

UNDERSTANDING TURKISH CYPRIOTS' CONSTANTLY DEEPENING DISTRUST TOWARDS GREEK CYPRIOTS

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ABSTRACT

The island of Cyprus has held a permanent position on the agenda of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for decades. The UNSC regularly adopts resolutions to extend the mandate of the UN Peacekeeping Force (UNFICYP). In 2023, UNSC Resolution 2674 reiterated several points, including “the importance of achieving an enduring, comprehensive and just settlement based on a bicomunal, bizonal federation with political equality” in Cyprus. The authorities of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) expressed their dissatisfaction with the resolution, highlighting that “the wording adapted in the resolution is completely detached from the realities on the ground and gives the rest of the world a misleading message.” This article aims to explain the reasons behind the TRNC authorities' perception of the UNSC resolution as detached from reality and misleading within the conceptual framework of trust. Trust is an essential prerequisite for cooperation, forming the foundation of common ground between two negotiating parties. By exploring the emotional aspects of the issue, this article argues that the historical trajectory of events, coupled with the current policies pursued by the Greek Cypriot authorities and the prevailing attitudes among the majority of Greek Cypriots, undeniably convinces Turkish Cypriots that Greek Cypriots would not engage in honest cooperation and would exploit Turkish Cypriots when presented with an opportunity.

Keywords: Cyprus, the United Nations, Conflicts, Trust

INTRODUCTION

For decades, the island of Cyprus has maintained an unwavering presence on the United Nations Security Council's (UNSC) agenda. The UNSC regularly adopts resolutions to extend the mandate of the UN Peacekeeping Force (UNFICYP). The UNSC (2023, January 30) Resolution 2674 reiterated several points, including “the importance of achieving an enduring, comprehensive and just settlement based on a bicomunal, bizonal federation with political equality” in the island of Cyprus. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) (2023, January 30)

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expressed its objections to this Resolution through an official statement, which partly read as follows:

“The wording adapted in the resolution is completely detached from the realities on the ground and gives the rest of the world a misleading message by serving the interests of the Greek Cypriot side. The imposition through the use of expressions such as the continuation of the search for common grounds with the aim of paving the way for returning to the negotiations, as well as the resumption of official negotiations based on the “bi-zonal, bi-communal federation” model, in most diplomatic terms, is a great disrespect towards the will of the Turkish Cypriot people.”

This article aims to provide a fresh perspective on the enduring impasse on the island of Cyprus by illuminating the significance behind the TRNC Foreign Ministry's reference to "detachment from the realities on the ground" within the context of trust. Trust stands as an indispensable prerequisite for cooperation, forming the bedrock of common understanding between two negotiating parties. In its absence, any attempt to establish such common ground becomes a futile endeavour. By focusing on the emotional aspect of the issue, this article argues that the historical course of events, along with the ongoing policies pursued by Greek Cypriot authorities and the prevailing attitudes among the majority of Greek Cypriots, have unequivocally convinced Turkish Cypriots that Greek Cypriots are unlikely to engage in sincere cooperation and would exploit Turkish Cypriots whenever presented with an opportunity.

CONCEPTUAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Trust constitutes the conceptual framework of this study. Even though trust has been recognized as significant by those involved in foreign policy, researchers have only gradually come to fully comprehend the concept. Starting from the 1990s, there has been a growing field of study within International Relations (IR) that aims to comprehensively grasp the concept analytically and theoretically. This field endeavours to employ trust in novel empirical situations and utilize it as a tool to address explanatory challenges (Pursiainen & Forsberg, 2021, p. 300). Although there is a large body of trust literature, there is no universally accepted definition of the concept. As Vuorelma (2018) suggests, trust is risk-taking with the expectation that the trustee will do the right thing (p.39). Pursiainen and Forsberg (2021) posit that trust is not a rigid “either-or” concept; instead, it exists along a spectrum of intensities.

They claim that when we view trust as a continuum, its contrary is mistrust or distrust (p. 301). A conceptual issue related to the study of trust is whether it makes a difference to differentiate distrust from mistrust. Mistrust indicates the absence of trust. Distrust, on the other hand, is regarded as the opposite of trust. It carries more emotional baggage and is more rooted in past experiences compared to mistrust (Forsberg, 2018, p.159-160). Sinkkonen (2018) approaches trust as a multi-layered phenomenon and analyses it in three levels, namely, elite, organizational and societal levels. The context for trust at the elite level is the personal relations of the leaders. The organizational level, on the other hand, signifies relations between state institutions, which are facilitated by civilian and military bureaucrats. Finally, trust at societal level indicates common feelings of community members towards the leader, people, state, or culture

of the other party in a relationship (p.10). All three levels should be taken into consideration when trust is examined.

