

Revisiting the Cyprus Crisis of 1974: U.S. Involvement and Future Prospects

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Abstract: *The Cyprus Crisis of 1974 divided the island of Cyprus and left a long-lasting effect on the regional dynamics of the Eastern Mediterranean to this day. The following paper provides an examination of the Crisis of 1974 and the role of the United States in it. The study begins with an overview of the history of Cyprus and then focuses on the key development in the crisis—from the Greek-sponsored coup to the subsequent two phases of the Turkish invasion—to analyze where exactly American foreign policy on Cyprus failed. It then concludes with an overview of the aftermath of the conflict, advocating for the role of the U.S. as a potential mediator in post-1974 Cyprus. The following study contributes to the academic discussion through a critical reflection on the role of American foreign policy in Cyprus in 1974 and its aftermath.*

Keywords: *Cyprus, Cyprus Crisis of 1974, US-Cyprus relations, Eastern Mediterranean, Cold War, Henry Kissinger.*

INTRODUCTION TO THE CYPRUS CRISIS OF 1974

Relevance and Significance

Fifty years after the Cyprus Crisis of 1974, Cyprus appears to be slow-paced on the surface, yet beneath this façade lies its scarred history, underscored by the fact that Nicosia is the last divided capital in the world, with a Berlin-type wall in the middle. The Crisis of 1974 was so explosive that it left the island divided to this day, and the dynamic surrounding the two *de facto* entities of the divided island—the internationally recognized Republic of Cyprus

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(RoC) and the unilaterally declared Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC)¹—not only shapes the sociopolitical landscape for conflict resolution on the island, but also poses challenges to the stability of the southern flank of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Cyprus is both “the cause and the victim of continued antagonism” of tensions between two NATO members crucial for regional stability, with Greece supporting the RoC and Turkey supporting the TRNC.²

Understanding the Cyprus Crisis of 1974 should be contextualized within the broader dynamics of the Cold War, particularly through the lens of the Truman Doctrine of 1947, which provided a framework for United States engagement during this period. At its core, the Doctrine articulated the U.S. commitment to containing the spread of communism by justifying support for upholding and safeguarding democracy in the strategically important countries of Greece and Turkey: Turkey is a key player in the Middle East, while Greece is a key player in the volatile politics of the Balkan states. Furthermore, it emphasizes the ultimate role of the U.S. in the newly created United Nations as *the* global power in defense of democracy. In the case of Cyprus, however, the U.S. used double standards in its foreign policy and, notably, violated its own laws—a matter that will be explored later.

Central to the U.S. response during this period was Henry Kissinger, who, from 1973 to 1977, served as the U.S. Secretary of State, the President's chief foreign affairs adviser responsible for carrying out foreign policies during the Cold War of the 1970s. Henry Kissinger's approach to foreign policy was grounded in *realpolitik*, prioritizing strategic interests and power dynamics over ideological, ethical, and legal considerations. Despite Cyprus's strategic significance and its tensions with implications for regional stability,

¹ The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is recognized only by Turkey.

² Tozun Bahcheli, Theodore A. Couloumbis, and Patricia Carley, *Greek-Turkish Relations and U.S. Foreign Policy: Cyprus, the Aegean, and Regional Stability* (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace, 1997), x and 7.

Kissinger's *realpolitik* approach did not actively promote democracy and stability on the island and did not consistently align with the principles outlined in the Truman Doctrine.

The academic discourse surrounding the American involvement in the 1974 events, and Kissinger's role, differs based on the perspectives and interpretive frameworks of historians and political scientists, with the most critical examinations of the American involvement articulated by Brendan O'Malley and Ian Craig in *The Cyprus Conspiracy: America, Espionage, and the Turkish Invasion* and by Christopher Hitchens in *The Trial of Henry Kissinger*. Considering that Henry Kissinger passed away in 2023, it is crucial to reassess his legacy and his influence in shaping the U.S. response to the crisis (or lack thereof). This paper provides an examination of the failure of the American foreign policy in regard to the Cyprus Crisis of 1974, focusing on the responses of U.S. officials, particularly Henry Kissinger, to shed light on the rationale behind specific policy approaches and untangle the complexities inherent to the crisis and its aftermath. The paper will offer a balanced assessment that synthesizes various viewpoints, providing insights that both align with and diverge from prevailing interpretations. It revisits the Cyprus Crisis across three parts: an introduction and a historical overview, a critical examination of the U.S. involvement and policy gaps during the crisis, and a contextualization of these events within the complexities of its resolution, calling for a reevaluation of the U.S.'s historical role and its approach in addressing the Cyprus conflict, providing insights into its long-lasting impact.

Historical Context to the Independence of Cyprus

The Cyprus Conflict is often portrayed as solely ethnic, yet this depiction oversimplifies a complex narrative. For centuries, two communities—the Greek Cypriots (GCs) and the Turkish Cypriots (TCs)—coexisted on one island. While ethnic confrontations undeniably constituted a major part of the crisis, foreign players had been influencing the island's dynamic immensely. Tracing the roots of the Cyprus Conflict could take us as far as

the sixteenth century, when the Ottoman Empire started its 300-year rule in Cyprus before giving the island to the British Empire. Even though the existing ethnic separation on the island intensified during the Colonial British period, which was evident in the decline of the number of mixed TC and GC villages,³ the escalation of ethnic tensions was marked by the struggle for Cypriot liberation from Colonial British rule when the U.K. started to lose its grip on Cyprus after the end of World War II.

At the forefront of the fight for liberation was EOKA—a nationalist GC organization with the old guerilla fighter Georgios Grivas as its military leader. EOKA made British rule as uncomfortable and costly as possible through guerilla warfare tactics.⁴ In turn, the colonial authorities intensified their “divide-and-rule” policy by pitting ethnic groups against each other to preserve their rule on the island. Because the EOKA’s primary goal was *enosis*, meaning the union of Cyprus with Greece, the colonial authorities made the TC minority wary of the Cypriot liberation movement, as the pursuit of *enosis* would potentially result in TCs becoming an even smaller minority within Greece. In practice, this translated to torturing those suspected of collaborating with EOKA and employing TCs in the police to take armed actions against the EOKA’s primarily GC movement,⁵ further polarizing the communities and amplifying the growing tensions on the island.

By the mid-1950s, Archbishop Makarios III became the political leader of Cypriot liberation. At the same time, the British were ultimately losing Cyprus, lacking an extensive military presence after they had to withdraw much of their forces from the island in late 1956 due to the Suez Crisis. Yet the political climate surrounding the island was changing: the goal of *enosis* was not achievable, and Makarios knew it. Turkey would never allow it, and in

³ Ozay Mehmet, “Divergence or Convergence? Toward a Two-State Outcome” in *Sustainability of Microstates: The Case of North Cyprus*, ed. Ozay Mehmet (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2010), 136.

⁴ Some literature, particularly British and Turkish sources, characterize those tactics as terrorist in nature.

⁵ Andreas Varnavas, “The Events Following the Exile of Archbishop Makarios until His Release from Seychelles (9 March 1956 - 28 March 1957),” in *A History of the Liberation Struggle of EOKA (1955-1959)*, ed. Tomazos Maos, trans. Philippos Stylianou (Nicosia: C. Epiphaniou Publications, 2004), 159.

