UN Involvement in Cyprus after the 2004 Referendum

James Ker-Lindsay
Senior Research Fellow, Kingston University

Abstract
This paper examines the future of UN peacekeeping and peacemaking activities in Cyprus. It argues that the process of peacemaking has suffered a severe setback, not just as a result of the referendum, but also as a consequence of an effort to discredit the UN Secretary-General. As a result of this, and the fact that the Greek Cypriot leadership consistently refuses to produce a set of amendments to the Annan Plan, a new initiative appears unlikely until the appointment of a new Secretary-General. Even then, regional political developments may limit the opportunities for dialogue for the next several years. Meanwhile, in the absence of a peacemaking process, it has been suggested that steps be taken to limit the extent of UN peacekeeping on the island. However, while there has been a reduction in the size of the force, the opportunities for a major downgrading of the mission are limited.

Introduction
For forty years the UN has played the central role in both peacekeeping and peacemaking efforts on the island. Through the United Nations Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), the UN has played a key part in trying to prevent inter-communal tensions (1964-74) and, for the past thirty years, attempting to prevent incident across the Green Line. At the same time, the UN has also attempted to secure a peace settlement. At first this centred on a mediation process. However, since 1967, this effort has been centred on the UN Secretary-General’s Mission of Good Offices. Meanwhile, through a range of associated activities – such as the Committee for Missing Persons, UN Development Programme (UNDP), UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS) – the United Nations has also attempted to foster the wider conditions for peace and development on the island.1

However, with the failure of the Annan Plan many are now asking what future the UN has in Cyprus. Quite apart from the obvious fatigue that has set in, and the frustration at the failure of yet another attempt to reunify the island, the bitter referendum campaign has undoubtedly damaged the credibility of the Secretary-General. The question is whether the damage has been done to Kofi Annan personally or to the actual Mission of Good Offices as a framework for assisting the parties to reach a settlement. At the same time, attention has also turned to the question of the future of peacekeeping on the island. With little prospect of a new peace process any time soon, and with a number of other pressing issues on the international stage, it has been argued that the UN should look to downgrade its presence on the island. Already, there has been a major reduction in the size of the Force. However, some have argued that it should be reduced yet further; it has even been suggested in some quarters that it could be converted into an observer mission. In the face of this post-referendum uncertainty, this paper examines the development of the UN presence in Cyprus and explores some of the possible directions the UN operation in Cyprus may take in the coming years.

A History of UN involvement in Cyprus
On 4 March 1964, just under three months after an outbreak of fighting on the island, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 196. This resolution had a dual role. On the one hand it recommended the appointment of a mediator to address the island’s political problems.2 At the same time, it also authorised the creation of a peacekeeping mission, the United Nations
Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP). According to paragraph 5 of the Resolution, the mandate of the Force was defined as follows: ‘the function of the Force should be in the interest of preserving international peace and security, to use its best efforts to prevent a recurrence of fighting and, as necessary, to contribute to the maintenance and restoration of law and order and a return to normal conditions.’ By that summer the UN mission in Cyprus was up and running. The Force was fully functional with an overall strength of 6,411 personnel. This was made up of troops from Austria, Britain, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Ireland and Sweden and with civilian police units from Australia, Austria, Denmark, New Zealand and Sweden. At this point, the various contingents were allocated sectors around the island, a pattern of deployment that remained unchanged for the next ten years. Meanwhile, a peacemaking mission had also been established. However, the initial Mediator, Sakari Tuomioja, died just months after his appointment and was replaced by Galo Plaza Lasso. The following year Plaza presented the two sides with a report. This recommended that the Greek Cypriots abandon their efforts to unite with Greece and called on the Turkish Cypriots to give up their hopes of securing a federal settlement. This report was quickly rejected by Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots, who demanded the resignation of the Mediator. However, the Greek Cypriots refused to allow the appointment of a replacement. As a result the role of Mediator fell into abeyance. Instead, in 1966, U Thant established a mission of Good Offices. This has remained the framework for UN peacemaking ever since. From 1968-74, further talks were held between the two communities, but no agreement was reached.

1974 radically altered both the peacekeeping and peacemaking role of the United Nations. In response to the Turkish invasion, UNFICYP were forced to abandon their patchwork quilt approach to peacekeeping and were instead deployed along the dividing line. The Security Council continued to endorse regular six-monthly extensions to UNFICYP’s mandate. Meanwhile, at the peacemaking level, the previous efforts to find a settlement that was based on greater Turkish Cypriot autonomy was abandoned in favour of a settlement that would reconstitute the Republic of Cyprus as a bizonal and bicommmunal federation – even if the Greek and Turkish Cypriots did not agree on what this would mean in practice. In the years that followed, however, there was little progress towards reunification. Matters were not helped by the 1983 unilateral declaration of independence by the Turkish Cypriot side, and by the 1985 decision of President Kyprianou to reject a UN document that many Greek Cypriots – including the two main parties, AKEL and DISY – regarded as constituting a realistic settlement plan. By the start of the 1990s there was a growing sense of impatience about the lack of progress on the peacemaking front. At the same time, UNFICYP was coming under increasing strain as a number of countries had reduced or withdrawn their contingents. In the course of one year, UNFICYP underwent a 28 per cent reduction in size. Meanwhile the financial situation was growing increasingly difficult. The shortfall up to the end of June 1993 was US$200 million. In response to these developments, Javier Perez de Cuellar, the then UN Secretary-General, recommended restructuring the Force to create three sections with contingents of 350 men; the minimum size felt necessary to maintain operational effectiveness. He also secured a major new contribution of forces from Argentina, who took up position in October 1993. In terms of financing, the Security Council recommended that the costs of the force be treated as expenses of the organization to be borne by member states in accordance with Article 17 of the United Nations Charter. This was accepted by the General Assembly in the autumn.