The concept of trust can also be explored within the framework of a tripartite typology, which studies it as a rational choice calculation, psychological and social phenomenon. Trust as a rational choice calculation is also referred to as strategic trust. According to this approach, parties engaged in a relationship undertake a thorough cost-benefit analysis to assess potential gains and losses associated with placing trust in the counterpart. If the benefits outweigh the losses and there is an anticipation that the other party also has a vested interest in reciprocating trustworthy actions, trust is bestowed. In this context, trust represents an ongoing process of calculated risk-taking that persists as long as it remains advantageous.

Trust as a psychological phenomenon draws attention to the emotional aspect of the concept. While positive emotions such as happiness reinforce trust, negative feelings decrease the level of trust and may lead to distrust. Trust as a social phenomenon is closely linked with identities. Similarities with the other party are the connection of “we-feeling,” which results in trusting behaviour. Interactions with the other party form “the social basis of trust.” This basis in return creates a “perceptions bias,” which determines how the behaviours or the messages of the other party are categorized. While a positive perception bias neutralizes negative signs, a negative perception bias distorts positive signals coming from the other side (Haukkala, et al., 2018, p.2-3).

Is placing trust in a party to perform a specific action more complex than simply depending on that party to carry out that particular task? Hinchman (2021) mentions that over the last three decades, discussions around this question have centred on three stances, namely Reductionist, Affective Attitude and Reactive Views and introduces a fourth perspective, the Assurance View. The Reductionism viewpoint argues against this complexity, asserting that trusting a party simply involves believing that the party is relatively reliable. The Affective Attitude View, on the other hand, argues in favour of complexity. It suggests that trust embodies a sense of optimistic emotion about a party's benevolent intentions. The Reactive Attitude View also supports complexity, but for a distinct reason: it posits that the foundation of trust is not solely predictive but normative, backed by a tendency to feel resentment if the party fails to fulfil the expected action. Hinchman's Assurance View, on the other hand, offers a novel interpretation of the normative framework of trust and a fresh explanation for distinguishing trust from mere reliance. Unlike mere reliance, trust grants a rationale for relying on the trusted party. In mere reliance, justification for depending on a party comes externally from the reliance itself, usually rooted in the party's record of reliability. In contrast, when you trust a party, you perceive an inherent justification to rely on that party, grounded not only in its reliability but also in its responsiveness to your pertinent needs (p.76).

The trust serves as a foundation for cooperative behaviour. The inclination to trust is influenced by the confidence one party has in their judgment of the trustworthiness of the other side. When there is uncertainty, it can hinder the willingness to participate in trusting or cooperative behaviour. Through empirical observation, it would be necessary to inquire about the level of trust a party holds, their confidence in this judgment, and then whether their behaviour aligns with it (Bauer, 2021, p. 27). While trust at a certain level might facilitate cooperation, distrust makes it unlikely even

when cooperation is beneficial for both parties (Haukkala & Saari, 2018, p. 111). For long term cooperation, a high-level trust is a must (Lebow, 2013, p. 23).

Drawing from a wide array of literature on trust, this study seeks to introduce a novel perspective on the interpretation of trust by focusing on the concept of persistently entrenched distrust, which can also be referred to as “irreversible distrust.” The main IR inquiry of trust lies in understanding the intricate process of reversing distrust and subsequently rebuilding trust. However, it is imperative to acknowledge that there are instances where the fundamental notions of willingness and mutual effort are evidently absent. In such cases, the task of overcoming distrust and achieving a restoration of trust to any meaningful extent can prove to be unattainable. When faced with such circumstances, recognizing the realities on the ground and redirecting efforts towards enhancing communication, as opposed to persistently pursuing cooperation, could emerge as a viable policy decision.

This study employs qualitative research methodology, drawing upon various scholarly perspectives that encompass different classifications for qualitative inquiry. Scholars like Creswell and Poth (2018) have outlined distinct types of inquiry approaches, which encompass narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case studies. Narrative research, for instance, centres on individual experiences, capturing narratives through interviews or secondary sources such as observations, books, documents, videos, and images. Data analysis options encompass thematic or structural analysis, with complementary visual analysis of images for a comprehensive interpretation. Phenomenological research, on the other hand, delves into the shared meaning attributed to a phenomenon by a collective group. Data collection involves individuals who have encountered the phenomenon, leading to the development of a general description. Interviews and a range of sources such as observations, novels, stories, poems, paintings, videos, and documents contribute to data collection.