Greece, this goal was abandoned in favor of Cypriot independence. Makarios had to balance interests for the island to become liberated, and in this, he succeeded: after the London-Zürich Agreements, the island achieved its independence in 1960.

The island, however, became independent under provisions that contributed to its instability. In an effort to secure the representation of both communities on the island, provisions were made in the constitution for the president to be elected by GCs and the vice president with veto power to be elected by TCs, leading to government paralysis. Among the various conditions accompanying independence, one of the prominent ones was the Treaty of Guarantee, which was meant to secure stability in Cyprus by granting the guarantor powers—the United Kingdom, Greece, and Turkey—the right to take action in the event of a breach of established provisions, i.e., Cypriot independence. However, the interpretation of the Treaty in subsequent events instead introduced ambiguities that would be exploited in the future.

In the discourse surrounding the crisis of 1974, the Turkish argument often relies on the Treaty of Guarantee to justify its military intervention. However, it is essential to clarify that while the Treaty indeed undermined the sovereignty of Cyprus, it did not give Turkey the right to invade. Article 2 of the Treaty explicitly “prohibit[s] ... either the union of the Republic of Cyprus with any other State, or the partition of the Island.”⁶ Additionally, Article 4, mentioning “taking actions,” does not refer to active military intervention, rather focusing on actions solely aimed at restoring the state of affairs established by the Treaty, excluding the events of partial or double *enosis*: “taking actions [not forces] with the sole aim of re-establishing the state of affairs established by the present Treaty.”⁷ Additionally, if the word

⁶ “Treaty of Guarantee,” conclusion date: 16 August 1960, *UN Peacemaker*, <https://perma.cc/HQS7-P8UC>.

⁷ See note 7 above.

“action” is to be interpreted as “force,” then it is not consistent with the U.N. charter and is thus void.⁸ Clearly, the Treaty of Guarantee did *not* authorize any invasion.

The rocky path to the island’s independence provides the basis for understanding the complexities and inconsistencies in American foreign policy during the Cyprus Crisis of 1974. The complex interplay of foreign influences and power struggles between two ethnic groups, with intra- and inter-communal violence resulting from the power vacuum left by the British, led to full-scale clashes between the two communities in the coming years, with two major crises in 1964 and 1967, with both Greece and Turkey involved. Still, the Truman Doctrine solidified the commitment of the U.S. to the region, particularly with Turkey and Greece. Due to the strategic importance of Cyprus and its influence on the relationship between those two key allies, it was unavoidable that the U.S. would become involved in the crises that arose in the area. However, the greater U.S. involvement in the Eastern Mediterranean that helped solve those conflicts peacefully left many with the impression that this would be the course of action in the future.

⁸ Eugene T. Rossides, “American Foreign Policy Regarding Cyprus and the Rule of Law” in *The United States and Cyprus: Double Standards and the Rule of Law*, ed. Eugene T. Rossides and Van Coufoudakis, (Washington, D.C.: American Hellenic Institute Foundation, 2002), 29.

FAILURE OF AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY ON CYPRUS IN 1974

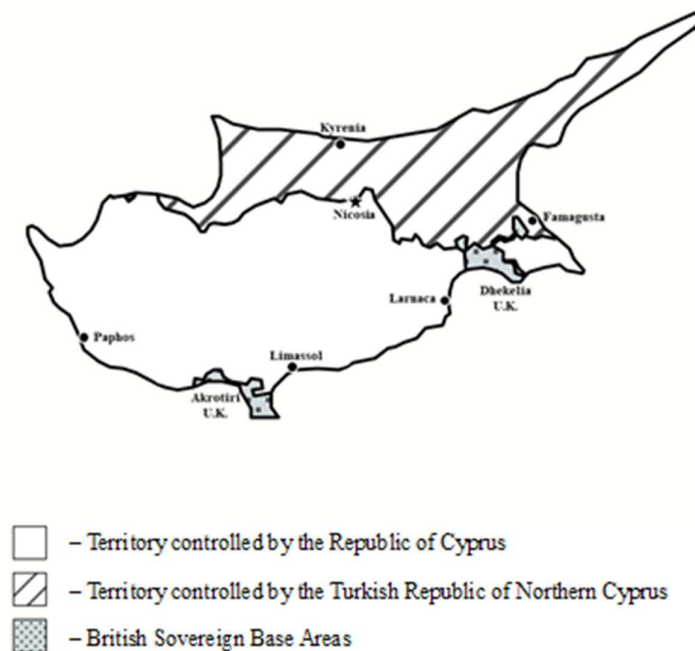


Figure 1. Map illustrating the division of Cyprus after the events of 1974.⁹

Setting the Stage for Analysis

We will fast-forward to 1973, less than one year before the Cyprus Crisis. The crisis itself consisted of three major events over the span of only one month—the Greek-sponsored coup and the two phases of the Turkish invasion that left the island divided to this day, as shown in Figure 1. This part of the paper covers those three events in chronological order and analyzes the actions of the U.S. during that period.

To understand foreign policy decisions, we have to understand what information, primarily intelligence reports, was available. However, it is important to note that while the CIA gives us only one piece of the puzzle, various other sources, from expert analyses to ground-level realities, often provide a more comprehensive understanding. The forthcoming sections will explore these diverse angles, offering a deeper analysis of American foreign policy actions on Cyprus.

⁹ The map was created with mapchart.net.

Events Leading to the Greek-Sponsored Coup of 1974

Prior to the coup, Cyprus had long been identified as a potentially volatile region. In a report dated May 6, 1974, from the Interdepartmental Group for Near East and South Asia Study, Cyprus is summarized as “a foreign policy problem for the United States because strife between the Greek Cypriots and Turk Cypriots brings Greece and Turkey into military confrontation unhinging NATO’s southern flank.”¹⁰ In the 1970s, Cyprus was a major destabilizing factor in the region.

However, the political landscape of Cyprus was volatile not just internally, as it faced external tensions, notably with Greece, stemming from long-held but unsatisfied aspirations of ultra-right GCs for union with Greece. Those tensions became even worse after Dimitrios Ioannides, also known as the Invisible Dictator, became the *de facto* head of the Greek military regime in 1973.¹¹ The United States, however, did not wait long before resuming its relations with the Greek junta. Throughout this period and preceding it, Washington pursued a dual foreign policy in Greece by supporting the military regime with money and arms while having the objective of restoring constitutional order.¹²

Meanwhile, in the U.S., the timing could not be worse. President Nixon would resign on August 8, in the middle of the Cyprus Crisis. However, in the months preceding his resignation, Nixon’s presidency was in its terminal stage, as the Watergate Scandal was becoming more problematic. This left Secretary of State Henry Kissinger—who was the first and only Secretary of State to hold a chairmanship position in the Forty Committee, which

¹⁰ “Study Prepared by the Interdepartmental Group for Near East and South Asia,” in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976*, vols. XXX, GREECE; CYPRUS; TURKEY, ed. by Daniel J. Lawler and Erin R. Mahan (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2010), Document 75, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v30/d75>.

¹¹ Tensions between Makarios and Ioannides were fueled by their conflicting visions for Cyprus. Makarios favored independence and pursued a non-aligned policy, while Ioannides sought *enosis* and a more aggressive approach towards Turkey—these differences in ideology led to friction between the two leaders.

