Original article

Cyprus – meeting point for global and regional players

Ivan Majchút

Security and Defense Department,
Armed Forces Academy of General MR Štefánik, Liptovský Mikuláš, Slovakia,
e-mail: ivan.majchut@aos.sk

INFORMATION	ABSTRACT

The Cyprus Island, located in the Eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea, is known for decades of conflict known as the "Cyprus conflict". The resolution to the conflict is, first of all, influenced by the citizens of local communities. However, we should not forget about the external actors. First and foremost international organisations (UN, EU) and the significant world or regional countries (USA, Russia, Great Britain, Turkey, and Greece) are also significant and very active and efficient in this process. These countries have an important influence on activities in the Eastern Mediterranean and assert their interests in the mentioned region.

KEYWORDS

Introduction

It is natural that the internal political activities in both parts of the island affect the resolution of the Cyprus conflict. However, the external actors influence the resolution to a considerable extent as well. On one side, there are international organisations operating in the region mentioned (UN, EU). On the other, there are both the so-called "mother countries" (Turkey and Greece) and Great Britain, which is closely and directly engaged as a power with interests in the Mediterranean. Moreover, the current power constellation in international relations is forced to consider the position of the United States of America and we cannot forget about Russia.

1. United Nations in the resolution of the Cyprus conflict

The United Nations (UN) is trying to resolve the Cyprus conflict ever since its beginning. The establishment of the Republic of Cyprus in 1960 represented the resolution of the conflict between the Greek and Turkish Cypriots. Already in this process, UN played an important role.

It was the UN that was considered by the government of Cyprus to be an organisation which could help with the legitimacy of the country at the beginning of the existence of the Republic

of Cyprus. The first Cypriot president (Makarios) probably acted with this intention when he presented the Cyprus question to the United Nations Security Council and the United Nations General Assembly. Without a doubt, he committed the UN to the resolution of the situation in Cyprus.

The UN has been engaged in the resolution of the conflict since March 1964. The UN became involved in its active resolution due to the escalation of the conflict. Moreover, The United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) was sent to the island in 1964. However, not even the arrival of the peacekeeping forces managed to stop the constantly deteriorating relations between the two communities.

The attitude of the UN is clearly expressed by the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council. It is mainly the resolutions 367/1975, 649/1990, 716/1991, 750/1992 and 1179/1998. All of them are highlighting the political equality of both communities and state that the resolution of the Cyprus conflict depends on the political organisation of the country. Although the resolutions of the UN do not have a legal commitment, they have an important moral role.

The UN was trying to mediate or directly organise the dialogue between the two alienated communities on the island. During several decades, there were many proposals, plans and agreements which, in some cases, served as a guide for following negotiations, while in some cases, they were forgotten and not used at all.

One of the successful attempts at the resolution of the crisis state in Cyprus is the so-called "Galo Plaza report" in 1965, which served for the initiation of bilateral negotiations between the two communities under the auspices of the UN (which continue to this day).

Further important event in resolving the Cyprus conflict was the signing of the "High-Level Agreement" in 1977 and the subsequent signing of the "High-Level Agreement" in 1979. The nature of these agreements was the establishment of a "bi-communal" federal republic in Cyprus. Both communities have appealed to these agreements quite often during negotiations [1, p. 196].

Most of the negotiations in the 70s, 80s and 90s under the authority of the UN have failed in terms of government power proportions, freedom of movement and property ownership. Both sides perceived the conflict in two areas. The first one referred to the attitude to the internal issues of Cyprus and the second concerned the community relations towards the "mother countries" (Greece and Turkey) and their influence on the issues on the island. When the northern part of the island has declared the establishment of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus – TRNC – in 1983, the UN announced this act to be invalid and urged all countries not to recognise any other country on the island than the Republic of Cyprus.

The role of the UN in the resolution of the Cyprus conflict culminated when it switched from the position of a communication mediator to the position of an active coordinator. The highlight of the negotiations in 2002-2004 was a peacemaking plan entitled "The Comprehensive Settlement of the Cyprus Problem", which was historically known as the "Annan plan" from the name of the UN General Secretary at that time.