The analysis focuses on describing and interpreting the experienced phenomenon. Meanwhile, the grounded theory approach strives to formulate process, action, or interaction theories that establish a framework for future investigations, transcending mere descriptions of individual or collective experiences. Ethnographic research probes into social organization patterns, studying ceremonies and customs while emphasizing the mental dynamics within the group. This entails exploring the group's ideas and beliefs, expressed through language and behaviours, to showcase the workings of culture. Conversely, case studies research examines specific instances, which might encompass entire culture-sharing groups, fostering a comprehensive understanding of the subject of study (p. 85). In this study, a primary emphasis is placed on the case studies research design, while also incorporating other approaches when applicable. Source triangulation is achieved by leveraging diverse data sources like interviews, documents, speeches, statements, books, and journal articles. Both inductive and deductive data analysis strategies are employed to unearth patterns and facilitate deeper comprehension.

BACKGROUND OF TURKISH CYPRIOTS' DISTRUST TOWARDS GREEK CYPRIOTS

Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots had lived together as the subjects of the Turkish Ottoman Empire between 1571 and 1878 and under the rule of the United Kingdom (UK) until 1960. The independence of Greece from the Ottoman Empire in 1832 marked a significant turning point in the history of Turkish-Greek relations and it had negative repercussions on Cyprus. Following its independence, Greece began pursuing a policy of expansion, also known as the *Megali Idea* ("Great Idea" in Greek). Greeks in Cyprus supported the *Megali Idea* and accordingly devoted themselves to realise the unification of Cyprus with Greece, which they called *Enosis* ("Union" in Greek). They were widely indoctrinated, especially in schools and churches. Passion for *Enosis* went hand in hand with hatred against Turks, who challenged the political union of Cyprus and Greece (Reddaway, 1990, p. 47). The UK assumed the provisional administration of Cyprus in 1878 and unilaterally annexed it in 1914 when the Ottoman Empire entered the First World War in the opposite camp. Türkiye formally recognized this annexation in 1923. During its rule in Cyprus, the UK had to deal with Greek Cypriots' determination to achieve *Enosis*. In 1955 Greek Cypriots established an underground organization called the National Organisation of Cypriot Fighters (EOKA) to end the British rule and realize *Enosis* (Hatay & Papadakis, 2012, p. 2).

By 1960, EOKA had killed 142 British servicemen and 84 Turkish Cypriots (Aziz, 2000, p. 67). Under these circumstances, Turkish Cypriots retreated from mixed areas to Turkish majority quarters (Atakol, 2012, p. 28). The Republic of Cyprus (RoC) was proclaimed in 1960 against this background. The RoC was a settlement that did not satisfy Greek Cypriots (Hatay & Papadakis, 2012, p. 28). It was a *sui generis* state, in which Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot communities elected their leaders separately. The leader of the Greek Cypriot community became President, and the Turkish Cypriot leader became Vice President. In the 10-member cabinet, six ministers were Greek Cypriots and four were Turkish Cypriots. In the parliament of 80 seats, 56 seats were reserved for Greek Cypriots and 24 for Turkish Cypriots. Similarly, all state posts were allocated according to a certain ratio, in line with the populations of the two communities. The Vice President had the right to use veto for matters that are significant for the Turkish Cypriot community. Also, cabinet decisions required at least one Turkish Cypriot Minister's approval. Türkiye, Greece, and the UK were granted guarantor powers to protect the constitutional order of the RoC, even by military means if deemed necessary. Many commentators at the time called RoC a "reluctant republic," a "quasi-state," and an "unwanted child" (Adamides, 2020, p. 30). Heraclides maintains that RoC, based on the London and Zurich Agreements was an "imposed settlement" and therefore the structure created by it could not last long (Heraclides, 2011, p. 119).

Head of the autocephalous Church of Cyprus, Makarios (born as Michael Christodoulou Mouskos and later adopted the clerical name Makarios) became the first President of the RoC and Dr. Fazıl Küçük was the Vice President (Cassia, 2007, p. 19). Makarios was the political leader of EOKA, and he was a staunch supporter of *Enosis*. The following remarks he uttered on 20 October 1951, when he was elected as the head of the Church of Cyprus demonstrates how deeply Makarios was attached to *Enosis*: "I take the holy oath that I shall work for the birth of our national freedom and shall never waiver from our policy of annexing Cyprus to Motherland Greece." (Atakol, 2012, p.

28). Moreover, the “oath” Makarios took at the Church of St John after a service in the early 1950s displays his intentions clearly:

“Beneath these sacred domes, let us in faith take the oath: We shall remain faithful unto death to the national demand. Without any retreats, without any compromises, we shall show our contempt for force and tyranny. With daring we shall raise high our morale, pursuing one sole aim, looking to one sole goal Enosis and only Enosis” (Reddaway, 1990, p. 12).