¹² Stern, *The Wrong Horse*, 7.

was responsible for approving the covert operations of the CIA¹³—with unprecedented power over American foreign policy. Thus, he had both the diplomatic and intelligence capacities to know about the details of the Cyprus Crisis.¹⁴ While acknowledging that Kissinger was not the only actor, the following analysis will prioritize examining his policy decisions because of their profound influence on foreign policy during the transitional period between the Nixon and Ford administrations that coincided with the Crisis of 1974.

An example of Henry Kissinger’s controversial, in retrospect, political views on Cyprus pertains to the meeting with Andrei Gromyko, Soviet Foreign Minister, with whom he met to discuss Soviet-American relations and the Middle East situation in Nicosia on May 7, 1974. Although Kissinger remained silent about the position of the U.S. regarding Cyprus during this meeting, we can find more context in Gromyko’s memoir:

Having heard Kissinger’s explanation of the U.S. position, I asked him point blank, “Does the U.S. government support the independence and territorial integrity of Cyprus, or not?”

He was evasive, but his answer boiled down to the admission that Washington would basically be happy to see the division of the island into two parts, Greek and Turkish—that is, the creation of two separate states. ... [H]e personally, and the U.S. administration, regarded Makarios as an anomaly, a church man who would be better sticking to church affairs.¹⁵

Henry Kissinger’s approach to Cyprus focused on the big picture—Soviet involvement and Cold War interests—over the pursuit of a just and lasting solution. Yet his position was not formed in isolation but rather echoed the plans of double *enosis* drafted during the 1964 crisis. For Kissinger, Makarios, the founding father of Cyprus, was nothing more than an anomaly at best and a communist at worst because he, following the policy of non-alignment, sought support from various sources, including Communist nations. Mindful of past events,

¹³ David Wise, “The Secret Committee Called ‘40,’” *The New York Times*, January 19, 1975, <https://www.nytimes.com/1975/01/19/archives/the-secret-committee-called-40-at-least-in-theory-it-controls-the.html>.

¹⁴ Christopher Hitchens, “Cyprus” in *The Trial of Henry Kissinger* (New York City: Verso, 2001), 84.

¹⁵ Andrei Andreevich Gromyko, *Memoirs*, 1st ed, trans. Harold Shukman (New York City: Doubleday, 1989), 235-236.

such as the 1972 incident when Moscow did not stop communist Czechoslovakia from smuggling weapons to Cyprus, the United States was cautious about Makarios's "friendship" with the communist bloc during the Cold War era. These historical ties would influence the decisions the U.S. approved and did *not* approve during the crisis of 1974.

Going back to Cyprus, the apparent lack of urgency surrounding the island is frequently emphasized—"no sense of imminent crisis," as Kissinger put it.¹⁶ While both Kissinger and British Foreign Secretary James Callaghan did not find it necessary to be worth mentioning during their meeting less than a week before the coup,¹⁷ it would be inaccurate to completely dismiss the idea that the coup was unimaginable. Callaghan described Cyprus in a very precise way, comparing the island to a volcano that was "always likely to erupt, but not expecting every subterranean rumble to lead to disaster."¹⁸ While the international community acknowledged Cyprus's volatility, the island did not receive significant attention for its "rumbles," such as Makarios's demands to withdraw all Greek officers from the island on July 2, less than two weeks before the Greek-sponsored coup.

Despite the signals of deteriorating relations between Ioannides and Makarios, the U.S. failed to foresee or anticipate the coup, which was partly attributable to the limited access of government officials to intelligence information. Only the CIA had exclusive access to Ioannides, the *de facto* leader of Greece who, officially, was not a part of the military government, only the chief of the secret police. Even Henry Tasca, the U.S. Ambassador to Greece, lacked direct access to Ioannides. Furthermore, the CIA operatives reported to Washington; however, Washington was not passing the information, partly due to restrictions

¹⁶ Henry Kissinger, "Cyprus. A Case Study in Ethnic Conflict" in *Years of Renewal* (New York City: Simon & Schuster, 1999), 203.

¹⁷ Kissinger, "Cyprus. A Case Study," 204.

¹⁸ James Callaghan, "Cyprus — background to the Turkish invasion — negotiations at Geneva — President Nixon's Resignation," chap. 11 in *Time and Chance* (Glasgow: William Collins Sons & Co, 1987), 335.

by Kissinger on the access of most top-secret documentation to NODIS, EYES ONLY,¹⁹ which severely impacted the communication within the government.²⁰ As a result, when Thomas Boyatt, a junior official and the director of Cyprus Affairs, who believed in the imminence of the attack of the Greek junta on Cyprus and the subsequent Turkish invasion, urged Tasca to use explicit measures but didn't provide specific details of the risk of the coup, Tasca downplayed the potential of a coup and decided not to speak with Ioannides about Cyprus. When Boyatt took the matter to Joseph Sisco, the most senior of Kissinger's officials responsible for the region, Sisco chose to ignore the concerns.²¹ While other officials, including Senator William Fulbright, also voiced their concerns, for brevity, we will not delve into their warnings.

Some observers also point out the inability of the U.S. to react quickly to the CIA's mixed reports. Although the CIA failed to warn of the impending coup, it did provide explicit warnings of growing confrontation between Ioannides and Makarios, as the relations were quickly deteriorating.²² On June 7, roughly a month before the coup, the *National Intelligence Daily*, breakfast reading for high-ranking officials, stated, "Ioannides claimed that Greece is capable of removing Makarios and his supporters within twenty-four hours with little if any blood being shed ..."²³ Furthermore, an intriguing perspective comes from Tasca, who later suggested that the Turks may have been aware of the coup before July 15, as it was highly unlikely that they would be able to launch the 40,000-troop invasion on July 20 in only three

¹⁹ "NO DISTRIBUTION, EYES ONLY" refers to classified documents that are exclusively intended for a specific set of readers. Even with the necessary clearance, access to these documents is restricted, and their distribution is heavily limited.

²⁰ Brendan O'Malley and Ian Craig. *The Cyprus Conspiracy: America, Espionage, and the Turkish Invasion*. (New York City: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 164-165; Hitchens, "Cyprus," 83.

²¹ O'Malley and Craig, *The Cyprus Conspiracy*, 166.

²² "Study Prepared by the Intelligence Community Staff for Director of Central Intelligence Colby," vols. XXX, GREECE; CYPRUS; TURKEY, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976*, ed. by Daniel J. Lawler and Erin R. Mahan, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2010), Document 171, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v30/d171>.

²³ Hitchens, "Cyprus," 82.

or four days.²⁴ It raises intriguing questions about how Turkey may have been aware of the coup while the United States was not. Nonetheless, the failure to anticipate the coup was not the sole nor the most significant of the American mistakes.

The Greek-Sponsored Coup of 1974

On July 15, Ioannides orchestrated a military coup with the help of the Cypriot National Guard and EOKA-B.²⁵ In the coup, Nicos Sampson was installed as the President of Cyprus. Most importantly, though, the coup aimed to assassinate Makarios. Fortunately, the attempt was unsuccessful, so Makarios fled to the south of the island and was evacuated to Malta by the Royal Air Force. Subsequently, he traveled to New York to address the U.N. Security Council on July 18. From the international perspective, and especially from the viewpoint of Turkey, the coup looked like a *de facto enosis*.²⁶ Turkey was compelled to intervene to “protect” the Turkish Cypriot minority on the island from what they saw as the looming tyranny of the Greeks.