What was not realised at the time of the shake up was that the relative calm that had existed on the island since 1974 was about to end. In 1993, Greece and Cyprus concluded a mutual defence pact, the Joint Defence Doctrine, which was intended to upgrade the level of military co-operation between the two countries. As a part of this, the Greek Cypriots decided to build new naval and air base facilities on the island. Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots responded in kind, thereby creating an arms race. Moreover, growing frustration among Greek Cypriots over the lack of any settlement was increasingly vented in the form of demonstrations against the Turkish occupation. In August 1996, a protest organised by a group of Greek Cypriot
motorcyclists, erupted in violence as groups of Greek and Turkish Cypriot youths clashed in the buffer zone in the east of the island, which led to the death of a Greek Cypriot and injuries to a number of soldiers serving with UNFICYP, who had attempted to prevent the two sides from crossing the line. Several days later, another Greek Cypriot was killed trying to climb a Turkish flagpole. As a result, tensions between the two sides reached their highest level since 1974. In the months that followed, any hope that there would be a tailing off of hostility were short lived. In January 1997 the Greek Cypriots, in an attempt to force Turkey back to the negotiating table, placed an order for a consignment of Russian-made S-300 surface to air missiles. For the next two years, the efforts of the international community were directed more towards defusing this crisis than reaching a settlement. In the years that followed tension continued between the two sides. This was fuelled by the decision of Rauf Denktash, the Turkish Cypriot leader, to pursue a solution based on confederation and by the Greek Cypriots’ moves to join the European Union, which led to a number of threats from Turkey that any move by the Greek Cypriots to integrate with the European Union would be matched by Turkey and the ‘TRNC’. This was subsequently followed by a claim that if Cyprus joined the EU, then Turkey would formally annexe Northern Cyprus.

Despite the threats from Ankara, by late-2001 it became increasingly obvious that the European Union would accept Cyprus as a member with or without a settlement. As a result, in November 2001, a new peace process was, to the surprise of outside observers, initiated by the Turkish Cypriot side. Despite hopes that this would lead to a relatively rapid settlement by June 2002 it had become clear that Denktash, supported by the nationalist government of Bulent Ecevit in Turkey, had started the talks as a stalling tactic aimed at delaying Cypriot accession. As a result, the first steps were taken by the UN Secretary-General to formulate a peace plan to put before the two parties. The opportunity to present the blueprint came in early-November that year, when a new government took office in Ankara that saw a settlement of the Cyprus issue as an integral part of Turkey’s overall EU membership aspirations. Nevertheless, Denktash was able to thwart the will of the new administration in Turkey. As a result, the talks broke down in March 2003. But following Turkish Cypriot parliamentary elections in December 2003, they were revived in February 2004. With the island’s EU accession set for 1 May, the Secretary-General imposed tight new conditions on the parties. The talks would follow a two phase process. The first phase of talks would be held in Cyprus between the two communities and would last for one month. Thereafter a second phase would be held elsewhere that would also include Greece, Turkey and Britain – the Guarantor Powers. Thereafter, in the event that agreement could not be reached on any elements of the plan the Secretary-General would complete the remaining areas of difference in order to produce a final text.

Although it had been hoped that progress could be made by the two sides, the first round of talks ended with no agreement. Similarly, the second round of talks, which were held in the Swiss mountain resort of Burgenstock, also failed; largely due to the Greek Cypriot side. As a result, Annan was forced to complete the agreement. On 31 March he presented the two sides with the final version of the plan to be put to the two communities in simultaneous referendums to be held three weeks later. While the plan was endorsed by the Turkish Cypriot and Turkey, the Greek Cypriot leadership made it clear that it could not support the agreement. In a televised speech made on 7 April, Papadopoulos launched a stinging attack on the blueprint and called on the Greek Cypriot to deliver a resounding ‘no’ to the plan. In the weeks that followed, a major campaign was launched against the plan, seemingly with the tacit support of the government. Despite the widespread support for the agreement by the international community, including Greece and the other members of the European Union, on 24 April the Greek Cypriots rejected the plan by a margin of three to one.
Peacemaking after the Referendum

Almost as soon as the referendum had failed questions were asked about the future of UN peacemaking in Cyprus. In spite of hopes that the bad blood created during the referendum campaign would quickly pass, the antagonism between the Greek Cypriots and the UN actually intensified after the vote. In his report prepared shortly after the referendum, the Secretary-General outlined a litany of complaints against the Greek Cypriots. For example, the report made it clear that Papadopoulos had called for a resumption of talks in a letter sent in December 2003, and which was repeated when Papadopoulos and Annan met face to face in Brussels in January 2004, at which time Papadopoulos had assured Annan that ‘he did not seek “forty or fifty” changes to the plan, and that all the changes he would seek would be within the parameters of the plan’ (paragraph 8). In terms of the first phase of talks, Annan stated that the Greek Cypriots, in contrast to the Turkish Cypriots, produced length lists of demands and refused to present a single paper outlining their preferred changes until halfway through the second phase of talks (paragraph 20). In addition, he stated that the Greek Cypriots demanded that all their points be considered, while rejecting discussions of the Turkish Cypriots points (paragraph 22). The problem of negative press reporting of leaked information from bilateral meetings held between Papadopoulos and de Soto was also raised (paragraph 24). As far as the second phase of talks was concerned, Annan noted the way in which the Greek Cypriots had prevented direct meetings between the leaders thereby forcing the UN to hold informal meeting and gatherings to bring the sides together (paragraphs 33 and 34). He also criticised the way in which information regarding the fourth, bridging version of the Annan Plan has been leaked to the Greek Cypriot media, which had then reacted very negatively to the proposals (paragraph 40).