Due to his involvement with EOKA’s activities, Makarios was arrested in 1956 and exiled to the Seychelles Islands. Field Marshal Sir John Harding, British Governor of Cyprus at that time, issued a statement regarding Makarios’s exile, where he described him as “the leader of a political campaign which relies on the use of ruthless violence and terrorism” (Aziz, 2000, p. 67). His connection with EOKA was reiterated years later by EOKA leader Georgios Grivas, in his memoirs.

“January 11, 1955. I (Grivas) told the Archbishop all about the work we had done and are doing; I also talked to him about the excellent morale of our men. The Archbishop told me that Papagos (sc. then Prime Minister of Greece) wanted action; the Archbishop added that he (the Archbishop) had decided on 25th March as the date on which operations were to begin” (Reddaway, 1990, p. 61).

Grivas was a known extreme anti-Turkish. He once famously stated, “When fire unites with water and heaven with hell, only then can the Greeks become friends with the Turks.” (Atakol, 2012, p. 46). Makarios, as soon as he assumed his post as the President, publicly declared that this settlement was forced upon him, and he was still determined to realize *Enosis*. He appointed EOKA leaders to key positions, such as Polycarpus Yorgadjis became the Minister of Interior. Makarios acted in a way to prove that the system was dysfunctional, therefore it had to be revised. On 30 November 1963, he tabled 13 major amendments to change the balance of power in favour of the Greek Cypriots, which was categorically rejected by the Turkish Cypriot leadership and Türkiye (Şahoğlu, 2021, p. 28). On Christmas Eve of 1963, Greek Cypriots launched attacks on Turkish Cypriot civilians all over the island. Aziz (2000) described that “the honeymoon of the independence of Cyprus, the island in the sun, was over” (p. 1). “And it was literally the end of the union of the two races, Greek and Turk. Coexistence was over” (Aziz, 2000, p. 77). It marked the beginning of an 11-year-long period when the Turks were forced to live in enclaves (Atakol, 2012, p. 40).

Concerned about Türkiye's military intervention based on the Treaty of Guarantee, Makarios initially sought assistance from the UK and subsequently called upon the UN to address the situation. The UK responded positively. General Young, who oversaw the British operation, separated Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot quarters in Nicosia on 30 December 1963, by using a green marker to demarcate on his map. Hence, this line and the eventually expanded border in Cyprus is also known as the Green Line (Hatay & Papadakis, 2012, p. 5). Leaders of two communities, Makarios and Dr. Küçük, also President and Vice President of the RoC respectively, gave their consent to the Green Line in writing. That is to say, the capital city of the RoC was officially divided in 1963. Soon after, the first UN troops (UNFICYP) arrived on the island in March 1964 for a three-month mission. However, their mandate has been continuously extended every six months by the UNSC since then. That is after six

decades UN troops are still present in Cyprus. Under UN watch, Greek Cypriots had continued pressuring Turkish Cypriots to achieve *Enosis*. Turkish Cypriots were driven into enclaves, which covered only 2-3% of the island territory (Heraclides, 2011, p. 120).

Then, in 1964, Greek Cypriot forces commenced a heavy attack on Erenköy, a Turkish Cypriot enclave on the north shore of the island. The UN failed to stop the attack and Türkiye had to take military action to end atrocities. Turkish jets bombarded Greek Cypriot forces in the northwestern tip of the island. (Adamides, 2020, p. 30). Makarios urged Türkiye to cease its air strikes, otherwise, he announced, “he would order every Turkish village on the island to be attacked and if Türkiye attempted a landing, no Turkish Cypriot would be found alive.” (Aziz, 2000, p. 77). George Ball, who was the US Under-Secretary of State between 1961 and 1966, expressed that “Makarios’ central interest was to block off Turkish intervention so that his Greek Cypriots could go on happily massacring Turkish Cypriots” (Atakol, 2012, p. 4).

Between 1964 and 1968, Greek Cypriots turned these enclaves into open prisons and restricted the movement of people and goods in and out. Stepping out of the enclaves proved to be fatal (Atakol, 2012, p. 48). “It was several months after I arrived in the Turkish quarter before the Greeks allowed us to cross to their side to buy medical supplies,” Aziz remembers. “A shipment of Red Crescent supplies, under escort by British troops from Famagusta port in the west to Nicosia, was ambushed by armed Greeks and destroyed. The whole Turkish community on the island was forced to remain behind their locked doors as armed Greek thugs, both in and out of uniform, rampaged the countryside.” (Aziz, 2000, p. 77). As a result, Turkish Cypriots turned “extremely suspicious, bitter and unforgiving towards their Greek compatriots” (Reddaway, 1990, p. 49). In the meantime, representatives of two communities gathered in Beirut in 1968 for the first time to negotiate a way out of the situation. This marks the beginning of a cycle of failed negotiations.