The referendum regarding the Annan plan took place on 24th April 2004 simultaneously in both parts of the island. The majority of Turkish Cypriots agreed to the plan (64.91%), while the majority of Greek Cypriots rejected it (75.38%). The negative result of the referendum

on the Greek side can be attributed mainly to the unwillingness of the Greek-Cypriot government to inform their citizens correctly about the plan, what it meant, to what extent it is advantageous and what compromises it contained [2, p. 20].

The negotiations after the unsuccessful referendum concerning the Annan plan ended with both positive and negative news. Globally, it is possible to evaluate a certain progress with the issue (especially after 2008). Both sides have had a positive approach to mutual trust building and some partial agreements were moved forward (i.e. opening of two new border crossings); however, the conflict still persists.

Despite everything, the UN is the most impartial and neutral actor in the conflict. Owing to its team of experts and a resume full of proposals for the final resolution of the conflict, the UN can be considered the only reliable involved actor.

2. European Union in the resolution of the Cyprus conflict

It is interesting that the European Union (EU) is considered to be the only international organisation which has a possibility of using the "carrot and stick" policy. Some crisis management experts see this policy to be a way for the EU to influence the political resolution of the Cyprus conflict [3].

The Greek-Cypriot administration applied to be a full EU member in 1990. Until this time, the EU was not significantly involved in the resolution of the Cyprus conflict. The EU has verbally supported the activities of the UN; however, it has never created a common initiative. The Cyprus conflict though meant and still means that there is one problem on two "battlegrounds". The first aspect was the aspirations of Cyprus to become an EU member and the second one was the aspirations of Turkey to become a member.

Representatives of the Turkish-Cypriot community have opposed the request with the reasoning that the Greek-Cypriot administration does not represent the Turkish-Cypriot community; therefore, it is not in a position to implement such action on behalf of both communities. Agreement on guarantees from 1960 has prohibited Cyprus, as a whole or just its part, to participate in any political or economic union with any country. According to this "still valid" agreement, the accession of Cyprus to the EU was impossible. Therefore, the EU was facing an inconvenient situation – negotiations had to be carried out with the Greek Cypriots; however, it was necessary to find a way to include the Turkish Cypriots while at the same time resolving any complications which could arise between Greece and Turkey.

The neutral behaviour of the EU was significantly affected in 1995 when the "Protocol about financial and technical cooperation" was signed with Republic of Cyprus (Greek-Cypriot administration) and in 1998 when the accession negotiations with the Republic of Cyprus have started. The EU got into a difficult situation. In 1996, Greece has "warned" that in the event of rejecting the accession of Cyprus, it would veto the expansion of the EU by other candidates (Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) in 2004 [4, p. 52].

The process of negotiations run simultaneously with the process of resolution of the Cyprus conflict (in the background of the proposed Annan plan). It is questionable whether it was the hopes/assumptions that the plan would succeed that in some phases it was speculated that the whole island will enter the EU.

The Republic of Cyprus (without the northern part) joined the EU on 1ˢᵗ May 2004 without resolving the situation on the island. Brussels created some sort of an unrequited precedent when it provided a fixed date of accession to a country which has unresolved territorial disputes. Political and economic interests probably prevailed in the question of the accession of Cyprus. Its geographical location in the Eastern Mediterranean foreshadowed the influence of expansion of the EU in the mentioned region with reach to the Middle East.

In this situation, it is necessary to remind that, with its EU membership, the Republic of Cyprus has a good reach on the accession of Turkey into the organisation. The unresolved conflict in Cyprus can become a serious obstacle for Turkey on its way to the EU. However, that would mean a paradox – if the unresolved Cyprus conflict did not interfere with the accession of the Republic of Cyprus to the EU, it should not be an obstacle for Turkey either.

As a catalyst of the resolution of the Cyprus conflict, the EU has lost its motivational value after the accession of the Southern part of the island. Resolution of the situation on the island is important for the EU. It is undesirable for one of the current EU member countries to not have full power over its territory in long term. Moreover, an absurd situation arose when one of the EU candidate countries (Turkey) does not recognise the Republic of Cyprus as a supreme representative of the whole of Cyprus and all Cypriots.

