

# Cyprus: IDPs from Conflict to Integration, 1964-2004

Peter Loizos

Crisis States Program  
London School of Economics  
and Political Science.



# Background

Cyprus, a large island in the E.Mediterranean, close to the coast of Turkey, and Lebanon.

Greek Cypriots: 78% in 1960 . wealthier

Turkish Cypriots: 18% in 1960  
poorer; declining from 25 % in 1880.

Before 1974 many ethnically mixed villages in most parts of the island.

Each ethnic group contains at least 4 distinct political parties.

# Main Violent Periods

- 1955-59 British colony: Leaders struggle for opposed national dreams: GCs in Greece, TCs in Turkey.
- 1963-4: independence leads to widespread fighting.
- TCs end up controlling only 3% of the island, in defended enclaves.
- 1974: Greece launches anti-democratic army coup, Turkey invades and occupies 36% of the island.



# Greek Cypriots and 1974

- Massive political-cultural humiliation
- Major economic and territorial losses
- 165,000 IDPs – destitute, disoriented.
- Potential political and economic state collapse.

# Public Politics and pragmatic policies

- Greek Cypriots “demands” that Turkey leave Cyprus and allow all IDPs to return to their homes.
- In reality, they knew this would not happen
- At best they might get 50% of the IDPs back home.
- The housing and integration policy contradicted this political posture.

# Greek IDP hopes and actions

- The GC IDPs grieved and mourned for lost homes and farms.
- But they took “future-oriented actions” to develop new incomes, and educate children.
- They “hoped” for return but “expected” not to return. They stopped believing their leaders promises.
- They had been told it would take a “long term [diplomatic] struggle”.



# Greek Cypriot Emergency Plans

- Planning Bureau used Keynesian “New Deal” economics to cope with crisis.
- Treated the IDPs as a “development resources”
- They were, in fact skilled human capital
- IDPs were highly motivated to rebuild their lives through economic activity.

# Emergency Measures:

- Rehousing of poorest by state-financed public housing
- Redeployment of civil servants
- Small loans to small businesses
- Major state-led infrastructural work – airports, roads, light industrial sites. Private sector responded well

# Three Externalities which helped

- OPEC oil price rise 1972 : Gulf States new oil income meant big consumer markets for Cypriot-IDP-made clothing, and foods.
- Lebanese Civil War, 1975-1990 sent wealthy refugees to Cyprus, and “offshore” financial services.
- Mass “sunshine” tourism from UK and Germany became the leading economic sector.



# Turkish Cypriot IDPs.

- First main displacements – 1964.

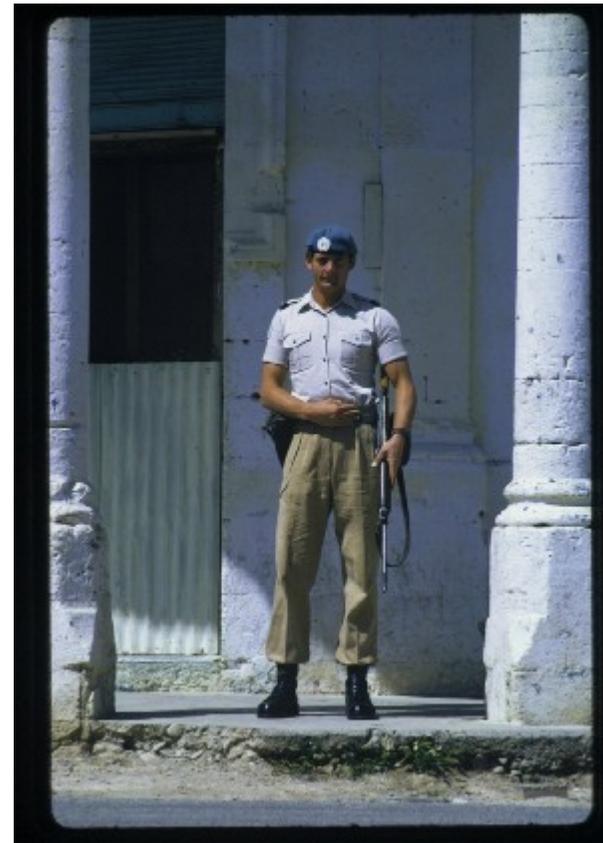
impoverished withdrawal into defended enclaves.

Search for security through separation from Greeks.

If TCs sought “partition” one reason because that many were fearful of GC domination and/or violence.

# Inside the enclaves: 1964-74.

- The GCs for several years economically blockaded the TC enclaves.
- The TC nationalist leadership now built a separate economy.
- In this process they also built a separate administration.
- After 1968, 5 years negotiations over a new constitution.



## The possibility of “normalisation without agreement.”

- Poverty now [1970s] drove many TCs to work for the prospering GCs, as labourers.
- GCs leaders could afford to “wait and see”
- TCs leaders feared demographic collapse, loss of ethnic control, “leakage” into minority in a Greek Cyprus.

# The bitter lessons of 1974



- The intercommunal massacres of 1974 made both GCs and TCs more insecure in the now-divided island.
- Most TCs now saw their future safety with the Turkish army between them and the Greek extremist militia EOKA VITA.
- 1975 Clerides-Denktash agreement allowed TCs to go to the north under UN supervision.

# After 1975: TC IDPs

- They were told by their leaders that they should forget “return”, and make their future in the north. Everything the state did supported this policy.
- Whole IDP villages were directed to re-settle together, which promoted social cohesion.
- They were allocated “points” [numerical values] for the property they had left in the south.
- Their leaders slowly allocated them the use of Greek properties in the north.

# TC IDPs and subsidies



- TC IDPs got Greek land, but no further help from their administration.
- Settlers from Turkey were given major economic help.
- Turkey subsidised the whole of N.Cyprus.

# Housing and Land Allocated.

- It is probable that in many cases they received less land than they had left.
- It is probable that many received housing less good than they had had.
- Some non-IDP TCs took the best GC housing before the IDPs arrived.

## The process of formalising allocation was slow

- By 1993, only 2/3 of these allocations had been registered officially.

Settlers from Turkey – at least 40,000, possibly twice this number brought in to work Greek land, to energise the economy, and confirm the “Turkishness” of the regime.

## Tension and Distance between settlers and Cypriot TCs.

- The TCs, and TC IDPs did not integrate socially with the settlers at first. They saw them as “backward” and “different”.
- These effects probably grew weaker with time, and with inter-marriages between children.

# Integration as enemy of return?

- For GCs the reality of resettlement and employment contradicted the policy of “all must return.” Everyone knew this, no-one said it publicly for many years.

For TCs, integration was always the official goal, and the thought of return was strongly discouraged

# Did IDPs manipulate their leaders?

- For the GCs, the IDPs were always an issue, never THE issue, which was collective ethnic humiliation and occupation.
- GC IDPs made sure their rights to benefits were never reduced.

# IDPs as manipulators?

- TC IDPs had little leverage on their leaders.
- Their votes counted, but policy issues did not lead to a strong IDP “voice” against the key policy, until 2000, and the Annan Plan.

# The IDPs in the Peace Process

- It was always understood that GC IDPs fell into two groups, those who might return, and those who could not return.
- The TC IDPs did not express a collective desire to return. They accepted life in a new political community.

# How far have the IDPs blocked an Agreement?

- They have not been the primary factor.
- The more they aged, and the more their children and grandchildren lived normal lives, the less powerful the “old life” has been.
- The property issue remains difficult, because no-one knows how to resolve it.
- The deeper reasons for failure to agree are about the ethnic collectivity.
- The IDPs are only a part of the story. After all, they are the result, not the causes of the original violence.