On July 15, 1974, a military junta in Greece, with the assistance of EOKA B, a Greek Cypriot right-wing pro-*Enosis* paramilitary organisation formed in 1971, staged a military coup in Cyprus to topple Makarios to speed up *Enosis* (Hatay & Papadakis, 2012, p. 5). Sampson, who replaced Makarios, was determined to root out the Turkish from the island and unite Cyprus with Greece. Türkiye immediately approached the UK to take mutual action, as guarantor powers. The UK rejected to act, and Türkiye decided to intervene unilaterally. Five days later, on July 20, 1974, the first Turkish troops landed on the island. By the time Türkiye intervened, only 48 mixed villages remained in Cyprus. The number of mixed villages had peaked at 234 in 1859.

During that year, the number of Turkish-only villages was only half of the mixed ones. Subsequently, there was a decline in the number of mixed villages due to unfolding events on the island (Atakol, 2012, p. 86- 90). Following the establishment of a boundary between the two communities, 57 thousand Turkish Cypriots found themselves on the wrong side of the border. The Greek Cypriots did not permit their movement to the north for a year. In 1975, the sides agreed to a UN plan to exchange populations. With this agreement, as articulated by Atakol (2012), “the physical separation of Turkish and Greek Cypriots, which had begun almost a century ago, reached its conclusion” (p. 90).

Even though the RoC collapsed towards the end of 1963, the UN and the international community continued to recognize the Greek Cypriot state as the RoC. Greek Cypriot leadership invited the UN, and they have been covering most of the operational budget of the UNFICYP. Turkish Cypriots, on the other hand, initially formed a General Committee to manage their daily activities. The Committee worked between December 1963 and December 1967. Upon realizing that there were no indications of a return to business as usual within the constitutional order of the RoC, Turkish Cypriots restructured their committee into the Provisional Cyprus Turkish Administration in December 1967. Four years later, the word “provisional” was dropped from the name of the administration. The Autonomous Cyprus Turkish Administration was proclaimed in 1971. Following Türkiye's intervention, the administration was elevated to become the Turkish Federated State of Cyprus. In the meantime, negotiations with the Greek side continued without success. After living 20 years as stateless people, Turkish Cypriots eventually proclaimed the TRNC on November 15, 1983 (Atakol, 2012, p. 82). Türkiye recognized TRNC, but no other country followed suit upon the call of the UN Security Council with its resolution 541 (1983).

A turning point during this time was the Greek Cypriot leadership's European Union (EU) application in 1990 to become a member. The UN stepped up its efforts to solve the issue before Greek Cypriots joined the EU. Kofi Annan, then the UN Secretary-General, came up with a plan, which was named after him, the Annan Plan. It was the most comprehensive settlement plan since the beginning of the conflict (Adamides, 2020, p. 36). By the time a version of the plan was made public in 2002, Greek Cypriot leadership was confident that they were going to be accepted to the EU as a full member regardless of the outcome of the ongoing negotiations (Hatay & Papadakis, 2012, p. 6). As an EU member, they were going to be in a stronger position vis-à-vis Türkiye and the Turkish Cypriots.

The leaders of the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot communities agreed to hold simultaneous referenda to consult their communities. Greek Cypriot leader Tassos Papadopoulos actively campaigned for “no.” He presented the Annan Plan to Greek Cypriots as an existential threat and urged them to reject it even though he was the one who negotiated and accepted it to put on the referendum (Adamides, 2020, p. 37). Referenda took place on both sides of the Green Line on April 24, 2004. 75 per cent of Greek Cypriots said “no”, while 65 per cent of Turkish Cypriots said “yes” to the plan. As a result, the plan was rejected and only a week after, on May 1, 2004, Greek Cypriots joined the EU as the RoC. The UN's attempts to unite the island have continued after 2004. However, each negotiation process finally collapsed.

TURKISH CYPRIOTS' DEEPENING DISTRUST TOWARDS GREEK CYPRIOTS

Multiple examples will be presented here to illustrate that the Turkish Cypriots' distrust towards Greek Cypriots, stemming from the bitter experiences mentioned in the previous section, has been consistently nurtured. This sense of distrust is continually reinforced through various means, including national celebrations, commemorations, heroic figures, symbols, school history books, adopted policies, and the rhetoric employed by Greek Cypriot authorities, among others.