In connection with the Cyprus conflict, the independence of the EU as an institution is questioned. The EU has gone from an impartial observer and potential mediator to a direct participant in the conflict. When it comes to the role of the EU in relation to Cyprus, it seems that the EU policy has divided, rather than integrated, its member countries. Moreover, it has alienated rather than attracted Turkish Cypriots, and with its actions and decisions, it has created conditions for the division of the island rather than its union.

On the other hand, it can be seen that the EU is hoping for an interest of Turkish Cypriots to integrate to the EU (it is relying on "carrot" in its "carrot and stick" policy), and therefore, it is also expecting a more collaborative attitude towards the resolution of the Cyprus conflict. For them, there is an interest in economic profit from potential membership in the EU, but they also consider security-related (and many other) aspects.

3. United States of America in the resolution of the Cyprus conflict

Historically, Cyprus was not a priority in the agenda of the United States of America (USA). It happened in the 60s and 70s, during the Cold war, when after the outbreak of violence in 1963 USA partially took over the role which was originally the role of Great Britain. However, they just stayed in the background during the resolution of conflict.

The USA entered the conflict in Cyprus mainly in the form of diplomatic intervention. Their priority was peacekeeping in the region with an effort to avert the conflict situation between Greece and Turkey. Their primary interest was to keep good relations in the South-eastern part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO).

One of the attempts of the USA at resolving the Cyprus conflict was a plan of a US diplomat, Dean Acheson, in 1964. He was in charge of the creation of the Truman doctrine; therefore, he was a famous figure in Greece and Turkey.

The main idea of the plan was to end Cypriot sovereignty, end the Republic of Cyprus, and subsequently divide the island between Greece and Turkey. For the Turkish-Cypriot community,

the territory of the northern part of the island would be bounded. Furthermore, in the Greek-Cypriot territory, there would be two autonomous regions. Turkish Cypriots would get compensation if they would leave the island. Moreover, there would be a bounded region for the Turkish sovereign base in the North-East part of the island and Greece would give a small island Castellorizo.

Immediately, there were contradictions regarding the size of the area for the Turkish base. Acheson modified his plan and suggested that the bounded territory for the Turkish military base would not be under the Turkish sovereignty, but Cyprus would rent it out for 25 years. However, the plan was not accepted even after many changes [1, p. 129].

Cyprian president Makarios did not see any reason for the division of the island and he was looking for a way for the island to become independent. He was looking for support from the UN. His activities caused the USA to stop paying attention to the conflict resolution after 1964.

During a coup on the island in 1974, there was no reaction from the US administration. Similarly, the USA merely observed the situation, while Turkey reacted with power to the mentioned coup. The partial reaction of the USA in 1975 was caused mainly by the pressure exerted by the Greek lobby in the US Congress, which accepted an embargo against Turkey regarding its intervention on the island in 1974.

In the 80s, the USA actively engaged in the resolution of the Cyprus conflict due to the rising strategic importance of the island in the US foreign politics. It was caused by the events in the Middle East in 1979, especially the Iranian revolution and Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. This mediation increased the interest of the USA in Cyprus and encouraged the US Congress to accept certain measures. The USA recognised the role of the UN in the process and, simultaneously, they calculated the necessary support for the resolution. For this purpose, the US Congress created the "Peace and Reconstruction Fund for Settlement in Cyprus" in 1985. At the time they considered Cyprus to be a "valuable partner in the fight against new global threats of proliferation of terror, illegal narcotics and international crime" [3, p. 567].

The position of a Special envoy was created in the USA in June 1997. The position was taken by Richard Holbrooke (the creator of the Dayton agreement regarding the crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina). He created a plan whose nature is mutual recognition of the sovereignty of both sides and creation of a bi-zonal federation. Among other things, he has proposed a four-sided conference in the "Dayton style".