In terms of the referendum, Annan was particularly scathing. He accused Papadopoulos of having completely turned his back of the previous assurances he had given in Brussels earlier that year (paragraph 65), and that he had actually appeared to reject the basis parameters of the agreement (paragraph 66). He also complained that the Greek Cypriots had not participated at a major donors’ conference to discuss economic aspects of the plan at a sufficiently high level, despite their stated concerns on this issue (paragraph 70). He also noted the way in which the Greek Cypriot media had prevented de Soto from explaining the plan (paragraph 71). In conclusion, Annan stated: ‘If the Greek Cypriots are ready to share power and prosperity with the Turkish Cypriots in a federal structure based on political equality, this needs to be demonstrated, not just by word, but by action.’ (Paragraph 86)

All in all, the report by the Secretary-General amounted to a damning indictment of the Greek Cypriots negotiating strategy and an unprecedented criticism of the Greek Cypriot leadership by a Secretary-General. Naturally, such strong accusations necessarily required a response from the Greek Cypriot side. This came in the form of an official letter from President Papadopoulos in which the various allegations were answered directly and which insinuated that the report by the Secretary-General had been written in anger and as an attempt to punish the Greek Cypriots for the vote against the UN agreement. He also drew attention to the perceived lack of impartiality of the Secretary-General, suggesting that some of the sections of the report had been written by Britain or the United States. He also took strong exception to calls from the UN Secretary-General for steps to alleviate the isolation of the Turkish Cypriots, so long as these steps were in accordance with Security Council Resolutions 541 (1983) and 550 (1984): ‘this suggestion lies clearly outside the Secretary’s General good offices mission and is in direct contravention to the SC resolutions and international law.’ At the end of the letter, a full report was attached that outlined in detail the shortcomings and inconsistencies within the UN Secretary-General’s report. It left little doubt as to the position of the Greek Cypriots towards the Secretary-General at that point:

Although disappointed at and concerned by the recent Report, skilfully slanted by its drafters to present co-operative Turks and unfairly isolated Turkish Cypriots as
against obstructive Greek Cypriots blocking reunification of Cyprus, the Government of the Republic believes that the United Nations will in due course revert to its hitherto impartial stance and once again use its best endeavours to promote an agreed settlement of the problem confronting Cyprus.25

By the spring of 2006, almost two years after the referendum, a perceived return to ‘impartiality’ had yet to occur. While the overt hostility had dissipated, a distinctly cool relationship nevertheless remained between the Greek Cypriot leadership and the UN Secretary-General. In addition to the lack of any movement on the Cyprus issue, this was discernable in terms of numerous small issues. For example, there had been no attempt on the part of the Greek Cypriot leadership to apologise or express their regret, either directly or indirectly, for the way in which the Greek Cypriots media behaved at the time of the referendum, either in terms of the abuse heaped upon the Secretary-General and his team or in terms of the efforts to prevent them from presenting the plan to the public. Meanwhile, the Greek Cypriot side remained determined to show that the UN did not act as an honest broker at the time of the negotiations. A book published by Claire Palley, a constitutional advisor to successive president of Cyprus – which heavily criticises the role played by the UN during the talks, often in very derogatory terms – was endorsed by the government, which distribute copies as a part of its information campaign.26 There were also reports that the Greek Cypriot side notified Annan that they did not wish to have to work with Alvaro de Soto again.27

Meanwhile, it appears as if the Secretary-General wants to keep a distance from the Cyprus issue unless and until he can be absolutely sure that the Greek Cypriots are willing to engage in talks in an effort to reach a settlement, rather than for purposes of show. The fact that they are not ready to articulate a clear set of prioritised changes to the plan was shown in late-May 2005, when Sir Kieran Prendergast,28 the Undersecretary-General for Political Affairs, visited the island to take soundings on the chances for a new initiative. On his return to New York, it soon became apparent that neither Prendergast nor Annan felt that the time was right for a new settlement effort. Indeed, it appears as if the Greek Cypriots again managed to frustrate the Secretary-General by demanding that artificial timetables and arbitration – the key ingredients of the previous peace process – be ruled out of any further initiatives. In June 2005, in what appeared to be a counter-response, Annan, following a meeting with Prime Minister Erdogan, stated that he would like to see his May 2004 report endorsed by the Security Council. The Greek Cypriots were furious at the suggestion and lodged a formal complaint to this effect.29 This suggested that the bad blood remained. Since then, Annan appears to have decided to put Cyprus very low down on his list of priorities – no doubt a decision that is also shaped by the fact that with the ongoing oil-for-food scandal his attention is elsewhere. For example, in September 2005, when he came to appoint a replacement for his Acting Special Representative for Cyprus, Zbigniew Wlosowicz, who had held the position since 2000, Annan decided against appointing a high-profile former political figure or diplomat, as had often been the case with other Special Representatives. Instead, he instead appointed Michael Moller, a long-standing UN official, to take over the position.30