Gözügüzelli (personal communication, September 9, 2021) puts forward that on the Greek Cypriot side, even when politics is left aside, by only looking at education from the primary level, the dominance of an “unbelievable level of enmity” towards Turkish could be understood. The Organization of Greek Secondary Education Officers defended the content of history schoolbooks by stating on May 5, 1959 that, “This is what our origin, our history, our traditions, our heart, and soul demand. The character of our Education is Hellenic because we are Greeks - because we cannot conceive a real education and correct education without Greece, because nothing good and great can be done without the leavening ingredient called Greece.” (Socratous & Uludağ, 2021, p. 11). Similarly, Öznacar (2019) highlights that Greek Cypriot books emphasise Greek ownership of Cyprus and uphold Greek culture.

They portray Turks in Cyprus rather negatively. Turks are described as “enemies”, “murderers”, “torturers”, “occupiers”, and “barbaric”, in addition to several other similar villain characterisations. Öznacar’s other finding is that Greek Cypriot books when they refer to Cypriots, do not include Turkish Cypriots. In other words, “Cypriot identity” for Greek Cypriots exclusively indicates Greek Cypriots. Turkish Cypriots are regarded as minorities, who were granted excessive rights in 1960 when the RoC was created. Moreover, Öznacar draws attention that there is no single Turkish flag in Greek Cypriot history schoolbooks. Overall, he argues that history teaching in Greek Cypriot schools is designed to embed the messages in the minds of new generation Greek Cypriots that Cyprus has been and will always be a Greek island and Turks are barbaric people who have caused immense suffering for Greeks for centuries. Briefly, Greek Cypriot history schoolbooks incite hatred towards Turks (p.161-65).

Greek Cypriot leadership has ignored the Council of Europe’s recommendation on history teaching in twenty-first-century Europe and continued to use history schoolbooks as propaganda material to promote anti-Turkish feelings. In this recommendation, the Council of Europe (October 31, 2001) proposes that “history teaching in a democratic Europe should be a decisive factor in reconciliation, recognition, understanding and mutual trust between peoples” and “history teaching must not be an instrument of ideological manipulation, of propaganda or used for the promotion of intolerant and ultra-nationalistic, xenophobic, racist or anti-Semitic ideas.” Against this backdrop, it was unsurprising that in 2021, upon discovering that Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was praised in the Oxford Discover Futures 3 Workbook – an English language school workbook used by 11th-grade Greek Cypriots – the Greek Cypriot Ministry of Education promptly sent an urgent e-mail to teachers, instructing them to remove the specific page before distributing the books to students.

The e-mail was later leaked to the media and triggered a heated exchange of words between the officials on both sides of the Green Line. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk is a national hero of the Turks. The Turkish Grand National Assembly granted him his surname, Atatürk, which means "Father of the Turks" in recognition of the leading role he played in building the modern Türkiye. Cities in North Cyprus are decorated with his statues, his pictures are hung behind the desks of Turkish Cypriot officials, and his ideas are passed from one generation to another passionately. Atatürk, in other words, is an indispensable part of Turkish Cypriot identity. Ersin Tatar, the President of the TRNC condemned the Greek Cypriots Ministry of Education for taking such an action (*Tatar condemns*, 2021). An official statement released by the Foreign Ministry of the TRNC (2021, September 8) also denounced the actions taken by the Greek Cypriot

Ministry of Education. Initially, this involved removing a section about their esteemed leader from a secondary education textbook, followed by its complete withdrawal, under the pretext of its alleged “inappropriateness.”

The Ministry underscored that the increasingly hostile behaviour exhibited by the Greek side illuminated their inability to accept the Turkish presence on the island and their resistance to acknowledging the glorious history of the Turkish nation. Furthermore, the TRNC Foreign Ministry urged the international community to recognize that the prevailing racist mindset within the Greek Cypriot ranks lay at the core of the impasse in achieving a resolution to the Cyprus issue.

Upon examining Greek Cypriot national celebrations and commemorations, one can observe a distinct presence of strong antagonistic feelings towards the Turkish Cypriot community. Greek Cypriots celebrate 25 March Greek Independence Day, marking the day the Greek uprising started against the Ottoman Turks in 1821. On April 1, Greek Cypriot National Day, also known as the EOKA Day, marks the establishment of the EOKA in 1955. Greek Cypriots honour EOKA for forcing the UK to withdraw from Cyprus. However, EOKA for Turkish Cypriots, is a stark reminder of the most painful period in their history. The presidency of the TRNC (March 31, 2021) posted Turkish Cypriot Leader Tatar’s statement, which commenced with the following paragraph:

“I condemn EOKA and all terrorist organisations. Terrorist organisation EOKA commenced armed attacks on Turkish Cypriots on April 1, 1955, under the aspiration to annex Cyprus to Greece (ENOSIS), which had in fact started a period that turned Cyprus into a bloodbath, destroyed peace and security, of which the effects are continuing today.”