As a condition for any discussions, Turkish Cypriots requested that TRNC is recognised. On the other hand, Greek Cypriots have been trying to avoid the recognition of TRNC at any cost. Therefore, the mediation of the agreement in the USA agenda faced the same obstacle as in the UN agenda – the conception of sovereignty. Such a plan was doomed to fail.

From the USA point of view, Cyprus presents several mutual, intertwined areas of interest:

– restriction of the influence of well-armed and aggressive countries of the Middle East,

– uninterrupted flow of oil from the Middle East to the West,

– stability of the Eastern Mediterranean.

The stability of the Eastern Mediterranean is necessary for the regional stability of South-east Europe and the Middle East. The Cyprus conflict influences Greek-Turkish relations, which are threatening and weakening the South-East wing of NATO.

Cyprus is located on oil routes with the possibility of influencing the flow of oil to the West. Among other things, new sites of natural gas are of US interest. In this regard, the Republic of Cyprus granted rights to multinational concern (with a dominant American representation) for the extraction of natural gas in one of the sea blocks ("Cyprus A").

The USA considers the Republic of Cyprus to be the closest democratic country of the Middle East. In consequence, if there is a need of armed intervention in the region, the USA sometimes shows interest in the use of Cypriot military bases (and British bases on Cyprus), harbours and airports [5].

The USA declares that the support of the permanent and viable resolution of the Cyprus conflict is an aim of the American foreign politics. Cypriots (especially Greek Cypriots) expect that the USA will actively contribute financially to the resolution of the Cyprus conflict [6]. If they expected it from the USA in 2008, in 2017 they refer that there is a major loss of trust towards the USA. At the same time, they talk about "firm evidence that the USA have undermined the interests and needs of Cyprus" [7].

We can try to find real evidence on the American practices which are in conflict with the interests of Cyprus. They could actually cause closer relations of the Republic of Cyprus with Russia. It could also be a certain political game from the side of the Cypriot political administrative for the justification of close links with Russia.

4. Russia in the solution of the Cyprus conflict

Russia has been an active actor in influencing the Cyprus conflict since the 90s. This means that there is yet another actor in the Cyprus conflict, which complicates the already complicated problem even more. In April 1997, Russia submitted a plan called the "Basic Principles for a Cyprus Settlement". There were no new or groundbreaking ideas in this document; it simply contained the position and attitude of Russia towards this problem. It could be said that Russia presented its interest of involvement in this document.

Russia is following its economic and security interests with its active entry into the Cyprus conflict. It is trying to extend its influence in the regional and global politics; moreover, it is creating more favourable conditions for the USA, NATO and Turkey [7].

Russia became involved in influencing the Cyprus conflict through its role in the development of the Greek-Cypriot military potential. It sold not only tanks but also a rocket system S-300 to the Greek Cypriots. The motivation of the Greek Cypriots for the purchase of such an air-defence system is obvious. They are trying to create a threatening element with relation to Turkey and eliminate the Turkish air force superiority in relation to Greece and Republic of Cyprus.

Russian intention for the development of the Greek-Cypriot military potential is highly likely more diverse. They are creating new links in the region of the Middle East and they are trying to extend the spheres of their influence through these connections with the Greek Cypriots. Trade in weaponry and military technologies is a suitable tool for this.

Russian interests with regard to the extension of its influence in Cyprus are strategic. Russia considers military and technological collaboration with Cyprus to be an inseparable part of its foreign politics. With its expansion of influence, Russia compensates both the expansion of NATO by its new member countries from Central Europe and the Turkish efforts to expand its influence in the Caucasus.

An evident manifestation of interests in the relevant area is the creation of military bases. The result of mutual Russian-Cypriot negotiations was an official agreement between the Republic of Cyprus and Russia signed on 25th February 2015. It concludes that the Republic of Cyprus will provide access to Cypriot airports and harbours for the Russian air and marine forces when needed (so-called host nation).

Cypriot president (Anastasiades) called this act the "renewal of old (defence) agreement, while some of the additional services will be provided". He referred to the traditionally good relations with Russia, which according to his words is "not possible to change" [8]. Cyprus is one of 28 EU members which, in connection with the events in Ukraine, imposed sanctions on Russia in the previous year.

