

Summary

The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) is an important and legitimate state according to international law, contemporary international developments, and human rights. According to the Turkish side, the TRNC was declared a confederation-based state on August 16, 1960, based on the founding partnership of two peoples. Despite this, the Greek Cypriot side disregarded the Turks in violation of the 1960 Cyprus Constitution and attempted genocide in 1963 within the framework of the Akritas Plan. Therefore, it is incorrect to call the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus (GCASC) the Republic of Cyprus. The Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus defines two constituent peoples: the Turkish Cypriot people and the Greek Cypriot people. From this perspective, the Republic of Cyprus is not a legitimate state. Considering the past years, the Turkish Cypriot people have effectively maintained their statehood by holding their own democratic elections for over forty years.

The geopolitics of the Eastern Mediterranean have reached a very different level since the beginning of the Cyprus Conflict. Located directly across from the Suez Canal, which opens to the Indian and Pacific Oceans, the island of Cyprus is increasingly important in global geopolitics. Cyprus is forty-five nautical miles from Türkiye and is integral to Türkiye's national security.

The Future of Cyprus and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in a Changing Global Geopolitical Landscape.

Dr. Ahmet Zeki BULUNÇ - Ambassador (Ret.)

While Türkiye considers the island of Cyprus as a whole, the Greek Cypriot side perceives the island as its own state. Furthermore, the Greek Cypriot side considers the TRNC not as a state but merely a "community." This situation offers a crucial perspective for understanding the Cyprus issue.

The importance of Cyprus lies in the presence of the Turkish people on the island and the historical context of their struggle for existence. As a result of this long-standing struggle, Greek Cypriots, supported by Greece, initiated anarchist terrorist activities through the "Ethniki Organosis Kiprion Agoniston (EOKA)" from the 1950s onward. In 1963, they overthrew the main state and occupied the south of Cyprus. Unfortunately, negotiations held during this process failed to reach any conclusion. Finally, the TRNC was declared in 1983, and Türkiye recognized the TRNC shortly thereafter.

The Greek Cypriot side defines the northern part of Cyprus as an "occupied territory" and operates on this concept. The struggle and achievements of the Turkish people on the island form the basis of their existence. The TRNC is an important and legitimate state, considered a zone of peace and stability in the context of international law, constitutional structure, contemporary developments, and human rights.

The truly illegitimate side is the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus. This is because the Greek Cypriots equate the concept of "Cyprus" with the Republic of Cyprus, established on August 16, 1960. However, the Republic of Cyprus was a federal, confederal, and functional state founded on the partnership of the two peoples, established through negotiations conducted under the auspices of the United Nations. However, the Greek Cypriots attempted to destroy the Turkish Cypriot people within the framework of the Akritas Plan, which began implementation on December 21, 1963, and was clearly a genocidal plan. Considering this situation, it is not possible for the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus to be referred to as a legitimate state under the name "Republic of Cyprus".

According to the constitutional structure at the time, the state had two founding partners: the Turkish Cypriot people and the Greek Cypriot people. However, the Greek Cypriots viewed the Turkish Cypriot people not as a state, but as a minority community. Their fundamental approach, consistently expressed during the negotiations, was to define the Turkish Cypriot people not as a people, but as a religious minority or community. Despite this, the Turkish Cypriot people established their constitutional structure, held their democratic elections, and continue to exist as a state. The TRNC has effectively maintained its statehood for over forty years.

The Greek Cypriots' primary objective was the annexation of the island of Cyprus to Greece, or "Enosis." While the Greek Cypriots were striving for this goal, a republic model was agreed upon in 1960, based on two founding partners, with shared sovereignty. This republic was established not only on a geographical basis but also on a functional division of responsibilities. However, this structure lasted only three years.