Church of Cyprus organized an unofficial referendum on *Enosis* between 15 and 22 January 1950 in Cyprus. Later it was announced that 96 per cent of Greek Cypriots voted in favour of the unification of Cyprus with Greece. On 9 February 2017, the Greek Cypriot Parliament passed a resolution to introduce the *Enosis* Day at public schools to mark the referendum for *Enosis* (*MPs Revive*, 2017). This decision was taken when negotiations between Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot delegations were ongoing, and it terrified the Turkish Cypriots. Then Turkish Cypriot Prime Minister Hüseyin Özgürkün criticized the decision by stating that it was “the clearest evidence of the Greek side’s desire to own the whole island.” (Hümeýra Atılğan, 2017). Parliament of the TRNC (2017, February 13) issued a declaration to condemn the *enosis* decision taken by the Greek Cypriot parliament. The declaration partly reads as follows.

“It is a common knowledge which historical facts *Enosis* reminds our community. *Enosis* ignores the existence and identity of Turkish Cypriots, who constitute one of the two communities on the island... It should be known that this decision was perceived as a considerable disrespect to the main philosophy of the settlement negotiations. It deepened Turkish Cypriots’ mistrust and increased suspicions with regard to the Greek side’s goodwill and sincerity in efforts to reach a solution within the UN parameters.”

Then TRNC President Mustafa Akıncı urged Greek Cypriot leadership to get the *Enosis* decision, which he referred to as an act of “gross insensitivity,” rescinded. Akıncı also announced that he withdrew from negotiations that had been ongoing for two years until

the *Enosis* decision was reversed (Gümrukçü & Kambas, 2017). He maintained his position, which led the Greek Cypriot Parliament to take another vote on the said decision and cancelled it in April 2017. Although short-lived, this celebration is worth mentioning in this section due to the irritation it caused among the Turkish Cypriot population.

The Green Line Regulation, which entered into force on May 1, 2004, lays out the rules and procedures for the movement of people, goods, and services across the border in Cyprus. In line with this regulation, Turkish Cypriot products, which meet certain criteria can have access to South Cyprus. A Turkish Cypriot businessman's experience of putting his products on the shelves of a Greek Cypriot supermarket displays how challenging it can be to do business across the Green Line:

When I deliver our products to the south, I am often asked by the Greek Cypriot buyers to take off all the tags and stickers indicating that the product is made in the north. They don't even want me to dispose of these in the bins at their place just to make sure that no one will discover that they trade with a Turkish Cypriot company. So, after I complete the procedural work on the movement of goods to the south and arrive at the buyer's place, I take the tags off in my vehicle before unloading the goods and I keep them in my vehicle to dispose of it later (Ersözer, 2019, p. 57).

A similar sensitivity arose in March 2018. Some mosaic floor tiles produced by a Turkish Cypriot company were used for renovation work in a Greek Cypriot school in Limassol. When this was found out, parents staged a protest and forced the school administration to have those recently placed tiles removed from the school grounds. Then Turkish Cypriot Foreign Minister Kudret Özersay (March 26, 2018) responded with the message below.

“The incident revealed that the Greek Cypriots cannot even tolerate goods imported from North Cyprus within the framework of the Green Line Regulation. The barriers in the minds can only be overcome through developing economic relations. I believe that this incident reflects this very same thing.”

The Church of Cyprus is a rather influential institution for Greek Cypriots. On the occasion of the Easter celebration, on April 29, 2019, the head of the Church of Cyprus Archbishop Chrysostomos issued a statement, which was read in all churches in South Cyprus. In his message, besides condemning Turks, he sharply criticized the Greek Cypriots engaging in cross-border interactions with the Turkish Cypriot community (Andreou, 2019). With this message, Archbishop Chrysostomos denounced those Greek Cypriots who interacted with the Turkish side and advised Greek Cypriots to be patient even if they needed to wait for decades until Cyprus becomes fully Greek again.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the TRNC (April 29, 2019) criticized these remarks and expressed that, “the statements he made unfortunately reveal in the most explicit manner that there has not been the slightest improvement in the Greek Cypriot Orthodox Church's racist, primitive and intolerant stance.” Additionally, the Ministry underlined that it is mostly through increasing relations and cooperation that trust can be built on the island, and it urged the Greek Cypriot authorities to raise their voice against the Archbishop's comments, which fell on deaf ears in the south.