The economy has an irreplaceable position in the Russian-Cypriot relations. It is estimated that in the last 20 years Russians transferred over 30 billion American dollars (approximately 1 trillion Russian roubles) to Cyprus [9]. In 2013, during the Cypriot financial crisis, it was estimated by financial analytics that over one-third of bank deposits could be of Russian origin and there is a large number of Russian companies on the island. Moreover, Cyprus is accused of "laundering the money of Russian criminals" [8].

Naturally, Russian financial involvement in an EU country evokes worries, especially in the highest positions of the institution. Alleged negotiations of the Republic of Cyprus with Russia during the culmination of the financial crisis with regard to saving the situation in 2013 caused extreme concerns. Especially alarming were speculations that, in return, Russia could have demanded a marine harbour in the town of Limassol and access to Cypriot resources of natural gas. The Republic of Cyprus has eventually solved the financial crises without the help of Russia, while the relations with Russia have not been disrupted, which has brought a relief to EU representatives [8].

An increasing number of Russians decided to settle in Cyprus (in the Republic of Cyprus), which contributed to a positive evolution of the Russian-Cypriot relations. According to data from 2010, around 50 000 Russians live in Cyprus; there are 4 Russian schools, approximately 10 Russian educational centres for afternoon activities and around 20 musical and dance schools. In these institutions, the Russian language is used as the main language for communication [7].

The positive evolution of the Russian-Cypriot relations is also confirmed by the meeting of the highest state representatives of both countries in 2017. During the meeting, they referred to "relationships based on mutual cultural, spiritual and religious values which have considerably grown and strengthened in the area of political, agricultural and defence collaboration" [10].

Putin and Anastasiades have signed a Common action programme for the years 2018-2020. The ministers of both Russian and Cypriot government have signed bilateral agreements Memorandum about understanding and Common declaration. Partner ministers of both countries have signed agreements on trade transport, international road transport, marine transport, communication, and information technologies. Moreover, an agreement on collaboration in the area of modernisation of economics was signed. In total, they have signed seven agreements, which added to the already high number of agreements between the two countries – currently amounting to a total of sixty-seven.

Some of the Greek Cypriots perceive Russia as a suitable alternative to Great Britain and the USA when it comes to the issues of security. In the past decade, the inclinations and hopes of the Greek Cypriots significantly leaned towards Moscow [7].

5. Great Britain in the resolution of the Cyprus conflict

The colonial history and influence of Great Britain in Cyprus is evident – for instance, the left-hand traffic. However, the much more important influence of Great Britain is represented by the existence of two Sovereign Base Areas on the island.

Great Britain was engaged in the resolution of the conflict at the time of its great influence on the island. It was particularly visible in the times of anti-colonial resistance and at the beginnings of the conflict.

In the past (especially during its colonial domination, but also later), Great Britain has created some proposals for the functioning of the island. The most important were: Winster proposal, Harding proposal, Radcliff plan and Macmillan plan.

Occupying the position of the governor of the island, Winster reacted to the political pressure of the newly-formed parties on the island by the creation of a proposal for a constitutional regime on the island. This proposal was suspended after the suppression of the anti-British insurgency in 1931. However, it was recovered in 1947 when it was also presented. Since the proposal has been criticised by Cypriot nationalist parties, the British administrative remade the proposal and in 1948 it was presented again. This time, however, the proposal was refused by the opposition [11, p. 72].

The acceptance of Winster's proposal would provide the Greek-Cypriot members of the parliament with the ability to create a majority in the assembly. It would be impossible for British and Turkish-Cypriot representatives to veto this majority, unlike in the time period before 1931. However, the proposal of the constitution provided privileges for control of the defence, international relations, finances, and rights of a minority to the governor. As a result, the whole political spectrum of the Greek-Cypriots blocked further process and the Cypriot assembly came to an end.

Harding has taken the post of the governor and chief commander of Cypriot armed forces in difficult times. In an unofficial referendum in 1950, 96% of the Greek Cypriots voted in favour of union with Greece, which basically meant voting against British supremacy. The Greek-Cypriots started an armed fight against British representatives and the Turkish-Cypriot minority as well.