The U.S. failed to predict the coup, yet its subsequent actions, or lack thereof, following the coup led to the failure to deter Turkey from invading, with the U.S. being arguably the only force capable of stopping the Turks. Some assessments even suggest that ill-considered American decisions might have inadvertently emboldened the Turkish invasion. Two primary interconnected foreign policy goals should have been pursued: (1) the active recognition of the legal government of Makarios and (2) the discouragement of Turkey from invading. However, these objectives, particularly the former, remained largely unaddressed. It is, therefore, imperative to look through the policy actions the U.S. took in this critical five-day period from July 15 to July 20.

²⁴ O'Malley and Craig, *The Cyprus Conspiracy*, 167.

²⁵ Not to be mistaken with EOKA. EOKA-B, aiming solely for *enosis*, was founded by Grivas *after* Cyprus became independent. By 1974, it fell under the control of the Greek military junta. EOKA had the support of the majority of Greek Cypriots, while EOKA-B did not enjoy the same level of support.

²⁶ O'Malley and Craig, *The Cyprus Conspiracy*, 173.

Following the coup, the U.S. did not condemn the new regime over the legitimate one led by Makarios, even though other countries, such as France and Britain, denounced the coup right away.²⁷ On top of that, Kissinger told the U.S. envoy in Nicosia to treat Sampson's "foreign ministers" as legitimate representatives, making the U.S. the *first and only* government to *de facto* recognize the legitimacy of Sampson's regime.²⁸ Had the U.S. joined the international community in condemning the coup, Sampson would have fallen quickly, and this would have prevented Turkey from invading.

Two main factors contributed to the weak response of the U.S. foreign policy to the coup: (1) sensitivity of Greek-American relations and (2) perceived communism threats associated with Makarios. Firstly, American relations with Greece, dictated by its geopolitical importance, are described as being "particularly sensitive [b]ecause the United States depends on Greek bases to berth the Sixth Fleet."²⁹ This dependence on Greece might be one of the reasons for the American eagerness to restore relations with the Greek junta in the first place, leading to hesitancy in condemning the coup in Cyprus afterward. Secondly, the U.S. response was affected by the prevailing fear of communism among American officials, often perceiving the Makarios government in general and Makarios in particular as sympathetic to or aligned with communist ideologies. As James Callaghan put it, "[I]t had only been necessary for the Colonels to declare themselves anti-communists to win a measure of understanding."³⁰ These largely skewed Cold War era perceptions of Makarios and of Cyprus were especially true in high-ranking officials, including Henry Kissinger, and would play a significant role in shaping policy initiatives in regard to Cyprus.

²⁷ Rossides, "American Foreign Policy Regarding Cyprus," 33.

²⁸ Hitchens, "Cyprus," 85.

²⁹ "U.S. BEGINS TALKS WITH NEW CHIEFS OF CYPRUS REGIME," *The New York Times*, July 18, 1974, <https://www.nytimes.com/1974/07/18/archives/u-s-begins-talks-with-new-chiefs-of-cyprus-regime.html>.

³⁰ Callaghan, "Cyprus — background to the Turkish invasion," 338.

A telling example of this mindset is evident in the telephone conversation between President Nixon and Kissinger on July 17, when Kissinger expressed a viewpoint regarding the return of Makarios. He stated, “My analysis is if Makarios is brought back this way, ... the Communists will be the dominant force and to balance the Turks he will have to rely on the Eastern bloc.”³¹ Once again, Kissinger was preoccupied with the Soviets and their influence on the island rather than the actual crisis. During the same day, the U.S. made an official statement, a derivative of the telephone conversation: the U.S. was leaning toward recognizing the government of Sampson rather than the one of Makarios, in part because he “turned too readily toward Communist states for assistance.”³² From the outside, all these signs, even if unintentionally, were doing little to deter Turkish military involvement.

To some extent, the U.S. did think about Greece and Turkey, albeit those considerations were primarily limited to preventing the war between those allies rather than specifically addressing the Cyprus situation. On July 16, the U.S. sent its men to Ioannides to warn him that the U.S. would oppose *enosis* and full-scale Greek military intervention.³³ While Greece was told not to intervene, the U.S. did not do nearly enough for the restoration of the government of Makarios in Cyprus. This lack of decisive action conveyed a message of ambiguity, in turn convincing Turkey of a lack of firmness in U.S. policy decisions. When Joseph Sisco, the right hand of Kissinger on Cyprus, had a private talk with Turkish Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit in the Turkish Embassy in London on July 18 and pressed if Turkey would take military action or not, Ecevit took a more extreme line with notions akin to

³¹ “Transcript of Telephone Conversation Between President Nixon and Secretary of State Kissinger,” vols. XXX, GREECE; CYPRUS; TURKEY, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976*, ed. by Daniel J. Lawler and Erin R. Mahan, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2010), Document 93, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v30/d93>.

³² *The New York Times*, “U.S. BEGINS TALKS WITH NEW CHIEFS OF CYPRUS REGIME.”

³³ Kissinger, “Cyprus. A Case Study,” 204.

partition.³⁴ Turkey's adoption of its stance was partly influenced by domestic pressure but also by the perceived weak response of the U.S. to the coup.

What is particularly striking, however, is that intelligence reports provided explicit warnings, including the date, about the upcoming invasion from various sources in Cyprus and Turkey.³⁵ Notably, the Pentagon reported that the units of the Turkish Second Army were moving to the Southern coast, 50 miles north of Cyprus.³⁶ This critical information was passed down, and the State Department was informed: "Colby [Director of the CIA] related information about Turkish military movements, which indicated that a Turkish invasion would occur July 21 or 22 or possibly earlier."³⁷ However, akin to the period preceding the coup, access to the CIA reports was severely restricted, leaving even Tasca, who should have been one of the key figures in such negotiations, unaware of such developments. Nevertheless, it is evident that the senior government officials knew about the upcoming invasion, not only from the theoretical assessments but also from intelligence reports.

Evidently, in this brief period of five days, very little was done after the Greek-sponsored coup to restore the legitimate government of Cyprus and prevent Turkey, a strategic American ally, from intervening. The U.S. allowed the events to develop to the point of no return, even though the intelligence provided accurate and compelling information about the upcoming Turkish invasion—this was not merely an oversight but the second failure of the U.S. foreign policy on Cyprus in 1974.

³⁴ "Editorial Note," vols. XXX, GREECE; CYPRUS; TURKEY, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976*, ed. by Daniel J. Lawler and Erin R. Mahan, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2010), Document 96, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v30/d96>; Geoffrey Warner, 2009. "The United States and the Cyprus Crisis of 1974." *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 85, no. 1 (2009): 136.

³⁵ "Study Prepared by the Intelligence Community Staff for Director of Central Intelligence Colby," Document 171.

³⁶ O'Malley and Craig, *The Cyprus Conspiracy*, 173.

³⁷ "Minutes of Meeting of the Washington Special Actions Group," vols. XXX, GREECE; CYPRUS; TURKEY, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976*, ed. by Daniel J. Lawler and Erin R. Mahan, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2010), Document 98, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v30/d98>.