The obvious question is whether the current levels of mistrust can be reversed and the credibility of the Secretary-General restored. In order to answer this question it is first necessary to analyse whether there is an alternative to the UN peace process. In September 2005, Abdullah Gul, the Turkish foreign minister, accused the Greek Cypriots of trying to sideline the UN.31 His position is not without foundation. Since Cyprus joined the European Union, there have been calls from Greek Cypriot nationalist quarters for the UN led process to come to an end and for a more active EU involvement in the search for a solution. This school of thought argues that EU accession has changed the very parameters of the problem and that the full application of European Union law will open the way for an abandonment of the old formulation of a bizonal, bicommmunal federation. At the same time there is a belief that the European Union should not act as an intermediary between the Republic of Cyprus and Turkey. In effect, the view is taken that the Cyprus Problem is not an intercommunal
problem, but is an interstate conflict based on the illegal invasion and occupation of the island by Turkey. While this settlement model, which has been termed the ‘European Solution’, has its adherents on the island, it is rejected by the two main Greek Cypriot political parties and by the international community, including the European Union. Quite apart from the fact that the Annan Plan was given a clean bill of health by the European Commission, which made it clear that there was nothing within the proposed agreement that violated European law, there is a discernable opposition to the idea that the EU can act as an intermediary. Numerous EU officials have stated that the EU cannot act as a third-party, either in a direct or indirect manner. The EU can provide support for a settlement. It can also provide a general framework for regional co-operation and conflict management. However, it cannot directly intervene in conflicts between member states or between member states and aspiring members. Lastly, the EU, both in terms of the member states and at the level of the Commission, has repeatedly stated that the only body that should be responsible for trying to resolve the Cyprus Problem is the United Nations. Indeed, despite calling for a ‘more active EU role in the negotiations’, Papadopoulos has nevertheless stated that the process should remain under the ‘UN Umbrella’.

In view of this, there would appear to be little alternative for the Greek Cypriots but to reengage with the United Nations. For this reason, the credibility of the UN Secretary-General must be restored at some stage. The question of when this happens is directly related to the issue of whether it is the office of the Secretary-General that has been damaged or Kofi Annan personally. On balance, it would appear that it is Annan, and his closest advisors, who have been discredited by the process and not the office of the UN Secretary-General as an institution. In view of this, and given the low standing of Annan in the eyes of the Greek Cypriots, it would therefore appear likely that little attention will be given to trying to improve relations with Annan. Instead, efforts will be focused on developing good relations with Annan’s successor, who will take up the office on 1 January 2007. Of course, neither Annan nor the Greek Cypriot leadership will close the door to talks in the interim period. Both parties will maintain their willingness to reengage is circumstances permit. Indeed, a change of situation may well arise that may well lead to a new process. However, on balance, it would seem as if both sides would prefer to leave the situation as it is at the moment. For his part, Annan appears to have little will to become involved again in Cyprus, realising that it is almost certain to produce any meaningful results. Instead, he would appear to prefer to spend his remaining months in office trying to lay the foundations for a reform of the organisation in the wake of the Iraq invasion and the oil-for-food scandal. As for the Greek Cypriot side, they appear to be unwilling to enter into any new negotiations on the Annan Plan at this stage. In this sense, the current apparent cool relations would appear to suit both the Greek Cypriots and the UN Secretary-General.

But while there is a very good chance that the position of the UN Secretary-General will be rehabilitated in the minds of the Greek Cypriots once Annan has left office, attention must be paid by the Greek Cypriot leadership to how they will engage with the new Secretary-General. Although the new appointee may well choose to take an active approach towards Cyprus, there is a chance that the experience of Annan, coupled with other world issues, will ensure that Cyprus remains low on the list of priorities. Moreover, what will the Greek Cypriots do if the new appointee makes it clear that the Annan Plan continues to form the basis of a settlement? Can they afford to alienate another Secretary-General? Playing the politics of personality was useful for defeating the Annan Plan the first time round. However, it is unlikely that it can be used again as a tactic for a second time given that this could well alienate the new Secretary-General and open up what could well be a five year gap in settlement efforts. For this reason, it appears likely that if the Annan Plan is retained the Greek Cypriot will have little choice but to go along with the wishes of the new incumbent and approach new negotiations in a constructive manner. In any case, whichever scenario evolves, it seems likely that the Greek Cypriots will have to plan a strategy for the
reestablishment of good ties with the UN, both in terms of bilateral relations with the Secretary-General and in terms of improving wider societal perceptions of the organisation.

UNFICYP after the Referendum

The other major question related to the issue of the future of UN peacekeeping on the island. Had the Annan Plan been successful, a new post-settlement peacekeeping force would have been created.\(^35\) In a report to the Security Council, Annan proposed that UNFICYP be terminated and a larger new mission, the UN Settlement Implementation Mission in Cyprus (UNSIMIC), be created in its place.\(^36\) In the event, the failure of the reunification effort opened the way for a review of UNFICYP, which was announced by Annan in his regular report on UNFICYP’s activities to the Security Council.\(^37\) The review, which would be carried out within three months, would examine the options for, ‘adapting its mandate to the prevailing circumstances’.\(^38\) In a remark that was not lost on observers, Annan also made it clear that, ‘the implicit central purpose of all peacekeeping operations is to provide an environment conducive to the resolution of conflict’. On 11 June, the Security Council extended the Force’s mandate and welcomed the review.\(^39\)

