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SPECPOL[†] 1 BRIEFING PAPER



[†] Special-Political and Decolonisation Committee

Question of Northern Cyprus

Background

The Cyprus conflict is an ongoing dispute between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. Initially, with the occupation of the island by the British Empire from the Ottoman Empire in 1878 and subsequent annexation in 1914, the "Cyprus dispute" was a conflict between the Turkish and Greek islanders.

The international complications of the dispute stretch beyond the boundaries of the island of Cyprus itself and involve the guarantor powers under the Zürich and London Agreement (Greece, Turkey, and the United Kingdom), the United Nations, and the European Union, along with (unofficially) the United States and formerly the interference of Czechoslovakia and the Eastern Bloc.

It entered its current phase in the aftermath of the 1974 Turkish military invasion and occupation of the northern third of Cyprus. Only Turkey recognises the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, while there is broad recognition that the ongoing military presence constitutes occupation of territories that belong to the Republic of Cyprus. According to the European Court of Human Rights, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus should be considered a puppet state under effective Turkish control.

Although the Republic of Cyprus is recognised by the international community as the sole legitimate state, the north is under the de facto administration of the self-declared Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, on which the Turkish Armed Forces are stationed.

The 1974 Cypriot coup d'état, initiated by the Greek military junta, was followed five days later by Turkey's invasion, leading to the occupation of the northern part of the internationally recognised Republic of Cyprus. In 1983, the Turkish Cypriot community unilaterally declared independence, forming the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, a sovereign entity that lacks international recognition with the exception of Turkey, with which Northern Cyprus enjoys full diplomatic relations, in violation of Resolution 550, adopted on 11 May 1984 by the United Nations Security Council. In 2004, the UN 'Annan Plan' to create a federated United Republic of Cyprus was rejected by Greek Cypriots in a referendum, due to perceived excessive concessions

As a result of the two communities and the guarantor countries committing themselves to finding a peaceful solution to the dispute, the United Nations maintains a buffer zone (known as the "Green Line") to avoid any further intercommunal tensions and hostilities. This zone separates the southern areas of the Republic of Cyprus (predominantly inhabited by Greek Cypriots), from the northern areas (where Turkish Cypriots and Turkish settlers are a majority). Recent years have seen warming of relations between Greek and Turkish Cypriots, with officially renewed reunification talks beginning in early 2014, though the talks have continuously stalled and resumed multiple times since they began.

The conflict has left 1,400 people missing and it's caused the death of 3,000 civilians.

Key issues

- **Political**

In the Republic of Cyprus, the President of Cyprus is both head of state and head of government, and executive power is exercised by the government, but. UN-brokered peace talks between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot leaderships which began in 1968 are still ongoing. These talks aim to reunify the island, but this has been challenging as the Turkish Cypriot leader, Tatar, openly supports a two-state solution. Also, rising tensions in 2020 between Cyprus, Greece, and Turkey over hydrocarbons explorations in Cyprus' Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) have complicated the process further.

The Turkish Cypriot breakaway state is only recognised by Turkey whereas the Republic of Cyprus is internationally recognised.

As Turkey refuses to recognise the Republic of Cyprus arguing that it ceased to exist when the intercommunal violence that broke out in December 1963 ended Turkish Cypriot participation in government. As a result, Turkey still refuses to allow Cypriot-flagged vessels access to its ports, despite pressure from the European Union.

Nicos Anastasiadis, Greek Cypriot leader has stated that Turkish proposals for a two-state solution, were a violation of the UN resolutions

- **Cultural**

Since 1974, the Turkish community in Northern Cyprus has promoted its own Turkish and Islamic cultures. Greek Cypriots take care to preserve their traditional culture and observe important holidays.

In some organisations, the Turkish sector of Cyprus is ignored, i.e., in the international sports-governing bodies.

- **Military**

Turkish military presence in Cyprus has led to the collapse of UN-brokered reunification talks. The Turkish troops who still occupy 36 percent of the island's whole territory, justify their actions through the legal basis of 'The Treaty of Guarantee,' which labelled the right for Turkey to protect its Turkish Cypriots. However, Greek Cypriots with support from the UN, argue that this was an illegal use of force and that there is no adequate justification for the measure of Turkish occupation.

Questions to consider

1. Why has the conflict defied so many efforts at resolution?
2. Who should be in control of Northern Cyprus?
3. What measures can be taken to help resolve the conflict?

