USA nor Russia is on the list of guaranteeing powers. At the same time, it is calculated with them, either in a positive or negative sense, on both sides of the island.

Security on the island is largely linked to the guaranteeing powers of the United Kingdom, Greece and Turkey in Cyprus, which result from the Zurich and London treaties adopted in 1959. In connection with these treaties, there are also sovereign territories of the United Kingdom in Cyprus (and thus the British military bases deployed on them). Although these territories are often seen as an anachronistic remnant of Britain's colonial past (Loucaides, 2018), no one wants to address this issue in UN-led negotiations.

The treaties enshrined the power of Greece to deploy a contingent of 950 troops on the island and the power of Turkey to deploy a contingent of 650 troops on the island. At present, neither party complies with these limits. Greece exceeds them slightly (estimated at 1000 troops) and Turkey significantly (estimated at 30,000 to 40,000 troops) (Özertem, 2021). Both sides of the island are working, in addition to these agreements, to improve their security situation. In essence, they also disrupt (or modify) the status quo.

The RoC is in a better position in this respect, as a state that is a sovereign and internationally recognized state has no problem concluding bilateral agreements with virtually anyone. On the Greek-Cypriot side, the agreements with Greece, Russia, France and Israel are worth mentioning in connection with the improvement of its security situation.

The most important of these can be considered the Agreement on Defence and Military Cooperation between the RoC and Greece, entitled "Joint Defence Doctrine", signed in 1993. This agreement forms the basis for the planning of joint military strategies and operations. These include joint military exercises, reorganization of defence infrastructures in Crete, the Dodecanese and Cyprus. With regard to Cyprus, the agreement provides for the possibility for Greece to set up an air base on the island ("Andreas Papandreou" Paphos) and a naval base (the port of "Evangelos Florakis" Mari), set up a telecommunications system, expand Greek Cypriot education and increase military spending. The concept of a "single defence area", as defined in the mentioned Agreement, means the area from Greece to Famagusta on the island of Cyprus (Blum, 2007). From the above, it is clear that Greece has thus significantly expanded its activities in the Mediterranean.

The security situation in the region is also affected by the agreement between the RoC and the Russian Federation signed in 2015. It follows that the RoC will provide the Russian Air Force and the Naval Forces with a use of Mari Seaport and Paphos Airport if necessary. The Cypriot President (Anastasiades) described the move as *"the renewal of the old (defence) agreement, with some additional services"* (Holodny, 2015).

The agreement between the RoC and France, signed in 2016, is also worth noting. At the same time, both countries refer to cooperation in the field of defence, energy and security. The signed agreement provides for the possibility for the French military to use the above-mentioned port and airport, which they have demonstrably done in practice in relation to the port. Among other things, France has pledged to take part in the modernization of the Mari naval base, which, according to the French president (Macron), is to *"help strengthen their cooperation"* (Christou, 2017).

The 1985 RoC agreement with Israel, authorizing Israel to use a special part of the port of Limassol used for cruise ships and ferries to launch Limassol-Haifa services, can also be included in a similar category. The Mavi Marmara incident in 2010 between Turkey and Israel caused their diplomatic relations to fall to an all-time low (UN, 2011). In this case, the RoC responded to the principle that "the enemy of my enemy is my friend" and signed an agreement with Israel on conducting search, rescue and other naval exercises (Atun et al., 2019). It developed its cooperation with Israel even more, when in 2019 it bought 4 tactical unmanned aircrafts from it – the so-called drones (belonging to the Unmanned Aerial Systems – UAS category) worth EUR 12 million with the priority objective of monitoring the area of its EEZ (Logicom, 2019).

The discovery of hydrocarbon deposits in the Eastern Mediterranean, as well as in the EEZ of the RoC, and the efforts for the extraction of hydrocarbons, altered the region's geopolitics putting the balance of power within it at risk (Evaghorou, 2020). RoC annually organizes the international exercise "NEMESIS" in the EEZ of the RoC (November 2021 – eighth year). The exercise usually involves several state institutions, including the Ministry of Defense and the Cypriot National Guard. International participation is ensured by many countries that have their interests in the mentioned zone – in 2021, for example there were: Greece, France, Great Britain, USA, Israel, Italy and Egypt as well as six private companies (Ministry of Interior – RoC, 2021). Turkey considers these exercises to be an act of intimidation (Atun et al., 2019).

The TRNC relies only on Turkey to improve its security situation. Turkey has been working for a long time on the idea of resolving the existence of its naval and air base in the northern part of the island. It presented this idea as early as 2009 in response to the signing of the "Joint Defense Doctrine" between the RoC and Greece in

1993 and the subsequent establishment of Paphos Air Base in 1998.

This was justified by "sovereign rights" to defend their interests in the Mediterranean and to strengthen the position of the TRNC and Turkey in the negotiations on a solution to the Cyprus problem. They pointed to the need to compensate for the influence of Greece and the RoC in the region, because *"these two countries are trying to dominate the Mediterranean energy fields by establishing cooperation and partnerships"*. Turkey began to implement these intentions by signing the *"Agreement on the Delimitation of the Continental Shelf in the Mediterranean"* with TRNC in September 2011 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs TRNC, 2014). Subsequently, they concluded agreements on air, land and naval defence, which created the conditions for determining a suitable place for the establishment of a Turkish military base (Atun et al., 2019).