While the Secretary-General avoided taking a position on what changes he would like to see emerge, some felt that there was even a possibility that the Force might be downgraded to a peace observation mission. Indeed, it was even reported that the United States supported such a drastic step.\(^40\) In reality, however, it was felt that this was unlikely. Quiet apart from the fact that Washington would not want to see anything happen that would destabilise Cyprus,\(^41\) it appeared as if Russia would oppose such a move.\(^42\) Nevertheless, the Cypriot Government was dismayed and angry at the Secretary-General’s decision. Quite apart from their belief that the Force was stretched to thinly as it was, they saw as further evidence that the Secretary-General was trying to punish the Greek Cypriots for the decision.\(^43\) Despite the concerns of the Greek Cypriots, at the end of August a four-man delegation of officials arrived in Cyprus from UN headquarters in New York to carry out a five-day review.\(^44\) Just prior to their arrival, the Cypriot Government again restated its opposition to any reduction to the Force, arguing that the basic facts on the ground had not changed. There were still 36,000 Turkish troops stationed on the island.\(^45\) However, in a move that served to emphasise the depth of hostility between Nicosia and London in the aftermath of the referendum, the Cypriot Government stated that if a force size reduction were to take place, then the cuts should be made from the British contingent on the grounds that the United Kingdom’s participation in UNFICYP was incompatible with its status as a Guarantor Power.\(^46\) This was a highly controversial statement on several levels. For a start, this objection had not been raised before. Secondly, and more importantly, Britain was a mainstay of UNFICYP since its inception and was the largest single contributor to the Force, at that point supplying 414 of the 1,272 troops serving with UNFICYP.\(^47\) Moreover, by virtue of the existence of the British Sovereign Bases on the island, which provided important support to the Force, Britain’s contribution to UNFICYP was intimately interlinked with the Force’s overall capabilities. If Britain were to leave, it would have a serious affect on the Force’s overall efficiency and efficacy.

On 24 September, the UN Secretary-General presented his report on the future of UNFICYP.\(^48\) Importantly, the review team had decided that the security situation had become rather benign over the previous few years, with a drop in the number of incidents along the cease-fire line.\(^49\) Moreover, the team assessed that the chance of a recurrence of fighting was ‘increasingly unlikely’.\(^50\) Nevertheless, rather than recommend any change to the overall mandate of the Force, or even downgrade the Force to an observer mission, which had also been considered by the review team,\(^51\) Annan instead called for a significant troop reduction. Specifically, he recommended that the overall size of the Force be reduced from 1230 to 860,\(^52\) a thirty per cent reduction, while retaining the ceiling of 69 civilian police. All this would tie in with a new operational concept for the Force, which would draw together
disparate units and create a more centralised administration. Although unhappy about the decision to reduce the size of the Force, the Cypriot Government accepted the report arguing that it was important that the Secretary-General had decided that the basic mandated mission of UNFICYP remain unchanged. On 22 October 2004, the Security Council endorsing the report put forward by the Secretary-General in his report and extending the mandate of UNFICYP for another six months.

In February 2005, the new concept of operations came into force. By now the full strength of the Force lay at 875, slightly higher than the envisaged Force size. In order to overcome the gaps that might be created by the reduction in numbers, the number of patrols rose significantly; from 50 a day in February to approximately 200 per day in March and April. As a part of the overall restructuring process, and to see what progress had been made, the review team paid another visit to the island, from 6-10 May. Three weeks later, on 27 May, Annan presented his report. Noting that there had been no substantive moves towards reaching a settlement, he nevertheless noted that the security situation continued to remain stable. In fact, since the implementation of the new concept of operations, the number of incidents had decreased. In overall terms, therefore, the changes were deemed to have been successful. No further alterations to the size, structure or operational concept was deemed necessary at that stage. As of September 2005, the strength of the force lay at 868 personnel from 12 countries, working with 59 police officers and 159 locally recruited staff.

While it is unclear when the Secretary-General will again review the Force, many observers feel that a significant change to UNFICYP’s structure and mandate will be required sooner rather than later. This seems to even have been envisaged by the Secretary-General, who, in his 2004 report, explicitly mentioned that if the security situation continued to improve on the island the option of creating an observer force, which was rejected in the September 2004 review, should be revisited. Certainly, the Greek Cypriots continue to fear that a major restructuring of the Force is still possible. As a result, it frequently attempt to highlight incidents along the ceasefire line as evidence the current force strength is still required and that any attempt to reduce its number or status would be dangerous. A key example of this was an incident in August 2005 when a Turkish soldier pointed his weapon at the commander of UNFICYP. Afterwards Greek Cypriot officials, in meetings with officials from UNFICYP and the United Nations, used this incident to indicate just how sensitive the situation on the island was. They also demanded to know what steps the United Nations would take against Turkey for such an improper action. Naturally, there was also an attempt to core points by indicating just how aggressive the Turkish forces were.

But while Greek Cypriots may not like the idea of a reduction in the number of troops serving with UNFICYP, and positively fear any attempt to downgrade the mission, it is undoubtedly the case that their position to argue against any attempt to downgrade the force has been weakened, both by their decision in April 2004 and by the subsequent refusal to play a constructive role in efforts to restart talks. Although it can be argued that any attempt to punish the Greek Cypriots for their vote in the April 2004 referendum would be unfair, and would represent a clear lack of respect for the democratic process, the fact is that the behaviour of the Greek Cypriots leadership in the aftermath of the referendum does present the UN and the international community with at least two justifiable reasons to make major changes to the Force: the need to link peacekeeping with peacemaking and the argument that UN resources could be better used elsewhere.

