

## INTRODUCTION

At the end of the Cold War, the international community had to face a huge range of conflicts that had been ignored or partially suppressed during the struggles of the Super Powers. One of them was the political instability that existed within some post-colonial States due to their diverse ethnic societies. Such instability was usually accompanied by violent outbreaks which involved neighboring areas or foreign states causing a general regional unrest in different parts of the world. Thus, the international community has been compelled to try to find a formula by which multiethnic states can settle their disputes. However, despite the effort of multiple international actors to appease such conflicts through mediation or intervention, many ethnic conflicts in multiethnic states around the globe remain unsolved and as a potential source of regional conflict; the Republic of Cyprus is one of them.

Despite of its small size (9, 250 km<sup>2</sup>), the “Cyprus question” is a conflict that has been at the top list of the U.N. agenda for the last forty years and therefore is one of the major case studies in international relations not only for its clashing ethnic groups but also for the continuous illegal Turkish occupation of the north of the island. Following a decade of intermittent violence between the main ethnic groups Greek Cypriots (majority group of 80% of the population) and Turkish Cypriots (minority of 12%), Turkey intervened militarily in Cyprus to protect its kin and subsequently occupied the north of the island in 1974. Even though negotiations between the parties and international mediation have been constant, a settlement or a compromise between the parties has never been reached while the prospect for a future solution has been complicated by the Republic of Cyprus’ E.U. membership.

The Cyprus conflict represents a unique case to study ethnic conflicts in the functioning of post colonial states as the origin and development of the Cypriot ethnic

struggle involved many issues that actually question many common international practices followed during the Cold War and currently in order to create a new world order at each time. Ethnic conflicts usually aroused as a result of the vacuum of power left by an occupying state in areas where multiple ethnic groups existed with ancestral enmities between them. In such cases, the subsequent violent power struggle between the groups was predictable and perhaps impossible to avoid, especially when religious differences were involved. However, Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots coexisted peacefully as an integrated society for many centuries but it was the island strategic position in the middle of Europe, Africa and the Middle East which brought Cyprus at the core of the super powers' ambitions especially under the context of the Cold War.

The purpose of this thesis is to show that the ethnic conflict between Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriots was not caused by their inherent cultural and religious differences as it is usually assumed but by the negative intervention of third powerful countries who through the manipulation of nationalism disrupted and destroyed the harmony of the multicultural Cypriot society which ultimately led to the partition of the country and the current stalemate of the conflict. Through the communities' lack of contact and through the continuous foreign intervention in the affairs of the island, the collective memory of the communities has also been manipulated to the point that the communities have grown suspicious about each other, and ignore the needs and grievances of the other side complicating a future integration of the communities. Therefore this thesis will also aim to revise the history of the interaction of the communities and recent developments in order to conclude whether or not reintegration is possible. Finally this thesis will propose possible steps to be taken in order to achieve a settlement between the communities.

The First chapter will deal with the history of the peaceful interaction of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots and it would show that the emergence of the clashes of both groups were the result of the manipulation by Great Britain in order to disperse the struggle for independence and how the freedom achieved condemned the Republic of Cyprus to be hostage of other countries (Greece, Turkey and Great Britain) through an imposed constitution which was in total contradiction with international law. It will describe the steps taken by the communities' leaderships which caused the Turkish Cypriots' mobilization to achieve secession. It will also describe how the alienation of the communities has been enforced by the intervention of other international actors which had interests at stake in the island before and since the creation of the Republic in 1960 and which ultimately led to the illegal partition of the island in 1974 and the subsequent proclamation of the "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus".

The Second chapter will describe how each society evolved after the partition of the island. It will also briefly describe the dynamics of their respective economics and politics and how they were affected by the partition. The position of both groups' different political parties regarding the conflict will be described as a realistic and viable solution can be easily emanated from the convergence of political forces across the illegal border. It will be stressed the activism of Turkish Cypriots' opposition parties and civil society movements for a change to the repression, economic stagnation and isolation imposed to them by their leadership and the Turkish Army. Finally, this chapter will describe the process of accession to the European Union and how the membership prospect affected the dynamics of the intercommunal negotiations.

The Third chapter will describe the latest developments relevant to the achievement of a potential settlement. Mainly, the two most important events which have resulted on a positive progress toward a solution will be discussed. That is the

U.N. Annan Plan, which despite of its final rejection by the Greek Cypriots, was accepted as a framework for future discussions or even a settlement. The second event is the actual accession of the Republic of Cyprus as member of the European Union, a movement which has been questioned for its side effects on Turkish application to the E.U., for the political implications of having a divided and invaded member state, and for the outcome it will cause in the Cyprus question itself. The Turkish role in northern Cyprus and Turkey's accession process to the E.U. will also be discussed as both facts represent the main obstacle as well as the best opportunity to negotiate a settlement. Finally this chapter will discuss the feasibility of a solution that would allow the physical unification of the island as well as a peaceful interaction of the communities.

The study of ethnic conflicts is of relevance as ethnic, cultural and religious differences are major current sources of conflict around the globe. The case of Cyprus in particular is of great relevance as it challenges the ability of the European Union to function as a multiethnic body. Also most world actors' have been involved in both the creation of the conflict and in the diplomatic effort to find a settlement. Actually the Cyprus question has become one of the international relations' biggest challenges and which had defeated all the greatest diplomats of our time. There is no doubt that the outcome of the Cyprus issue would set an important precedent to the solution of ethnic conflicts in other parts of the world.