In 1963, then-President Makarios, Interior Minister Georges, and other high-ranking officials (e.g., Speaker of the House of Representatives Clerides) implemented the Akritas Plan. According to this plan, the Turkish Cypriot population would be annihilated within 48 hours, and the island would be annexed to Greece, as in the case of Crete. However, the Turkish

21 January 2025

Cypriot people managed to resist this plan thanks to measures taken with Turkish support and the establishment of the Turkish Cypriot Resistance Organization (TMT).

Until 1974, the Turkish Cypriot people suffered greatly under embargoes, economic restrictions, and Greek Cypriot attacks. People were killed on the roads, villages were raided, and massacres were committed. However, with the 1974 Peace Operation, a structure emerged on the island where two separate states could exist. Today, one of these two states is the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus (GCASC) and the other the TRNC.

From an international legal perspective, when it comes to issues such as borders, sovereignty, property, and territory, this issue can be considered more than just a problem, but a dispute between two states. Various attempts have been made in the past to resolve this dispute. For example, Rolandis, the Greek Cypriot Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time, stated in articles and statements that all 18 plans or frameworks for negotiations proposed up to that time had been rejected by the Greek Cypriots, while the Turks consistently maintained a constructive stance.

Rolandis criticized his own government, which he believed did not want peace in Cyprus, and therefore resigned from his post as Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The Annan Plan process also serves as a significant example. This plan was imposed on the Turkish Cypriot people due to pressure from the international community, especially the European Union (EU), on Türkiye. In the referendum, the Turkish Cypriots overwhelmingly voted "yes" to the Annan Plan, while the Greek Cypriots voted "no" because they refused to grant even a small amount of rights to the Turkish Cypriots. Therefore, despite being a significant turning point in the Cyprus Conflict, the Annan Plan failed to reach a conclusion.

The talks in Crans-Montana in 2017, despite offering even more concessions than the Annan Plan also failed. Initiatives that would have weakened Türkiye's rights and status on the island were discussed, but it was the Greek Cypriot side that abandoned the negotiations. From late 2019, Türkiye openly stated that the Greek Cypriot side with a maximalist approach, had no intention of sharing the rights of the Turkish Cypriot people and continued to view them as subordinate. Even then-TRNC President Mustafa Akıncı stated that no agreement could be reached with the Greek Cypriot side. Despite implementing of various negotiation processes and plans over more than fifty years, the Greek Cypriot side has not shown a constructive approach. They have not accepted the Turkish Cypriot people as equal partner. Currently,

Türkiye and the TRNC expressed their readiness to engage in talks for a compromise based on separate, independent, sovereign states with equal international status. However, going beyond this would contradict our fundamental policy.

The geopolitical position of the Eastern Mediterranean has evolved significantly from the period beginning with the Cyprus Conflict to the present day. This shift necessitates a reevaluation of our approach to resolving the Cyprus issue. Cyprus has always been strategically important due to its location, but its geopolitical significance has been further enhanced by new dynamics. The presence of hydrocarbon resources in the Eastern Mediterranean, in particular, has altered geopolitical balances and made Cyprus an essential location for both Türkiye and the Turkish Cypriot people. The existence of the TRNC and its extensive coastline are crucial in terms of maritime jurisdictions and exclusive economic zones. Cyprus's geopolitical importance and maritime value are steadily increasing. In light of these developments, Türkiye must carefully assess these critical changes and adjust its strategic planning accordingly.

Conclusion

The TRNC was declared in 1983, a significant turning point in the Cyprus Conflict. While Türkiye recognized this state, it was not internationally recognized and was often referred to as "Northern Cyprus." The TRNC consider itself as a legitimate state but does not view the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus as legally or politically legitimate.

In 1960, the Republic of Cyprus was established under the auspices of the United Nations, with Türkiye, Greece, and the United Kingdom as guarantors. The primary objective of this state was to ensure political equality between Turks and Greek Cypriots in Cyprus and to establish a joint administration. However, this structure lasted only three years, and the crisis, which began with President Makarios's constitutional amendment proposals in 1963, deepened as the Greek Cypriots attempted to exclude the Turkish Cypriots from the state. Acting in line with the goal of enosis (the annexation of Cyprus to Greece), the Greek Cypriots viewed the Turkish Cypriot community as a minority and sought to exclude them from the administration.