However, it is less clear as to whether these reasons could actually result in any changes. First of all, and as pointed out by Annan in May 2004, a primary reason for peacekeeping was to facilitate a political settlement. Since the referendum, there has been very little sign that the Greek Cypriot side is prepared to enter into a new peace process. Instead, it has resisted efforts by the international community to begin the process of finding ways in which to amend the Annan Plan in a manner that would make it more acceptable to the wider Greek
Cypriot community. Despite denials to the contrary, the prevailing view is that Papadopoulos actually stands opposed to any settlement based on the Annan Plan. On this basis, and in view of the Greek Cypriot sensitivity over the issue, any move to alter the shape of UNFICYP might appear to be a powerful form of leverage over the Greek Cypriot side to re-engage in talks. On the face of it, the use of UNFICYP in this manner has actually become especially important in the period since the island joined the European Union, thereby fulfilling one of the most important, if not the key, foreign goals of the Greek Cypriots. As a result of this, there are now few major points of persuasion the international community has over Nicosia. Despite claims made at the time of the referendum that the ‘TRNC’ might be recognised if the Greek Cypriots rejected the Annan Plan, subsequent events have shown that any move to overturn the resolutions that declared the declaration of independence legally invalid, and which called on states not ‘to recognise any Cypriot state other than the Republic of Cyprus’, is extremely unlikely, if not impossible, under prevailing circumstances. In light of this, threats to alter UNFICYP are one of the few forms of leverage that continue to exist. However, in reality whether such changes could in fact be made is open to debate. It is likely that Russia would veto any move to radically refashion the Force. Under these circumstances, the only way in which Britain of the United States could force through a reformulation of UNFICYP is to veto any renewal of the Force, thereby forcing a more far-reaching reconsideration of peacekeeping in Cyprus. Naturally, this is considered to be the nuclear option for change. At present, it is clear that there is no political will, in either London or Washington, to take such a drastic measure. Therefore, while threats to undertake or initiate major downgrading of the Force may give a certain degree of leverage of the Greek Cypriots, in truth it would be difficult to put into action any fundamental change without the consent of the Greek Cypriots via Russia, their current proxy in the Security Council. In this sense, UNFICYP is actually a rather weak tool with which to try to encourage a reopening of peace talks between the island’s two communities.

Secondly, there is a strong case to be made that UN resources would be better directed to other problems elsewhere. Certainly, the continued presence of such a large peacekeeping force in Cyprus strikes many observers as, at best anachronistic and, at worst, a waste of precious resources at a time when the United Nations faces considerable pressures elsewhere. This view has been strengthened since 1 May 2004, when Cyprus joined the European Union. Certainly, it seems strange to many that there should be a United Nations peacekeeping force serving on the island of Cyprus now that it is a member of the European Union and Turkey is making progress with its own efforts to join the Union. Indeed, this was the main reason cited by Finland when it withdrew its last two peacekeepers from the island in 2005. Under these circumstances the idea that the UN should have to shoulder the burden of peacekeeping, both in financial and managerial terms, seems to be increasingly difficult to justify, especially given that the UN recognises that the overall number of incidents has decreased and that Turkey’s EU accession will make incidents less likely in the future. Yet again, however, while there are strong moral and practical cases for changing UNFICYP, the actual process by which this could be done is limited by the politics of the Security Council. The only way to bypass this would be for countries around the world to collectively refuse to contribute manpower to the Force. This is extremely unlikely to happen. For example, Britain, which would appear to be the most likely starting point for any such campaign, has shown no indication that it is about to withdraw its contingent from the Force.

Conclusion

For over four decades the United Nations has played an important part in ensuring peace and stability on the island and, by extension, the wider Eastern Mediterranean region. However, the failure of the 2004 referendum to bring about reunification has raised a number of questions about the future involvement of the UN on the island. In terms of peacemaking, questions must now be asked about the role of the UN as an intermediary. By virtue of actions
taken before and after the referendum, the current relations between the Greek Cypriots and the UN Secretary-General are at their lowest point ever. Undoubtedly, there are many close to the current Greek Cypriot administration that will not be unhappy about this situation. It is clear that there is a significant degree of support for efforts to try to move the Cyprus issue more firmly into the realm of the European Union. However, while the EU can certainly play an important support role in peace talks, it has been made clear that the EU will not take over as a mediating actor in the efforts to reunite the island. Even if it had the inclination to do so, which it does not, such a role would be rejected by Turkey. This means that the UN will necessarily remain vested with the ultimate responsibility for overseeing future peace efforts. This raises a secondary question relating the credibility and authority of the Secretary-General. What is not yet clear is whether the office of the Secretary-General has been damaged as a result of the referendum campaign or whether it was just Annan who has been discredited. The answer may well become clear in the next eighteen months, after a new UN Secretary-General has taken up office in January 2007. In the meantime, the prevailing view is that it is unlikely that Kofi Annan will make another concerted attempt to deal with Cyprus before the end of his term of office in December 2006. The question is whether his successor will seek to maintain the Annan Plan as a basis for a settlement or will instead seek to engage with the Cyprus issue on new terms.