Useful links

[Refworld | Freedom in the World 2018 - Northern Cyprus](#)

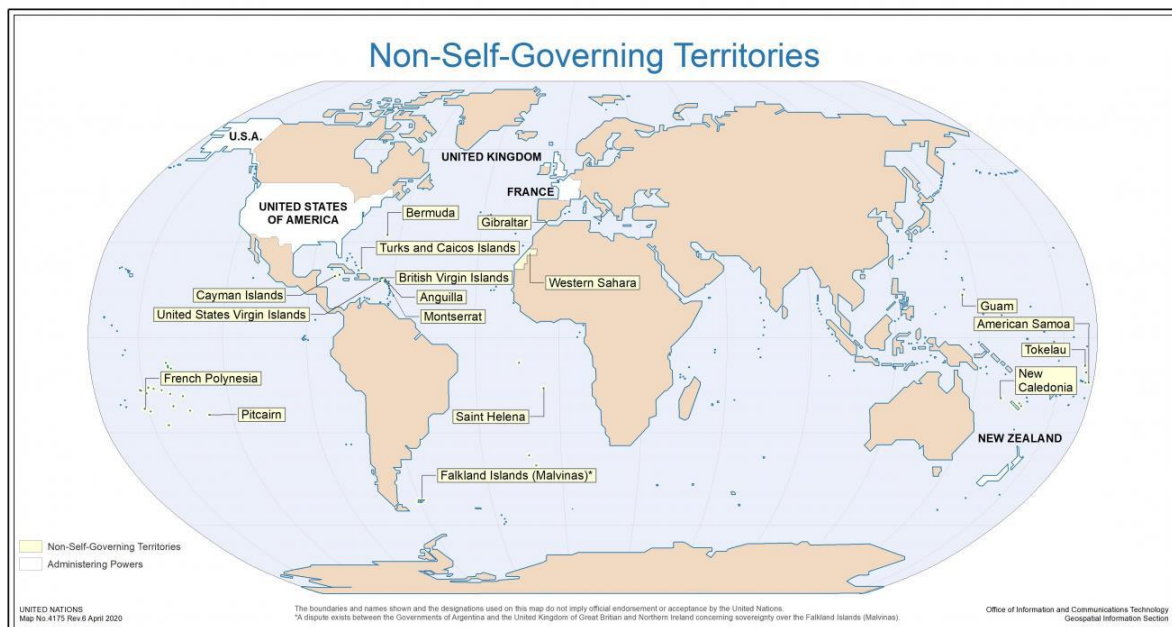
[Recent Peace Talks Fail To Resolve Ongoing Cyprus Conflict - The Organization for World Peace \(theowp.org\)](#)

Question of Non-Self-Governing Territories

Background

Under Chapter XI of the Charter of the United Nations, the Non-Self-Governing Territories are defined as "territories whose people have not yet attained a full measure of self-government". The General Assembly, by its resolution 66 (I) of 14 December 1946, noted a list of 72 Territories to which Chapter XI of the Charter applied.

In 1963, the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (also known as the "Special Committee on Decolonization" or the "C-24") approved a preliminary list of Territories to which the Declaration applied (A/5446/Rev.1, annex I). Due to decolonisation over the years, there are only 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories, still on the agenda of the C-24.



Countries administering Non-Self-Governing Territories are called Administering Powers.

Chapter XI urged the administering Powers concerned to take effective measures to safeguard and guarantee the rights of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories to their natural resources, and to establish and maintain control over the future development of those resources and requested the Administering Powers to take all necessary steps to protect the property rights of the peoples of those Territories.

Administering Powers assist them in developing self-government and democratic political institutions, in addition to ensuring the political, economic, social, and educational advancement of the peoples. They also have an obligation to communicate regularly with the Secretary-General information on the economic, social, and educational conditions in the Territories under their administration.

Chapter XI also urged all States, directly and through their action in the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system, to provide moral and material assistance to the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

Key Issues

- **Political**

Previously, Administering Powers had used their Territories as areas to ‘safely’ practice using nuclear weapons, but this led to the Territories being poisoned by radiation. Due to their lack of autonomy and national sovereignty they were unable to prevent this from happening.

As, Administering Powers have more political power than their Territories, they are less likely to be held accountable for their actions in these territories meaning civilians are worse off.

With Administering Powers maintaining high levels of control, it can be hard for Territories to reach the standards needed to begin the self-determination process and become an autonomous state.

In remaining territories, an overwhelming number have held referendums that supported maintaining the status quo of the territory and refusing independence

- **Environmental and Economic**

Climate change has exposed many of the Territories to more environmental and economic vulnerability

Some argue that sustainable development goals (SDGs) should be implemented in non-self-governing territories to help them face challenges of climate change, access health care, achieve economic diversification, conserve marine resources, and increase the quantity of safe drinking water. Some also argue that if economic dependency continues, SDGs can’t be realised, especially as many of these territories are more prone to natural disasters and without full sovereignty it can be harder to receive aid.