From 1963 onwards, Turkish Cypriots were subjected to severe oppression and forced to live in various ghettos. In 1974, a coup d'état supported by the Greek junta regime aimed to annex Cyprus to Greece. Türkiye, exercising its guarantor power, launched the Cyprus Peace Operation on July 20, 1974. This intervention led to the de facto division of the island into north and south.

21 January 2025

The post-1974 period was marked by the search for a bi-communal federal solution. In this context, the "Annan Plan," named after UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, was submitted to a referendum in 2004. While Turkish Cypriots accepted the plan, the Greek Cypriots overwhelmingly rejected it. This rejection of the plan led to the continuation of the status quo on the island.

TRNC's difficulties in obtaining international recognition stem from fundamental disagreements over the island's status. The Greek Cypriot side defines the Cyprus issue as an internal matter. According to this approach, Turkish Cypriots have the constitutional status of a minority and a community. Therefore, the situation in Cyprus is portrayed as a "constitutional dispute" and is not recognized as an international conflict.

Following the failure of the talks in Crans-Montana in 2021, new negotiation processes regarding the Cyprus problem are being discussed. TRNC advocates a solution based on two separate sovereign states. The Greek Cypriot side, on the other hand, wants to return to the negotiating table for a federation-based agreement. However, deep disagreements persist regarding the resolution of critical issues such as the guarantor system and Türkiye's military presence on the island.

Today, in opposition to the Greek Cypriot side's claim of "minority" status, the TRNC, as an independent state, continues to seek a solution based on the principle of political equality. This situation undermines hopes for a resolution of the Cyprus issue and increases tensions in the region. The Cyprus Conflict remains a pressing issue that directly affects not only the people of the island but also the strategic balance of power in the Eastern Mediterranean. While the TRNC's struggle for independence continues to be crucial for Türkiye's regional security and energy policies, a status quo remains resistant to the international community's efforts to find a solution.

About the Author

Dr. Ahmet Zeki BULUNÇ - Ambassador (Ret.)

Born in Nicosia, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, on August 5, 1945, he completed his primary and secondary education in Cyprus and pursued higher education in Türkiye. In December 1963, the same year he started university, he returned to Cyprus with other Cypriot students to join the Turkish Cypriot Struggle for Existence. This decision was made in response to the Bloody Christmas genocide carried

out against the Turkish people by the Greek Cypriots under the Akritas Plan. He actively participated in the struggle from 1964 to 1966.

After the students who had interrupted their university studies and returned to Cyprus were discharged, he went back to Ankara and resumed his education, which he had put on hold in 1967. He graduated from the Faculty of Political Science at Ankara University, Türkiye, in 1971. He began his career as a Budget Controller in the Turkish Cypriot Ministry of Finance in May 1973.

Due to the Sampson Coup orchestrated by the Greek Junta in Cyprus, he was called up to the expeditionary force on July 15, 1974, and fought in the Cyprus Turkish Peace Operation on July 20, 1974. After the Peace Operation, he was appointed Assistant Planning Specialist at the Undersecretariat of the State Planning Organization of the Prime Ministry of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (then known as the Ministry of Coordination and Planning) in January 1975. He held various positions within the organization, eventually becoming Undersecretary in 1991.

He pursued postgraduate studies at the Institute of Economic Planning and Development (ISVE-Naples) in 1980-1981 on an Italian government scholarship. He also attended a postgraduate program at Boston University in 1986-1987 as a US scholarship recipient, and in 1995 he studied Economics at Uludağ University, Türkiye. Additionally, in 2000, he completed a program at the Eastern Mediterranean.