Harding's proposal consisted in the establishment of Cypriot autonomy and provided the terms of gradual acquirement self-determination. Discussions between Harding and Makarios in 1956 led to Brits keeping the right for military defence and taking control of the foreign affairs of Cyprus until Cypriot autonomy will be able to take over such competencies. Despite positive outlooks, the Greek-Cypriot radicals intensified the anti-colonial activities. Harding's hard counter measurements were followed by his abdication from his position and by Makarios' banishing to Seychelles [12].

Radcliffe (British lawyer, famous for his role in the division of British India) prepared a plan which established the terms for the future Cypriot autonomy in accordance with the UN charter. The proposed plan originated from the condition that the British sovereignty will stay on the island, which meant that Great Britain could use the island as a military base and control the defence and internal security of the country.

Radcliff's plan offered a relatively simple way of how to get Cyprus out of the British supremacy. The Greek-Cypriots were focused on the union with Greece and they considered

all other solutions as a colonial type of governance. The Greek-Cypriot political garniture refused Radcliff's proposals because they were missing specific dates for obtaining independence [11, p. 15].

British Prime Minister Macmillan presented his plan for the resolution of the Cyprus issue. His plan counted on the participation of Greece, Turkey and Cyprus for the power distribution. The Turkish and Greek government would gain a right to manage the foreign relations, security and defence of Cyprus. Turkish-Cypriot and Greek-Cypriot representatives would gain a right to veto some of the legislation issues. It was hoped that each community would have its own parliament, which would basically mean the division of the island; however, it would still be controlled by Great Britain, Greece and Turkey.

Macmillan's plan (with the application of some ideas from Radcliff's plan) created possibilities for the territorial division. The possibility of segregation of both communities with the possibility of controlling the island from the side of Greece and Turkey was not enough. Even though this plan was not accepted, later on it was used as a basis for Agreements from Zürich and London which were a starting point for the establishment of the Republic of Cyprus in 1960. It presented the bases for the creation of the Constitution of the Republic from 1960 and it was basically the reason for the failure of operation of the newly-established country after 1960.

In 1960, Great Britain became one of the signatories of an agreement on guarantees which meant that they were obliged to actively participate in the resolution of the Cyprus conflict. However, the activities of Great Britain were taken over by the UN to a great extent.

Great Britain showed, and still shows, support with regard to the discussion and negotiations between both Cypriot communities with an interest in the solution of the conflict. Among other things, in the British administrative, the position of British High Commissioner to Cyprus still exists and he actively participates in the resolution of the conflict.

Present British politics (i.e. EU pre-accession negotiations concerning Turkey) and the constant presence of British armed forces on the island divide the Greek-Cypriot community in regards to Great Britain. Part of the community expects, requires even, the departure of the British armed forces, while another part relies on their presence because they see it as an anti-Turkish force and source of protection against the potential danger from the Turkish side [13].

Pre-election promises of the left-wing candidate (Demetris Christofias) in presidential elections of the Republic of Cyprus in 2008 caused serious concerns of the British government. He expressed that the withdrawal of all foreign military forces would be a part of the Cyprus conflict resolution. Moreover, he described the presence of the British armed forces on the island as a "colonial bloodstain" [14].

The involvement of Great Britain in the Syrian civil war in 2013 created various speculations in relation to the security of Cypriot citizens. Syrian military potential in the form of ballistic rockets (with the possibility of being a carrier of chemical weaponry) caused worries that there will be a strike against the British troops on Cyprus. The worries brought the possibility that Cypriots living near British bases could be threatened [15].

Despite significant disapproval regarding the presence of the British sovereign bases in Cyprus, Great Britain maintains their interest in keeping them on the island. The British

government considers the region mentioned as an area of geopolitical importance with high priority for long-term interests of the United Kingdom in national security. According to the Ministry of Defence of Great Britain, "military personnel, United Kingdom civilians and locally employed personnel in the Sovereign Base Areas make a major contribution to the national security of United Kingdom and will continue to do so in the future" [16].