Also, some Administering Powers, inhibit Territories from taking action to ensure an effective response to climate-related events.

In certain territories, the Administering Power maintained financial and economic control of the Territory through multinational corporations,

Questions to consider

- Should the UN be responsible for promoting independence in the territories?
- What systems and institutions should be put in place to ensure that citizens aren’t exploited?
- Should an aim be on eradicating colonialism at all costs, or should it be to protect the ‘voiceless’ and act as agents for their will? Is it possible to do both, and if so what measures can be used to achieve this?
- Are referendums a legitimate and fair expression of the will of the people?

Relevant organisations

- UNICEF
- UNESCO
- ILO
- UNDP

Useful links

[Non-Self-Governing Territories | The United Nations and Decolonization](#)

[Ensuring Non-Self-Governing Territories Can Address Challenges Key to Moving Decolonization Efforts Forward, Secretary-General Tells Regional Seminar | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases \(un.org\)](#)

[Decolonisation revisited and the obligation not to divide a Non-Self-Governing Territory - QIL QDI \(qil-qdi.org\)](#)

[UN Committee Focuses on SDG Needs in Non-Self-Governing Territories | News | SDG Knowledge Hub | IISD](#)

Question of the West Bank

Note: Palestine is an Observer member of the United Nations, and thus is not represented in this debate as a voting member

Background

West Bank is an area of the former British-mandated (1920-47) territory of Palestine, west of the Jordan River, claimed from 1949 to 1988 as part of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan but occupied from 1967 by Israel.

Israeli occupation resulted in constraints on West Bank's industrial development; investment capital remained scarce both in the West Bank and Gaza, and only the transportation infrastructure saw much improvement after 1967. This improvement occurred mostly for military reasons, although it also benefited agriculture by facilitating the supply and servicing of markets.

Many Palestinians were displaced after the 1948 and 1967 wars. About 300,000 Palestinians (most of whom were originally from territory captured by Israel in 1948) left the impoverished West Bank for Transjordan (later Jordan) during the year after the 1948 war; and about 380,000 Palestinians fled the West Bank after it was captured by the Israelis in 1967. Between 1967 and 1977 an estimated 6,300 Palestinians were evicted from East Jerusalem and replaced by Jewish immigrants, and many others lost their residency rights under the 1992-96 government of Benjamin Netanyahu.

Between 2.1 million and 3 million Palestinian Arabs currently live in the West Bank under both limited self-rule and Israeli military rule. The West Bank (excluding East Jerusalem) is also home to some 430,000 Israeli Jews who live in 132 settlements (and 124 smaller "outposts") built under Israel's occupation.

The vast majority of the international community considers the settlements illegal under international law, though Israel and the US under the Trump administration dispute this interpretation.

Annexation is the term applied when a state unilaterally proclaims its sovereignty over other territory. This is forbidden by international law.

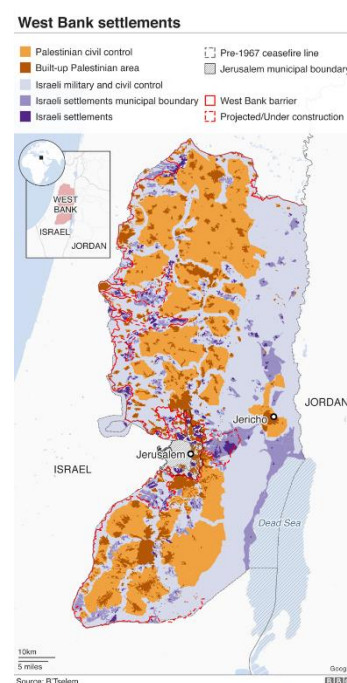
Palestinians living in West Bank haven't been offered citizenship by the state.

Timeline

Pre early 1970s - period of general peace existed in the West Bank

late 1970s and early 1980s - Israel pursued a more aggressive course of establishing settlements. Land, businesses, and buildings were seized from Palestinian inhabitants, many of whom had already fled

December 1987 - Anti-Israeli protests broke out amongst the Palestinians of the West Bank



1988 - Jordan renounced all administrative responsibility for the West Bank, thereby severing their country's remaining connections with the area.

September 1993 - Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) reached agreement on a plan to gradually extend self-government to the Palestinians of the West Bank (and Gaza Strip) over a five-year period prior to a final settlement of the issue of Palestinian statehood. Under the plan, Israel's civilian and military administration would be dissolved and the Israeli army withdrawn from populous Palestinian areas.