Turkey has warned that it does not have an air base on the island and needs it to meet the needs of the Turkish military deployed on the island (Andreou, 2018). The natural choice was Lefkoniko Airport (in turkish Geçitkale), which was built in 1982-1985 for military purposes. However, it was not used permanently as a military base, although it was used sporadically. One of the significant use cases was the arrival of 6 Turkish F-19 fighters in 1998. The event was presented by the Turkish side as a countermeasure to the arrival of Greek fighters at the newly opened airport Paphos. After the departure of Greek planes, the Turkish ones also took off (The Irish Times, 2018). Another example of the use of the airport was the arrival of Turkish drones in 2019 as a reaction to the above-mentioned Cypriot-French treaty and the Greek-Cypriot acquisition of Israeli drones (Özertem, 2021). The Turkish Prime Minister said that their deployment was related to the activities of two Turkish drilling vessels exploring hydrocarbon deposits in the Mediterranean (Morrow, 2019). In both cases, it is clear that Turkey has demonstrated its commitment to responding to changes in military potential in the region and to demonstrate the airport's technical capability.

The beginning of the existence of a permanent Turkish air base in Cyprus – Lefkoniko Airport was announced by the Turkish President (Erdoğan) on July 20, 2021. This is the 47th anniversary of the Turkish invasion of Cyprus, which is considered a provocation that affects the region and threatens any prospects to address the Cyprus problem (European Parliament, 2021).

Turkey compares the implementation of the measure to establish its naval base in the TRNC to British military bases in the southern part of the island, which has existed since 1960 (Andrea, 2018). It presents the need to create a naval base as a follow-up to the establishment of an air base, potentially mentioning Famagusta (Özertem, 2021) in the east, or Gemikonağı (Atun et al., 2019) in the north of the island. However, real activities in this direction have not yet taken place.

The status quo means the continued presence of Turkish troops in the TRNC, the continued presence of Greek troops in the RoC, the continued presence of British troops in the Sovereign Base Areas of Great Britain in Cyprus and the continued presence of UN troops on the island.

7. Conclusions

The continuation of the current status quo presents a difficult political environment. It causes a number of wasted personal, social, cultural as well as economic opportunities. It is understandable that both parts of the island (especially the TRNC) are trying and will try to eliminate the effects of this situation. Nevertheless, the continuation of the status quo seems to be one of the probable variants of future development on the island for a relatively long time.

Both sides are reluctant to back down from their demands or are backing down very slowly. It is clear that this situation cannot

persist indefinitely and that it does not represent an acceptable final solution. Especially in recent years, there have been significant changes in the perception of the term and changes in the characterization of the resulting so-called stalemate. Despite its name, the Cypriot status quo is dynamic.

Before 2003, there were huge differences between the two parts of the island in almost every aspect. The population's income was 1: 4 to the detriment of the TRNC population, and the economic structures and prospects were diametrically opposed.

The specific structural problems in the area of the economy that the RoC struggled with were gradually eliminated, especially in connection with the pre-accession processes to the EU. Its economy has successfully integrated into the European and international economy. This created favourable conditions for its long-term development.

The TRNC's economy was heavily dependent on Turkey. It was based on the so-called static model, which was associated with major problems related to the efficiency of its economy. The TRNC has struggled with the legitimacy of many processes and has addressed the sustainability of its economy. Socio-economic problems have forced many Turkish Cypriots to look for a better future abroad.

The status quo changed after the events of 2003 and 2004. RoC's membership of the EU has stimulated its economic boom. The partially free movement between the two parts of the island and the economic boom of the Republic of Cyprus also had a positive effect on economic development in the TRNC.

The existing status quo is not desirable for either Greek or Turkish Cypriots. However, for Turkish Cypriots, this represents a significant (though not complete) release from international isolation and is perceived more positively than Greek Cypriots. TRNC's efforts to end its international isolation are evident. In this respect, the Greek Cypriot side perceives it positively in the sense that the Turkish Cypriot party is "motivated" to work constructively to resolve the Cyprus conflict. The Turkish Cypriot party, on the other hand, suggests that the RoC is using the Cypriot conflict as a weapon against the TRNC. This idea can also be seen as one of the most important reasons for the RoC's disagreement with the attempt to include the TRNC in the free trade area with the EU (which would essentially legitimize Turkish Cypriot ports and airports).

In the future, it is not possible to rule out (but certainly not expect) an adjustment to the status quo, as happened in 2003. Sceptics on the Greek Cypriot side are receiving reports of an increase in the standard of living of Turkish Cypriots with some reluctance. They see this as their gradual integration into the international community. Transversely, they see their gradual loss of motivation to resolve the Cyprus conflict. On the contrary, Turkish Cypriots see behind these ideas the efforts of Greek Cypriots to use the Cypriot conflict as a tool to pursue their interests.

Although the stalemate is likely to continue, life on the island continues. It is extremely important to continue to build mutual trust between the two communities. The discussion of possible scenarios creates an environment for mutual assessment of reality and thus creates the conditions for resolving the Cyprus conflict. These are small but very important steps for the future. Discussing the advantages and disadvantages of mutual cooperation creates extremely important conditions for a prospective final settlement of the Cyprus conflict.

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