6. Turkey and Greece in the resolution of the Cyprus conflict

Turkey and Greece are, apart from Turkish and Greek Cypriots, the most obvious actors in the Cyprus conflict. Sometimes they are labelled as "mother countries". In 1960, Turkey and Greece (together with Great Britain) signed the agreement of guarantees, which obliged them to be active in the conflict resolution to a certain extent. It is obvious that many plans and decisions of the Greek and Turkish Cypriots were discussed with the governments of the mother countries. Their position often influenced the acceptance, modification or rejection of proposals.

Cyprus is an important part of Greek and Turkish foreign politics and is one of the most fundamental sources of dispute between Turkey and Greece. In many cases, the Cyprus conflict is presented as a conflict between these two countries. However, such presentation would just simplify all the influences on the conflict.

Turkey is interested in Cyprus for two main reasons. Firstly, it is interested in the security of the Turkish Cypriots; secondly, it is the security interests of Turkey which are of "life importance". During decades of the Cyprus conflict, the government of Turkey has changed many times; however, every government considered Cyprus as the "national case of Turkey" [3, p. 565].

Cyprus is important for the security of Turkey because it is located just several tens of kilometres from the mainland of Turkey. Turkish military presence in the Northern part of Cyprus allows Turkey to control the access to their southern coastline and its harbours in the Mediterranean.

From the Turkish point of view, Greece would gain strategic advantage if it would overtake Cyprus since the southern part of Turkey would be threatened. Greece and the Greek Cypriots would, in case of conflict, create the possibility of acting against the Turkish mainland. Turkey is monitoring the improvement of the armament of the Cyprus National Guard (especially with rockets S-300) with concern. The placement of these rockets on the island has an influence on Turkish capabilities in case of necessity to transport soldiers by air and support them from the air.

Greece, similarly to Turkey, is interested in Cyprus for two main reasons. Firstly, it is due to the security of the Greek Cypriots, and secondly, because of the security interests of Greece. Various Greek governments have considered the Cyprus conflict to be an important part of the national political scene, which put them in disadvantageous positions. The concessions of any of the Greek governments towards Turkey would be considered to be a betrayal of the national political interests. Therefore, the willingness to accept compromises in relation to the Cyprus conflict has become a disadvantage for any government in Athens.

Long-term discussions regarding the Cyprus conflict resulted in many years of influence of Greek internal politics and perception of "Turkish threat". "Haunting" of the citizens with

the Turkish threat is successfully displayed in the Greek political scene and it becomes an important source of popularity among Greek politicians [17].

It is evident that, apart from security interests, the Cyprus conflict presents an important part of the internal politics of Turkey and Greece. The incitement of anti-Turkish motives in Greece and anti-Greek motives in Turkey influences the inner politics of these countries, but these motives are also transferred to Cyprus.

Conclusions

The causes of the Cyprus conflict can be seen in the context of hundreds of years old fight for power in the European and global scale. Nevertheless, Cyprus presents a relatively small piece of land where the dynamics of the above-mentioned fight can be seen. Cyprus together with its citizens have become a tool for this fight.

Just like in the past, currently, there are two main realities in the power struggle. The first one is natural resources (in the past it was cuprum, currently it is natural gas in the coastal waters of Cyprus) and the second one is its location (it constitutes an entrance of a sort to the Asian mainland). Due to these two reasons, the control over the island is the main interest of the strongest powers, which causes an influence on the Cyprus conflict.

Acknowledgement

Conflict of interests

The author declared no conflict of interests.

Author contributions

The author contributed to the interpretation of results and writing of the paper. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

Ethical statement

The research complies with all national and international ethical requirements.

ORCID

Ivan Majchút https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7790-2147

References

1. Hakki MM. *The Cyprus Issue: A Documentary History, 1878-2006.* Oxford: Oxford Publishing Services; 2007.
2. Varnava A, Faustman H. *Reunifying Cyprus: The Annan Plan and Beyond.* London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd.; 2009.
3. Müftüler-Baç M. *The Cyprus debacle: what the future holds.* Futures. 1999;31:559-75. DOI: 10.1016/S0016-3287(99)00014-2.
4. Sommer J. *Security in Cyprus: Threat Perceptions, Possible Compromises and the Role of the EU.* Bonn: International Center for Conversion; 2005.