The First Phase of the Turkish Invasion of 1974

Shortly before dawn at 5:20 a.m. on July 20, heavily armed Turkish troops landed in Kyrenia, north of Nicosia. Turkey invaded Cyprus in an Attila I military operation, even earlier than what the CIA had predicted. On the same day, the U.N. Security Council called for a cease-fire. In the meantime, Turkey faced significant resistance and only managed to capture approximately 3 to 5 percent of Cyprus in two days before the cease-fire took place on July 22.

In invading Cyprus, Turkey violated multiple international agreements. First of all, even though to this day, Turkey relies on the Treaty of Guarantee as justification for military intervention and partition of the island, Turks *did* breach the explicit prohibition of such actions.³⁸ Secondly, by using force against Cyprus, Turkey's use of force violated both the U.N. and NATO charters. Thirdly, and most importantly for the future discourse within the U.S., Turkey breached the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, the Foreign Military Sales Act of 1968, and the bilateral agreements under those acts.³⁹ Those acts and agreements specifically state that American weapons must be solely used for defensive purposes, yet Turkey was illegally using American armaments during the Cyprus invasion. The official response of the U.S. to this situation should have been the immediate end of all sales of weapons, as stated in those documents. However, the following discussion will focus on the *actual* American response to the invasion.

Prior to the invasion, the only force that could have deterred the Turks from invading was the U.S. Sixth Fleet. Even though the British were one of the guarantor powers, meaning it was their responsibility to deter the military invasion, they were no longer a global super-power in the 1970s. The U.K. lacked the capacity to deter the Turkish army and thus sought

³⁸ For further details supporting this statement, please refer to pages 4-5 of the current document.

³⁹ Rossides, "American Foreign Policy Regarding Cyprus," 27.

the U.S. for a joint Anglo-American policy as a way to deter the escalation of the conflict. Their proposal, however, went without due consideration.⁴⁰

After the first notice of the landing of Turkish troops on the island, the situation was escalating quickly. Turkey was moving even more troops in the direction of Cyprus, while the U.K. was ready to defend its SBAs, and Greece was concentrating its military along the border with Turkey. On the island itself, the skyrocketing intercommunal violence only exacerbated the situation. Yet behind the scenes, the U.K. and the U.S. were doing last-minute frantic diplomacy to make sure the Turkish invasion of Cyprus would not bring the Soviet Union or other NATO members into a full-scale war.

However, the official response of the U.S. to the Turkish invasion was notably restrained. The United States did not cut military aid to Turkey mainly because of Kissinger's strong position on this question. Henry Kissinger also rejected an appeal from Henry Taska, the U.S. Ambassador to Greece, to use the Sixth Fleet to stop the Turkish invasion.⁴¹ The U.S. did not want to take any action against Turkey because, for Kissinger, Turkey was a strategic player in the Mediterranean, containing Soviet Union influence in the region. Given the proximity to the USSR, Turkey had twenty-six electronic stations to monitor Soviet missiles.⁴² During the conflict, Kissinger favored Turkey over Greece or Cyprus due to concerns that a stronger U.S. stance against Turkish actions in Cyprus would push Turkey closer to the Soviet Union.

These American decisions can be contextualized by examining the mindset of high-ranking officials regarding Cyprus. Consider a telephone conversation between Kissinger and Colby at the onset of the Turkish invasion of Cyprus:

K: But what do you think they're after? They're not after the whole island, are they?

⁴⁰ Callaghan, "Cyprus — background to the Turkish invasion," 341-42.

⁴¹ Joe Alex Morris, "U.S. 'Knew' of Plan To Invade Cyprus," *The Los Angeles Times*, November 22, 1974.

⁴² Kissinger, "Cyprus. A Case Study," 225.

C: No, no... [T]he most important thing is to *limit* it to Cyprus [emphasis added].⁴³

This conversation sheds light on a critical aspect of U.S. foreign policy. The primary objective was to *limit* or *contain* the problem of Turkish-Greek hostilities to Cyprus. The island, its people, and its future were viewed as expendable—a matter of secondary concern compared to preventing a full-scale war between Greece and Turkey.

Nonetheless, a cease-fire was achieved on July 22 through significant efforts of the U.S. and the U.K. By the time of the cease-fire, Turks had already captured Kyrenia and part of Nicosia, effectively establishing a corridor between the two areas. It is crucial to emphasize that the Turkish agreement to the cease-fire was primarily a strategic move. The Turkish army needed more time and reinforcement on the island to sustain their ongoing invasion. They agreed to temporarily hold fire but *not* to stop the invasion.

Following the invasion, major political rearrangements were unfolding in both Greece and Cyprus, as the Greek junta in Greece and their satellites in Cyprus were not prepared for the full-scale invasion. They erroneously believed that being anti-Makarios, or more accurately, anti-communist, was enough to get the U.S. support to help deter the Turks. However, this assumption proved incorrect. On July 23, both the Greek junta in Greece and Nikos Sampson's government in Cyprus crumbled—shockwaves from the Turkish invasion coincided with mounting internal pressures. Konstantinos Karamanlis, the Greek prime minister between 1955 and 1963, returned from exile to bring Greece to a democratic path. In Cyprus, Sampson resigned eight days into his “presidency,” and Glafkos Clerides, the speaker of the House of Representatives, became the president according to the Constitution, restoring the legitimate government on the island.

⁴³ “Transcript of Telephone Conversation Between Secretary of State Kissinger and Director of Central Intelligence Colby,” vols. XXX, GREECE; CYPRUS; TURKEY, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976*, ed. by Daniel J. Lawler and Erin R. Mahan, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2010), Document 102, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v30/d102>.

Peace talks between Cyprus and the guarantor powers—Greece, Turkey, and the U.K.—began on July 25. They resumed on August 8, a day before Nixon resigned. Despite ongoing negotiations in Geneva, Cyprus saw continued military activity: Turkey was reinforcing its positions by deploying more troops to the island and repeatedly violated the cease-fire, demonstrating increasingly aggressive actions. What Turkey could not achieve through peace talks, it sought to gain through force on the ground.

Meanwhile, on August 13, less than 24 hours before the second phase of the Turkish invasion, Kissinger expressed the following views in a conversation with President Ford on the Cyprus Crisis:

We certainly do not want a war between the two, but if it came to that, Turkey is more important to us... Some of my colleagues want to cut off assistance to Turkey—that would be a disaster. *There is no American reason why the Turks should not have one-third of Cyprus.* We will make a statement today that will get the New York Times off our back... [emphasis added]⁴⁴

As seen from Kissinger’s remarks, Turkey is still considered a key ally of the U.S., being “more important” than Greece and Cyprus combined. This prioritization significantly influenced the reluctance of the U.S. to discontinue military aid despite it being a legal obligation rather than a matter of preference. Washington issued a calculated official statement on the same day, stating that Turkish Cypriots needed more security, backing Turks in this conflict, albeit acknowledging “military actions were still seen as unjustified.”⁴⁵ For Turkey, this declaration could have been perceived as the green light to their military campaign.

⁴⁴ “Memorandum of Conversation,” vols. XXX, GREECE; CYPRUS; TURKEY, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976*, ed. by Daniel J. Lawler and Erin R. Mahan, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2010), Document 129, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v30/d129>.

⁴⁵ Bernard Gwertzman, “U.S. Backs Turks in Cyprus But Warns Against a War,” *The New York Times*, August 14, 1974, <https://www.nytimes.com/1974/08/14/archives/us-backs-turks-in-cyprus-but-warns-against-a-war.html>.