Tourism stands as a primary revenue generator for Turkish Cypriots. Greek Cypriot administration attempts vigorously to discourage people from visiting the TRNC. For instance, Greek Cypriot representations abroad reach out to travel agents and people to prevent them from selling packages or travelling to the TRNC by conveying threatening warnings (Embassy, 2020). Moreover, Greek Cypriot authorities have been taking actions to deter travellers from using their facilities to reach TRNC. Greek Cypriot officials have so far questioned numerous foreigners and deported several of those who stated that their final destination was TRNC. For example, in 2017, a group of Serbian children who were to take part in Children's Day celebrations in the TRNC were held at the airport for many hours and then sent back to their country.

Among those who were turned away from Larnaca Airport in South Cyprus in 2018 were around 30 Israeli tourists, a Russian tourist, and an academician from Cairo University who was planning to give a lecture at a university in the TRNC. The Foreign Ministry of the TRNC (April 20, 2017) released a statement following the incident involving the Serbian children, in which it raised questions about how a new partnership could be established and, even if realized, how it was to be maintained between the Turkish and Greek Cypriot communities. In a separate statement concerning the Israeli tourists who wished to spend their New Year holiday in TRNC but were denied entry by Greek Cypriot authorities, the Ministry (January 2, 2019) expressed disapproval of Greek Cypriots' practice that was "further exacerbating the lack of trust between the two sides." The Ministry also expressed that such actions once more proved that Greek Cypriots had not changed their hostile policy towards Turkish Cypriots and noted that discussing the necessity of building trust between the two sides on one hand, while simultaneously attempting to isolate the Turkish Cypriot population from the global community on the other, aligns with neither sincerity nor equity.

Higher education has become a window of opportunity for Turkish Cypriots to connect with the rest of the world. There are nearly 30 universities in the TRNC, with over 100 thousand students from almost 140 countries. With these numbers, higher education has become the second biggest source of income for the TRNC. Greek Cypriot authorities, concerned with the expanding higher education area in the TRNC, take several actions to prevent foreign students from enrolling at Turkish Cypriot universities and foreign universities from cooperating with these universities. Greek Cypriot universities and academicians are also forbidden to engage their Turkish Cypriot counterparts. What is more, Greek Cypriot diplomatic and consular missions abroad are occupied with sending threatening letters to universities and prospective students to influence their decisions to cooperate with or study in Turkish Cypriot universities.

In 2018, the Turkish Cypriot Eastern Mediterranean University signed a cooperative protocol with Oxford University. Shortly thereafter, the Greek Cypriot Ambassador in London sent a letter to the Rector of Oxford University, urging the termination of this collaboration. Kudret Özersay, then Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of the TRNC, criticised Greek Cypriot authorities for being insincere and inconsistent. He stated that on the one hand Greek Cypriot state seems to support the improvement of intercommunal relations on the island, but on the other hand, it is doing its best to suffocate the Turkish Cypriot community on every front. (*Özersay: Rum Yönetiminin*, 2018).

CONCLUSION

Within the conceptual context of trust, this article offers a fresh perspective on the ongoing impasse on the island of Cyprus by analyzing the criticism from the TRNC Foreign Ministry towards the UNSC Resolution 2674 as deemed detached from the realities on the ground. By examining the historical course of events, coupled with the ongoing policies pursued by the Greek Cypriot authorities and the prevailing attitudes among the majority of Greek Cypriots, this study concludes that Turkish Cypriots' distrust of Greek Cypriots has steadily grown and solidified over the years. Consequently, Turkish Cypriots firmly believe that Greek Cypriots are unlikely to engage in sincere cooperation and are prone to exploiting Turkish Cypriots whenever an opportunity arises.

Eliminating distrust and building trust is an exceedingly challenging endeavour that necessitates mutual willingness, concerted efforts, and a departure from established traditions. It is important to recognize that traditions can evolve because identities are not fixed (Wetering, 2018, p.66). Dilemmas, often referred to as "frame-breaking moves," explain shifts in traditions. A dilemma arises when a novel idea is introduced, compelling a re-evaluation of prevailing beliefs and practices (Vuorelma, 2018, p. 40). Nevertheless, it is imperative to acknowledge that in certain cases where willingness, mutual effort, and dilemmas are absent, eliminating distrust and fostering trust might remain unattainable. In such cases, the focus should shift towards cultivating improved communication grounded in the realities on the ground.

In the context of the island of Cyprus, Greek Cypriots should acknowledge the inherent sovereign equality and equal international standing of Turkish Cypriots. Such recognition could serve as an initial step towards nurturing enhanced communication with the long-term expectation that this recognition could establish a fresh foundation for the parties to initiate formal negotiations aimed at constructing a cooperative relationship that is mutually negotiated and agreeable. However, given the current circumstances in the island of Cyprus, there is hardly any indication that Greek Cypriots would contemplate adopting transformative actions that deviate from existing frameworks and address the concerns of Turkish Cypriots.

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