2000 - Palestinian Authority (PA) controlled less than one-fifth of the West Bank, while Israeli occupation (in some areas, combined with PA local administration) continued in the remainder.

2006 - in parliamentary elections, Fatah (an influential force in Palestinian politics since its foundation by Yasser Arafat in the 1950s) suffered a decisive loss to Hamas, reflecting years of dissatisfaction with Fatah's governance, which was criticized as corrupt and inefficient. The victory of Hamas, a group that was regarded by many as a terrorist organization, resulted in sanctions and boycotts from Israel, the United States, and the European Union.

2007 - with violence escalating in the Gaza Strip and the failure of a coalition government, PA president Mahmoud Abbas dissolved the Hamas-led government and established in its place an emergency cabinet favouring Fatah. The increasingly violent power struggle between Hamas and Fatah resulted in a split between the West Bank, run by Fatah through the emergency PA government, and the Gaza Strip, controlled by Hamas. Israel and other members of the international community moved to aid the West Bank, offering shows of economic and diplomatic support for Abbas and Fatah while blockading the Gaza Strip. Abbas appointed Salam Fayyad prime minister of the emergency cabinet. During his tenure the PA pursued a neoliberal state-building agenda in the West Bank to prepare it for eventual statehood.

2011 - after years of stalled peace talks, the PA began lobbying for international recognition of statehood and started gaining partial recognition in 2012.

2021 - An outbreak of violence in the ongoing Israel-Palestinian conflict commenced on 10 May 2021. A ceasefire came into effect on 21 May. It was marked by protests and police riot control attacks on Israel by Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and Israeli airstrikes targeting the Gaza Strip and occupation of territory, forcing Palestinians out of their homes. Crisis was triggered on May 6 when the Israeli Supreme Court evicted six Palestinian families in Sheikh Jarrah, an area effectively annexed by Israel part of the occupied Palestinian territories under international law. On 7 May, Israeli forces stormed the compound of the al-Aqsa Mosque, using tear gas, rubber bullets and stun on the holy site. 72,000 Palestinians were displaced.

Key issues

1. Borders & statehood

A two-State solution can only be achieved on the basis of the pre-1967 borders. Borders will likely need to be re-drawn to achieve a two State solution. This is premised on the idea that Palestine deserves to be a State. This question should be recognised by the

Committee. The question over the official legal recognition of Palestine is needed to find a solution to this problem.

2. Military

The Israeli military rule has led to the violation of basic civil rights, authoritarian repression, restrictions on movement and a constant environment of fear and insecurity for many citizens. Due to this, geographical borders in West Bank have disappeared over time and so increasing the possibility of an ethnonational state.

Israel regards possession of the West Bank as vital to its security.

The Palestinian Authority has questionable connections to terrorist organisations, notably Hamas, which should be considered.

3. Palestinian refugees

The Palestine-Israel tensions, specifically in the West Bank, have led to a large influx of Palestinian refugees. These refugees have been forced out of their homes with no place to go. They have a right to be housed and to security and shelter. As this crisis has unfolded, many lives have been taken and families destroyed on both sides. The issue of forcibly displaced people need to be considered.

4. Jerusalem

The question of access and control of Jerusalem is also under consideration. The city is an important religious sites for Christians, Jews and Muslims. The UN does not recognise that the entire city of Jerusalem is Israel's capital. Under President Trump, the United States moved their embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Jerusalem, according to the UN, should be an important part of West Bank discussions and a peaceful solution should be found that includes internationally guaranteed provisions to ensure freedom of religion and conscience.

Questions to consider

1. Is there a two-State solution? If so, how can we achieve it?
2. What can be done about Jerusalem?
3. How do we stop human rights violations carried out by both people from Palestine and Israel?
4. How can we achieve and guarantee a long-lasting solution to this problem?
5. Are Israel's West Bank settlements legal or not? Do settlers born there have the right to self-determination? Why/Why not?
6. Should Palestine be recognised as a UN Member State?

Relevant organisations

- UN Relief & Works Agency (UNRWA)
- UN Security Council
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

Useful links

[Action by UN System and Intergovernmental Organizations Relevant to the Question of Palestine \(May 2021 Monthly Bulletin\) - Question of Palestine](#)

[Where We Work | UNRWA](#)

[Military Rule in the West Bank - Project on Middle East Political Science \(pomeps.org\)](#)



Written/Sourced by Veylan Sebastian, Head Chair of the SPECPOL 1 Committee, for use at the thirteenth annual Haberdashers' Boys' School Model United Nations Conference, 11th-13th March 2022.