The second issue relates to peacekeeping. Looking ahead it seems unlikely that any further reductions in the size of UNFICYP will take place in the near to medium term. However, the option of reducing UNFICYP still further, or even of downgrading it to an observer mission, cannot be discounted. For a start, such a move represents one of the last forms of leverage the international community has against the Greek Cypriots in the aftermath of the island’s EU accession. If the Greek Cypriots continue to resist efforts to restart a peace process then greater attention might have to be given to the possibility of using a reduction in the size of the Force as a means to encourage them to return to the negotiating table. However, as has been shown the threat of this is far more powerful than the reality of taking such a step, which would almost certainly be vetoed by Russia. At the same time, there is a belief that the current resources devoted to UNFICYP could be better used elsewhere. This argument is given greater strength by the fact that the role of the EU has become more important in the efforts to resolve the Cyprus issue by virtue of the fact that Cyprus became a member of the Union on 1 May 2004 and Turkey started its own accession process on 3 October 2005. This will have the potential to improve the climate between Cyprus and Turkey, a fact recognised by the UN Secretary-General. Given that a key element of EU membership is an undertaking that no member state will use or even threaten to use force against another member state, the thought of a further military action by Turkey against Cyprus is inconceivable. However, balanced against this, should there be a breakdown in EU-Turkish relations, as a result of a decision by the EU or by Ankara, the possibility of ensuing tension spilling over to Cyprus cannot be discounted. This scenario is especially important when one considers that any settlement of the Cyprus issue is linked to Turkish membership of the EU and that any move to end this prospect will also end the chances for a solution. In other words, any further moves to change the size or status of UNFICYP, as much as the ultimate efficacy of the peacemaking mission, would appear to be intimately linked with Turkey’s relationship with the European Union.