While the CIA might not have provided a comprehensive picture of the impending invasion's magnitude,⁴⁶ the second phase should not have been unexpected. Signs of Turkey's intentions were evident through its reinforcement of positions on the island. Additionally, there were various proposals for the division of the island—from a canton model to a complete partition—circulating in Geneva talks, indicating potential outcomes.⁴⁷ Finally, on August 12, Kissinger and Callaghan even discussed the growing sense of the imminence of the second phase of the Turkish invasion.⁴⁸

As with the events of the U.S. following the Greek-sponsored coup, the efforts made by the U.S. were insufficient to prompt the withdrawal of Turkish troops from the island or at least deter the second phase of the invasion. The U.S. was reluctant to antagonize first Greece and then Turkey. For Cypriots, the sole consequence of the three-week cease-fire was the even more heavily armed Turkish army that was ready to get what they “deserved,” namely one-third of the island. This phase marked the third failure of U.S. policy on Cyprus, which resulted in the worst possible outcome for the island—its partition. The second phase of the Turkish invasion will be detailed in the forthcoming section of this part.

The Second Phase of the Turkish Invasion of 1974

On August 14 at 6:30 a.m., several hours after the breakdown of peace talks, Turkey launched the second phase of its aggression—the Attila II operation. Three weeks after the legitimate government of Cyprus was restored, Turkey captured 37.3% of the territory in just two days. Turkey stopped only when it reached the British base of Dhekelia on the south of the island, as it feared that further progression would mean war with the U.K., a risk Turkey

⁴⁶ “Study Prepared by the Intelligence Community Staff for Director of Central Intelligence Colby,” Document 171.

⁴⁷ O’Malley and Craig, *The Cyprus Conspiracy*, 209-211.

⁴⁸ “Memorandum of Conversation,” vols. XXX, GREECE; CYPRUS; TURKEY, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976*, ed. by Daniel J. Lawler and Erin R. Mahan, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2010), Document 128, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v30/d128>.

was not prepared to take. The new demarcation line dividing the island became known as the Attila Line or Green Line.

Following August 14, the events unfolding in Cyprus marked a notable change among U.S. officials: previously overlooked, the island nation became a matter of concern. On August 18, Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger stated: “Turkey had gone beyond what any of her ‘friends or sympathizers’ were prepared to accept.”⁴⁹ The U.S. military program for Turkey was effectively under review. Nevertheless, this momentum was short-lived, as the following day, Kissinger, in a press conference, relayed assurances he had received from Ecevit⁵⁰ that “the Turkish occupation zone could be reduced in size, that the demarcation line ... is negotiable, and that Turkey is prepared to ... phase troop cuts.”⁵¹

Cypriots responded with fury to the U.S. policy. On the same day, an anti-American riot erupted in Nicosia, with the mob shouting “Kissinger—a Killer” in front of the U.S. embassy.⁵² At this point, the anger towards Kissinger, stemming from his perceived role in the events unfolding in Cyprus, made him a scapegoat for all their grievances. During the demonstration, EOKA-B supporters shot the U.S. ambassador to Cyprus, Rodger Paul Davies, and his secretary.⁵³ President Clerides took the injured Ambassador to the hospital, where he died.⁵⁴ The same day, Ecevit made a provocative comparison, equating the death of

⁴⁹ Leslie H. Gelb, “PENTAGON’S CHIEF CAUTIONS TURKEY ON CYPRUS DRIVE,” *The New York Times*, August 19, 1974, <https://www.nytimes.com/1974/08/19/archives/pentagons-chief-cautions-turkey-on-cyprus-drive.html>.

⁵⁰ Rossides, “American Foreign Policy Regarding Cyprus,” 36.

⁵¹ *The New York Times*, “Crucial Turkish Pledge,” August 20, 1974, <https://www.nytimes.com/1974/08/20/archives/crucial-turkish-pledge.html>.

⁵² Ραδιοφωνικές Μαρτυρίες, [Radio Testimonials], “Anti-American demonstration outside the U.S. Embassy in Nicosia (19/08/1974),” video, 0:01, May 20, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qqUzC-X6aVc>.

⁵³ Henry Giniger, “WOMAN AID DIES,” *The New York Times*, August 20, 1974, <https://www.nytimes.com/1974/08/20/archives/woman-aide-dies-bullets-from-outside-penetrated-besieged-nicosia.html>.

⁵⁴ “Transcript of Telephone Conversation Between Secretary of State Kissinger and Acting Cypriot President Clerides,” vols. XXX, GREECE; CYPRUS; TURKEY, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976*, ed. by Daniel J. Lawler and Erin R. Mahan, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2010), Document 139, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v30/d139>.

the ambassador with the violence against the Turkish minority on the island.⁵⁵ This strategic move sought to portray Turkey, the aggressor, as a benign victim and make the U.S. sympathize with the Turks, even after the second phase of the Turkish invasion that left the island divided, resembling nothing less than a refugee camp the size of Puerto Rico.

However, the embargo on military aid to Turkey, mandated by existing acts and agreements, was still not implemented. This failure to act sparked heated debates in Congress, such as the one between Kissinger and Senator Eagleton.

“Do you have any *alternative but to obey the law*,” the Senator [Mr. Eagleton, a Missouri Democrat] asked again.

Mr. Kissinger then added, “If your legal opinion is correct, it will have very adverse foreign relations consequences for an important ally” [emphasis added].⁵⁶

Kissinger’s position reflected the strategic considerations but also placed him *above the law*. If Kissinger had just enforced the law, congressional action would not have been necessary.⁵⁷ The embargo on Turkey was placed on February 5, 1975, almost six months after the first phase of the Turkish invasion, further underscoring the divergence between legal obligations and geopolitical considerations. As anticipated, Turkey deprived the U.S. of access to American military bases. The embargo was attacked multiple times and lifted completely under President Carter.

Summarizing American Actions in the Crisis of 1974

The Cyprus Crisis of 1974, rooted in long-standing ethnic disputes, colonial legacy, and its tumultuous transition to independence, underscores a series of critical missteps and oversights of American foreign policy. Key figures within the U.S. administration, notably Henry Kissinger, prioritized geopolitical considerations over humanitarian concerns, viewing

⁵⁵ Juan de Onis, “Ankara Says Tragedy Echoes. Ordeals of Turks on Cyprus,” *The New York Times*, August 20, 1974, <https://www.nytimes.com/1974/08/20/archives/ankara-says-tragedy-echoes-ordeals-of-turks-on-cyprus.html>.

⁵⁶ *The New York Times*, “Senate Urges Ford to Halt Arms Aid to Turkey,” September 20, 1974, <https://www.nytimes.com/1974/09/20/archives/senate-urges-ford-to-halt-arms-aid-to-turkey.html>.

⁵⁷ Rossides, “American Foreign Policy Regarding Cyprus,” 39.