Throughout his career, he held important positions such as a member of the Board of Directors of the Cyprus Turkish Foundations Administration, a member of the Board of Trustees and the Board of Directors of the European University of Lefke, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Eastern Mediterranean University, and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Cyprus Turkish Cooperative Central Bank. He served as the Ambassador of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus to Ankara from August 1999 to August 2004.

Upon retiring in October 2004, he began working as an assistant professor at Başkent University, Türkiye. He currently teaches in the Department of Political Science and International Relations at the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Başkent University, and is a member of the Board of Directors of the Cyprus Turkish Historical Research Center at Başkent University.

21 January 2025

Throughout history, shaping the perceptions of societies has been one of the most fundamental elements of domestic and foreign policy. As the nation-state structure became widespread and nation-states emerged as the main actors in international relations, public diplomacy along with traditional diplomacy began to play a crucial role in shaping these relations.

Diplomatic relations between states are conducted by diplomats, including ambassadors and consuls. These diplomats also engage in public diplomacy, which serves a vital function in interstate relations. Public diplomacy activities have a significant impact not only on the citizens of a state but also on its leaders. Public diplomacy plays a pivotal role in shaping the relations between states alongside other diplomatic activities.

The aim of the project Public Diplomacy in Foreign Policy conducted in collaboration with Cappadocia University and Ankara Center for Crisis and Political Studies (ANKASAM) is to discuss the principles for implementing public diplomacy, identify key activities and highlight public diplomacy efforts undertaken by foreign diplomats in Türkiye. The ultimate goal is to contribute to shaping Turkish Foreign Policy and influencing decision-making processes.

For detailed information about the project;
<https://commonhorizon.kapadokya.edu.tr/> You can reach us from the address.

Prof. Dr. Şafak OĞUZ

Prof. Dr. Şafak OĞUZ became an Associate Professor in 2019 and a full Professor in 2024. He retired in 2021 after 23 years of service in the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF). During his time there, he also worked for the United Nations (UN) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). His expertise lies in Weapons of Mass Destruction, Terrorism (WMD), International Security, International Organizations and Peace and Conflict Studies. Prof. Dr. Şafak OĞUZ currently serves as the Acting Dean of the Faculty of Economics, Administrative and Social Sciences at Cappadocia University. He is fluent in English and German.

Prof. Dr. Mehmet Seyfettin EROL

Prof. Dr. Mehmet Seyfettin EROL graduated from the Department of Political Science and International Relations at Boğaziçi University (BU) in 1993. After completing his Master's Degree at BU in 1995, he was accepted to the PhD program at BU in the same year. After completing his PhD at Ankara University in 2005, Prof. Erol became an Associate Professor in 2009 in the field of "International Relations" and a full Professor in 2014. His areas of expertise are "Geopolitics", "Crisis Management", "Security", "Turkish Foreign Policy" and "Central Asia".

Prof. Erol has published numerous scientific articles and books on these subjects. He is the author and editor of various journals such as Eurasia File, Black Sea Studies, Gazi Akademik Overview, Journal of Regional Studies, International Crisis and Political Studies and contributor for national radio-television programs such as TRT, A HABER, TV NET, CNN TÜRK and HABERTÜRK.

Prof. Erol, whose opinions have been published in Turkey's leading magazines and newspapers has been deemed worthy of many awards, including Writers and Artists Foundation of the Turkic World (TÜRKSAV) in 2007, "Turkish World Service Award" in 2015 and Writers' Union of Turkey (TYB) "Press-Intellectual Award".

Prof. Erol has lectured at Ufuk, Ankara and Gazi Universities. As a faculty member in the Department of Relations at the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences at Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University, he served as an expert, coordinator and founder president in Türkiye's leading think tanks (ASAM, SDE, GSAM, USGAM). He has been the founding chairman of Ankara Crisis and Politics Research Center (ANKASAM) since 2016.