5. Katsineris S. *CYPRUS: Washington seeks new military base*, [online]. 2004. Available at: https://www.greenleft.org.au/content/cyprus-washington-seeks-new-military-base.

6. Theophanous A. *The Political Economy of a Cyprus Settlement: The examination of Four Scenaria.* Nicosia: PRIO Cyprus Centre; 2008.

7. Melakopides C. *On the "Special" Nature of the Russia–Cyprus Relationship*, [online]. 2017. Available at: http://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/on-the-special-nature-of-the-russia-cyprus-relationship-/.

8. Holodny E. *Russia reportedly getting military bases in an EU state*, [online]. 2015. Available at: http://www.businessinsider.com/russia-military-agreement-in-cyprus-2015-2.

9. Russia Today. *$30bn in Russian money sent to Cyprus in 2 decades – study*, [online]. 2013. Available at: https://www.rt.com/business/russia-cyprus-money-transfer-877/#.VNe_9xDttZ0.twitter.

10. Christou J. *Anastasiades-Putin sign joint action plan (update 2)*, [online]. 2017. Available at: http://cyprus-mail.com/2017/10/24/anastasiades-putin-reaffirm-strong-cyprus-russia-ties/.

11. Vanezis PN. *Cyprus: Crime without Punishment.* Nicosia: Regal Printing Limited; 2000.

12. Drousiotis M. *Five seconds that decided Cyprus' future*, [online]. 2009. Available at: http://www.makarios.eu/cgibin/hweb?-A=3285&-V=english.

13. Interpeace. *The Security Dialogue Initiative for Cyprus*, [online]. 2017. Available at: http://www.seedsofpeace.eu/images/projects/ProposalforaNewSecurityArchitecture.pdf.

14. Smith H. *Cyprus elects its first communist president*, [online]. 2008. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/feb/25/cyprus.greece.

15. *Nicolaide D. Cyprus placed in the cross hairs of Syria mess*, [online]. 2013. Available at: http://cyprus-mail.com/2013/08/29/cyprus-placed-in-the-cross-hairs-of-syria-mess/.

16. Hammond P. *The Strategic Defence and Security Review*, [online]. 2012. Available at: http://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-vote-office/9-Defence-Cyprus.pdf.

17. Briganti G. *Cyprus, Greece, Turkey and the S-300 missiles: enough is enough*, [online]. 2008. Available at: http://www.defense-aerospace.com/articles-view/feature/5/19159/cyprus%2C-greece%2C-turkey-and-the-s_300-missile-%3A-enough-is-enough.html.

Biographical note

Ivan Majchút – PhD, Eng., assistant professor of the Security and Defense Department at the Armed Forces Academy of General M.R. Štefánik in Liptovský Mikuláš, Slovakia. An author and co-author of textbooks, author and co-author of several scientific articles published in national and international conference proceedings and magazines focused on military art as well as national and international security.

	Cypr jako ośrodek zainteresowania graczy globalnych i regionalnych
STRESZCZENIE	Wyspa Cypr, położona we wschodniej części Morza Śródziemnego, znana jest z trwającego od dziesięcioleci konfliktu zwanego „konfliktem cypryjskim". Na rozwiązanie konfliktu wpływają przede wszystkim członkowie lokalnych społeczności. Nie należy jednak zapominać o graczach zewnętrznych. Istotną rolę w tym procesie odgrywają przede wszystkim organizacje międzynarodowe (ONZ, UE) oraz znaczące mocarstwa światowe lub regionalne (USA, Rosja, Wielka Brytania, Turcja, Grecja). Kraje te mają istotny wpływ na działalność we wschodniej części basenu Morza Śródziemnego i realizują swoje interesy we wspomnianym regionie.
SŁOWA KLUCZOWE	Konflikt cypryjski, gracze zewnętrznie, ONZ, UE, USA, Rosja, Wielka Brytania, Turcja

How to cite this paper