Cyprus primarily through the lens of Cold War dynamics and regional alliances. By containing the confrontations in Cyprus, his primary objective was to avoid a full-scale war between Greece and Turkey that could have led to the collapse of NATO in the Eastern Mediterranean, and in this, he succeeded.⁵⁸ A month post-invasion, the *New York Times* will write a critical review of the foreign policy actions on Cyprus taken by Henry Kissinger that reflects what we have already been talking about:

The stalling on the aid cutoff, in violation of the laws, is of a piece with Washington's earlier unwillingness to condemn Greece's disintegrating junta for the coup against the legal Government of Cyprus—a reluctance that encouraged Turkey to intervene on the island. It is also consistent with Washington's refusal to condemn Turkey's subsequent massive occupation of a third of Cyprus in flagrant breach of solemn cease-fire pledges.⁵⁹

Henry Kissinger's approach to the crisis in particular, and the U.S. foreign policy on Cyprus in general, were plagued with hesitation and narrow focus on strategic considerations, all of which ultimately failed to prevent the partition of the island.

First, despite indications of escalating tensions, the Greek-sponsored coup of 1974 caught the U.S. off guard, revealing a lack of anticipation and coordination. Subsequent actions, or rather the lack thereof, following the coup exacerbated the situation, as the U.S. was reluctant to condemn the coup to avoid antagonizing Greece—a reluctance that emboldened Turkey to intervene on the island, using the Treaty of Guarantee of 1960 as the pretext for “safeguarding” the TC minority. Later, despite clear intelligence indicating Turkey's intentions, the U.S. opted for a restrained response, remained hesitant to condemn Turkey's extensive invasion of Cyprus, and delayed implementing a military aid embargo, prioritizing short-term regional stability over the rights and security of the Cypriot people and

⁵⁸ Geoffrey Warner, 2009. "The United States and the Cyprus Crisis of 1974." *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 85, no. 1 (2009): 143.

⁵⁹ *The New York Times*, "Turkey Is Ineligible," September 14, 1974, <https://www.nytimes.com/1974/09/14/archives/turkey-is-ineligible.html>.

undermining America's moral leadership and credibility by diverging from the principles of commitment to supporting free peoples as outlined in the Truman Doctrine.

The present part has highlighted how geopolitical interests, such as concerns over communism and maintaining strategic alliances, overshadowed efforts to uphold ethical and legal obligations. In hindsight, the failure of American foreign policy on Cyprus in 1974 underscores the need for a more comprehensive approach to diplomacy and conflict resolution. By prioritizing short-term strategic interests over long-term stability, the U.S. inadvertently contributed to the perpetuation of division and conflict on the island. As subsequent events would demonstrate, the repercussions of these policy failures would echo for decades, shaping the political trajectory of the efforts to reunite the island and of the broader Eastern Mediterranean region. The ensuing and final part of this paper will briefly discuss the most important developments that occurred after the Cyprus Crisis of 1974, while advancing an argument in favor of the greater role of the United States in potential pathways toward conflict resolution.

CYPRUS IN SEARCH OF A UNIFIED FUTURE

Cyprus as a Graveyard for Politicians

In 1983, Northern Cyprus declared its independence,⁶⁰ drifting away further from possible unification. *De jure*, Cyprus still remains a single entity. However, the facts on the ground present a different story: the northern part of the island is under the *de facto* control of the TRNC. The history of Cyprus from 1974 to this day is a history of tensions, miscommunications, and incidents between the RoC and the TRNC.

Over the years, numerous attempts have been made to solve the Cyprus Conflict, with the most promising peace talks starting in the 1990s. The efforts culminated in the Annan Plan of 2004, which aimed to reunify Cyprus before its entry into the European Union, but it ultimately failed. Although the plan was accepted in the North, it was rejected in the South, partly attributable to weak security guarantees and compromises of Cypriot sovereignty, such as allowing Turkish troops to remain indefinitely on the island. The outcome reflects a historical pattern of the over-prioritization of the interests of Turkey at the expense of both GC and TC Communities.

Despite the plan's failure, Cyprus was still admitted to the European Union, but only the legal part of Cyprus, leaving the TRNC in a rather complex position. It is legally part of the EU, and Turkish Cypriots are European citizens who live in this uncontrolled zone. Still, most of the EU's benefits, such as EU legislation and the free movement of goods, capital, and people, have been suspended. The bulk of the support, financial and otherwise, comes from its patron state, Turkey, although the TRNC is also partly supported by the EU.⁶¹

Following the failure of the Annan plan, several rounds of negotiations followed, with the most recent efforts being the UN-supported Swiss talks of 2015-17. Even though both

⁶⁰ The TRNC is recognized only by Turkey.

⁶¹ Muhittin Tolga Özsağlam, "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus as a De Facto and Limited Recognized State: From Federal Solution to Two State Model," *Международная аналитика [International Analytics]* 13, no. 4, (2023): 131-2.

parties came close to understanding the most important elements of the settlement, the historic opportunity was missed.⁶² The failure of the talks stemmed mainly from disagreement about two persistent issues: (1) power-sharing arrangements and (2) security guarantee issues.⁶³

History does not support convergence, and to make Cyprus work as a united entity would require “superhuman effort in power sharing.”⁶⁴ However, as seen in countries where two or more ethnolinguistic groups are present, such as Canada, Belgium, and Switzerland, it is still possible and imperative, as maintaining the status quo is not sustainable, and there is *always* a risk of the escalation of conflict and further bloodshed.

The most basic framework agreed on multiple times is the bi-zonal, bi-communal federation, yet defining this concept within terms that would be acceptable to both sides has been challenging. As emphasized multiple times, “Neither side can ‘win,’ and both must be prepared to give up some demands.”⁶⁵ Greeks aim for a completely representative unitary system, meaning a roughly 80/20 balance, while the Turks aim for a two-state model, meaning a 50/50 balance. To sell the convergence to both sides, the realistic solution would mean some level of skewed but still representative loose federation or a united confederation with checks and balances for both sides. A practical settlement within this framework would mean the physical separation of two communities with the creation of majority-minority provinces while promoting political and social-physiological unity *on par with* economic unity to ensure long-lasting peace.⁶⁶ Under such a settlement, each government would retain control over its cultural, religious, and social policies, along with partial control over the

⁶² Przemysław Osiewicz, "The Cyprus Talks 2015–2017: Their Course, the Outcome, and Consequences for the European Union," *Rocznik integracji Europejskiej [Yearbook of European Integration]*, no. 14 (2020): 144.

⁶³ “Turkey and TRNC Push Two-State Solution to Cyprus Division. Country Report: Cyprus,” *Economist Intelligence Unit*, 2020, link.gale.com/apps/doc/A647197177/AONE?u=mosc00780&sid=bookmark-AONE&xid=152987ea.

⁶⁴ Mehmet, “Divergence or Convergence?” 136.

⁶⁵ Bahcheli, Couloumbis, and Carley, *Greek-Turkish Relations and U.S. Foreign Policy*, 19.

⁶⁶ Ozay Mehmet, "Towards a Solution in Cyprus through Economic Federalism" In *Cyprus: A Regional Conflict and its Resolution*, ed. by Norma Salem. (New York City: ST. MARTIN'S PRESS, INC, 1992), 170-1 and 174.

economic sector, while a federal authority would balance and redistribute finances, thus ensuring the island's long-term stability.