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Endnotes

1 For an evaluation of the wider range of UN activities in Cyprus see Oliver Richmond and James Ker-Lindsay (editors), The Work of the UN in Cyprus: Promoting Peace and Development (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001).
5 There is an extensive literature available on UN peacemaking activities in Cyprus from 1964. See, for example, Oliver Richmond, Mediating in Cyprus (London: Frank Cass, 1998); Farid Mirbagheri, Cyprus and International Peacemaking (London: Hurst, 1987) and, more recently, James Ker-Lindsay, ‘From U Thant to Kofi Annan: UN Peacemaking in Cyprus, 1964-2004’, Occasional Paper 5/05, South East European Studies at Oxford (SEESOX), St Antony’s College, Oxford University, October 2005.
7 Austria, Canada and Britain all reduced the size of their contributions, while Denmark withdrew its 300 men. Soon afterwards, Canada announced that it would terminate its involvement in UNFICYP in June 1993, thereby leaving Britain and Austria as the only major contributor to the Force since its inception in 1964 as Finland and Sweden had withdrawn most of their personnel in 1977 and 1987 respectively.
10 Naturally, there were questions raised about the dangers of having British and Argentinian troops serving so close just ten years after the Falklands War. However, the two contingents worked together well. As Major-General Evergisto Arturo De Vergara, the Commander of UNFICYP explained a few years later, “You must know how a soldier's life is. There's a kind of brotherhood of soldiers all over the world. Sometimes we fight because politicians tell us to fight, but we don't fight with hatred.” Cyprus News Agency, 6 May 1997.
12 UN General Assembly Resolution 47/236, 14 September 1993.
17 James Ker-Lindsay, EU Accession and UN Peacemaking in Cyprus (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p.118.
19 Ker-Lindsay, EU Accession and UN Peacemaking in Cyprus, p.120.
21 The final votes for the Greek Cypriot community, on a turnout of 90 per cent (428,587 votes cast), were 75.83 per cent against and 24.17 per cent in favour. In contrast, 64.91 per cent of Turkish Cypriots voted in favour and 35.09 per cent against on an 84 per cent turnout (121,160 votes cast).
23 One observer called the report a ‘mythical tale’ of ‘cooperative Turks and unfairly isolated Turkish Cypriots, anxious for reunification, as opposed to obstructive Greek Cypriots.’ Palley, An International Relations Debacle, note 6, p.2
27 ‘Summary of the Greek Cypriot Press’, British High Commission, Cyprus, 6 September 2005. It was also rumoured that the Turkish Cypriots had also asked for him not to be reappointed in the event of new talks. This is unlikely anyway. In May 2005, de Soto appointed to be the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and the Secretary-General’s Personal Representative to the Palestinian Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority. UN Press Release, SG/A/921, 6 May 2005.
28 On a related note, it is worth noting that Sir Kieren Prendergast, another key architect of the Annan Plan, and therefore a hate-figure for many Greek Cypriots (especially given that he is British), retired from the UN in June 2005. Like de Soto, he is therefore unlikely to be involved in any new process.
30 For example, former special representatives in Cyprus have included Dame Ann Hercus (1999), a former government minister in New Zealand; Diego Cordovez (1997-99), a former foreign minister of Ecuador; Han Sung-Joo (1996-97), a former minister of foreign affairs of South Korea; Joe Clark (non-resident 1993-96), a former prime minister of Canada; and Oscar Camilion, a former foreign affairs and defence minister of Argentina. The posting of Mr Wlosowicz as Special Representative reflected the appointment of Alvaro de Soto as Special Advisor. The fact that no new Special Adviser has been appointed to replace de Soto and that the post of Special Representative has now been given to Mr Moller, who was previously Acting Deputy Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary-General, would seem to suggest that the Secretary-General has downgraded the position.
31 ‘Turkey accuses Cyprus of seeking to sideline UN’, Cyprus Mail, 22 September 2005.
32 ‘How the EU resisted pleas for derogations’, Cyprus Mail, 2 April 2004
33 ‘EU Urges Backing of U.N. Cyprus Plan’, Associated Press, 1 April 2004. As was the case with de Soto, a furore erupted when Gunter Verheugen was denied an opportunity to appear on Greek Cypriot television to explain the plan. All this prompted Verheugen, who had been a leading proponent of allowing Cyprus to join the EU even if still divided, to note that he felt ‘cheated’ by the Cypriot Government. ‘Analysis: Cyprus result adds to EU woes’, BBC News, 24 April 2004.
34 ‘Cyprus wants no deadline for reunification accord’, Reuters, 18 September 2005
35 Main Articles, Article 8, ‘Demilitarisation’, paragraph D. Peacekeeping was more fully elaborated in Appendix E of the Comprehensive Settlement of the Cyprus Problem.
36 ‘Report of the Secretary-General on Cyprus’, S/2004/302, 20 April 2004. Britain and the United States, in an attempt to create greater confidence amongst Greek Cypriots about the implementation of the agreement sought to have this agreed just prior to the referendum. Ker-Lindsay, EU Accession and UN Peacemaking in Cyprus, p.109. However, in a rare move, Russia vetoed the proposal, arguing that any decision should be taken after the vote. ‘Russian veto defeats Security Council draft resolution on Cyprus’, UN news Centre, 21 April 2004. This followed a letter from the Cypriot Government, arguing that any new mission should be established under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. Palley, An International Relations Debacle, p.151.
38 ‘Annan calls for six-month extension of UN force in Cyprus with mid-term review’, UN News Centre, 2 June 2004.
40 Jean Christou, ‘Annan: time for a review of UNFICYP’, Cyprus Mail, 3 June 2004
41 Editorial, ‘UNFICYP’s role is far from over’, Cyprus Mail, 6 June 2004
42 Jean Christou, ‘Annan: time for a review of UNFICYP’, Cyprus Mail, 3 June 2004
43 Jean Christou, ‘What is the future for UNFICYP?’, Cyprus Mail, 6 June 2004
44 For the Secretariat, the team was led by Wolfgang Weisbrod-Weber, the Acting Director, Europe and Latin America Division, Office of Operations, Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Operation in Cyprus, S/2004/756, 24 September 2004.
45 Jean Christou, ‘UN experts to review UNFICYP operations - Government opposes any changes’, Cyprus Mail, 18 August 2004.
46 ‘Government wants British blue berets to leave, reports say’, Cyprus Mail, 4 September 2004.
47 In fact, following the reduction in the Force size, the Argentinean contingent became the largest element of UNFICYP (295 personnel). However, as a result of the fact that the contingent contains troops from Bolivia (1), Brazil (1), Chile (15), Paraguay (16), Uruguay (2) and Peru (14), the United Kingdom (278) remains the largest single contributor. S/2005/353, Annex.
49 S/2004/756, para.29.
50 S/2004/756, para.33.
52 S/2004/756, para.44.
53 S/2004/756, para.34.
54 George Psyllides, ‘Spokesman: reduced UN forces are fine – just as long as they stay’, Cyprus Mail, 28 September 2004.
62 UN official, comments to the author, October 2005.
63 Interestingly, this was read by some as evidence that the Force was not needed. The soldier had been ordered not to let anyone pass and he was determined to do this, even when faced with the Commander of UNFICYP, who was also a two star general officer. This showed a tremendous amount of discipline and indicated that the potential for accidental conflict was actually rather limited. British officer serving with UNFICYP, comments to the author, October 2005.
64 This view was further strengthened in November 2005 by statements from Ambassador Tasos Tzionis, the director of the president’s diplomatic office, who stated that he believed that the plan should be abandoned. Although he was speaking in a personal capacity, it was pointed out that as the closest advisor to the president he could not speak in a purely personal capacity. Editorial, ‘At last some honesty from the government’, Cyprus Mail, 15 September 2005.
66 It is expected that Russia would veto any attempt to overturn the resolutions.
67 Another suggestion made to the author is that the European Union could oppose Cyprus adopting the Euro. However, this is unlikely. For a start joining the Euro is an integral part of the island’s membership of the EU, and adopting it as the currency is required. Even a delay would be problematic as it would again be interpreted as unacceptable political interference in an economic process. EU official, comments to the author, June 2005.
68 Diplomat from an EU member state, comments to the author November 2005.
69 Western diplomat, comments to the author, November 2005.
70 Jean Christou, ‘What is the future for UNFICYP?’, Cyprus Mail, 6 June 2004
71 ‘Peacekeepers home from Cyprus’, Government Information Unit, Republic of Finland, 14 December 2004. Ireland and Canada also removed their final peacekeepers, one each, from the island in 2005, although Ireland continues to provide civilian police.
72 S/2005/353, para.38. Notwithstanding the view that the likelihood of incidents is decreasing, there was deep dismay at the decision of the Cypriot Government to stage major military exercises in October 2005. This marked the first time that these had been held since 2001, and was seen by many analysts as being a destabilising influence on the region. The fact that the Secretary-General had highlighted that the military situation in the region had remained stable since the referendum in part due to the fact that no military exercises had been held, indicates the danger that these manoeuvres have presented in the past. While there were certainly good reasons for the Greek Cypriots to go ahead with the exercises, the simple fact is that their decision created an unwelcome sense of instability in the region and further weakened the Greek Cypriot case for the need to have a major peacekeeping mission in Cyprus. To outside observers, the Greek Cypriots could not claim to want peacekeepers and yet create the conditions that made those peacekeepers necessary. Western diplomat, comments to the author, October 2005.
73 S/2004/756, para.5.