However, after five decades of diplomatic failure, Cyprus has been coined “a graveyard for politicians.” The complexity of the Cyprus resolution falls somewhere between the German Reunification on one end and the enduring Israeli–Palestinian conflict on the other. As of 2020, the Economist Intelligence Unit predicts a 20% chance of Cyprus settlement with a baseline scenario of the status quo to be maintained.⁶⁷ Even though the complexity of the solution is a major factor contributing to this statistic, achieving a solution requires an impartial and influential mediator and security guarantor, as intercommunal talks without a third party are not viable. Greece and Turkey are unsuitable as guarantors because they are biased toward one of the sides. The United Kingdom's inability to guarantee Cypriot independence in 1974 highlights its limited capacity to effectively ensure the preservation of Cypriot independence fifty years later. Among other prominent actors often discussed in the literature are the United Nations, the European Union, the United States, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

The United Nations became more directly involved in the Cyprus issue, mainly through the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), after Kissinger's mediation efforts failed to produce a lasting solution. UNFICYP, by physically separating two communities with a buffer zone, maintains peace but also entrenches the status quo. Moreover, UNFICYP's mandate is extremely limited, as it lacks the authority from the Security Council to carry out significant peacekeeping operations: UNFICYP does not even have the authority to propose solutions for the problems that develop on the ground.⁶⁸ Due to the nature of the conflict, it seems that the involvement of the United Nations is insufficient to

⁶⁷ “Turkey and TRNC Push Two-State Solution,” *Economist Intelligence Unit*.

⁶⁸ Bahcheli, Couloumbis, and Carley, *Greek-Turkish Relations and U.S. Foreign Policy*, 13-14.

restore peace, particularly when considering that the conflict has been going on for 50 years, with both sides engaged in a localized arms race.

Some experts have also argued that it may be “high time to ‘Europeanize’ the peace process in Cyprus,” given that the conflict not only presents a global issue but also directly affects the EU.⁶⁹ However, a significant obstacle arises with EU-led peace talks. Turkey would never accept the EU as a mediator because of the perceived bias. Within the EU, the Greek side is represented by Greece and Greek Cypriots, who hold veto powers, while Turkey is not an EU member, and Turkish Cypriots only have observer powers in the EU parliament. This situation undermines the neutrality of negotiations led by the EU.

The U.S. or NATO forces led by the U.S. are the final potential mediators in the Cyprus conflict. The U.S. is the only country that can be perceived as unbiased and powerful enough to become a mediator in the conflict. As argued by the United States Institute of Peace, stakeholders on all sides—Greece, Turkey, and the U.K., as well as Greek and Turkish Cypriots—would be willing to accept the U.S. or NATO as a middleman.⁷⁰ The U.S., as the *de facto* leader of the liberal world, can become the key player in the mediation of the conflict, which has been exacerbated, in part, by past neglect on the part of the U.S. The concluding section of the paper will advocate for a re-evaluation of the U.S. foreign policy approach to Cyprus involvement, emphasizing the potential for constructive American engagement.

The Prospective Role of the United States in Post-1974 Cyprus

While some conflicts arising from the Cold War era, such as the division of Germany, have been successfully resolved post-Cold War, the Cyprus Conflict remains unresolved. The significance of a mediator in conflict resolution cannot be overstated, but in the context of

⁶⁹ Osiewicz, "The Cyprus Talks 2015–2017," 149.

⁷⁰ Bahcheli, Couloumbis, and Carley, *Greek-Turkish Relations and U.S. Foreign Policy*, 27.

Cyprus's division, which is defined by a long-lasting and complicated dynamic between the two communities on the island and the guarantor powers, it is especially true. Considering that superpowers have historically demonstrated the capacity to facilitate resolutions of such conflicts, the U.S., driven by considerations of (1) strategic interests, (2) historical responsibility, and (3) continued tensions, should take an interest in the resolution of the Cyprus Conflict.

The strategic importance of Cyprus to the U.S. lies in its location at a crossroads between Europe, Asia, and Africa. The island hosts critical British Sovereign Base Areas (SBAs) with loads of monitoring facilities the U.K. and its biggest ally, the U.S., rely on for a range of purposes beyond eavesdropping on the neighboring region. More importantly, however, the island's dynamics between the RoC and the TRNC greatly influence the relations between the two key regional U.S. allies, Greece and Turkey, thereby impacting NATO's stability in the southern flank.

Furthermore, Cyprus is tied to America's historical responsibility. Reflecting on the events of 1974, Cyprus suffered immensely when the global advocate for democracy—the United States—driven by the principles of political realism chose to overlook the nuanced regional dynamics. The U.S. hesitated to antagonize Greece and Turkey, worsening the crisis and contributing to the island's division. Henry Kissinger, emblematic of this approach, drove American foreign policy on Cyprus to failure. Even though from a strategic perspective, his efforts to avoid a full-scale war between Greece and Turkey are understandable, they are heavily criticized for neglecting the sovereignty and rights of the people of Cyprus, contributing to the perpetuation of division and conflict on the island.

The report of the European Commission on Human Rights from July 10, 1976, found the Turkish army, *reliant on U.S. aid and material*, guilty of evicting and confining Greek Cypriots in detention centers, instances of torture, acts of rape and ill-treatment, and

deliberate killings of civilians, prisoners, and detainees.⁷¹ Moreover, despite the U.S. not sending troops to the island, the consequences of the Cyprus Crisis also had a direct human toll on American citizens. During the second phase of the Turkish invasion, five American citizens went missing, their fate remaining unknown to this day.⁷² On August 19, 1974, the first anti-American riot in the history of the island erupted in front of the U.S. Embassy in Nicosia, resulting in the deaths of Rodger Paul Davies, the U.S. ambassador to Cyprus, and his secretary.

Lastly, the frozen conflict in Cyprus is not sustainable and, without a comprehensive resolution, could potentially lead to the escalation of tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean, further unhinging NATO's southern flank. Recent developments have intensified concerns, particularly with Erdoğan's increasing shift towards authoritarian rhetoric, a trend similar to the one observed in regimes such as those of Russia and China. Following his re-election in 2023, the first visit Erdoğan paid was to the TRNC, where he called for the international recognition of the TRNC and gave a speech advocating for a two-state model—the complete partition of the island.⁷³

In conclusion, considering the geopolitical significance of Cyprus, American historical responsibility, and recent developments, the U.S. should play a central role in future peace talks and plans for Cyprus. However, as argued by the United States Institute of Peace, for the U.S. involvement to be effective, it will require a different view on Cyprus, the one where U.N. peacekeeping can be supplemented by special coordinators and negotiators from the U.S. and, most importantly, the one where the U.S. will provide security guarantees to both Greeks and Turks. The latter might entail the complete demilitarization of Cyprus and

⁷¹ European Commission on Human Rights, *Applications Nos. 6780/74 and 6930/75*, Report of the Commission, Strasbourg, 1976. <https://perma.cc/CLC3-4P6Y>.

⁷² The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, *Cyprus Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1997* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of State, January 30, 1974).

⁷³ Menelaos Hadjicostis, “Turkey’s president unwavering on two-state policy to resolve Cyprus’ ethnic division” in *The Associated Press* (New York City: The Associated Press, June 12, 2023). <https://perma.cc/N7D4-X66C>.

the replacement of Turkish troops with an international force led by the U.S. or NATO.⁷⁴ This decision would become an endorsement not only to acknowledge its historical obligation, but also to align with its commitment to supporting democracy globally with a resolution of a conflict that has long become a strategic necessity.

⁷⁴ Bahcheli, Coulombis, and Carley, *Greek-Turkish Relations and U.S. Foreign Policy*, 28.