

Diplomatic Relations between Cyprus and the Soviet Union/Russia: From Cold War Games to Friendship and Comprehensive Cooperation

YULIA NIKITINA,¹ DENIS KUZNETSOV,¹ LEILI RUSTAMOVA¹

Abstract

Bilateral relations of the Soviet Union and the Republic of Cyprus were rarely covered in the USSR and early post-Soviet Russia, and were generally considered in conjunction with the Cold War. The relations of the USSR and Cyprus could not overcome the logic of the Cold War, escape from realistic pragmatism and the harsh reality of military-political balancing. Nevertheless, the ties between the USSR and Cyprus turned out to be even more intense and diverse than similar ties of the superpower with many other States at the time. After 1991, relations between Russia and Cyprus have been developing based on their traditional alliance. Russia's position with regard to the settlement of the Cyprus conflict remained unchanged, and the ultimate goal was a unified State in terms that satisfy the Cypriot side. Cyprus, in turn, criticises the west's anti-Russian sanctions, despite being a member of the EU.

Keywords: Cyprus, USSR, Russia, Cold War, diplomacy, cooperation, agreements

Introduction

Bilateral relations of the Soviet Union and the Republic of Cyprus were rarely covered in the USSR and early post-Soviet Russia and were generally considered in conjunction with the Cold War. Both superpowers –the USSR and the US– were constrained to frame their foreign policies through the factor of global and total

¹ Yulia Nikitina, Associate Professor of World Politics and Leading Research Fellow at the Center for the Post-Soviet Studies at Moscow State Institute of International Relations (University) of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Relations (MGIMO-University); Denis A. Kuznetsov, Assistant Lecturer at the Department of World Politics, Moscow State Institute of International Relations (University) of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Relations (MGIMO-University); Leili Rustamovna Rustamova, Assistant Lecturer at the Department of World Politics, Moscow State Institute of International Relations (University) of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Relations (MGIMO-University). The reported study was funded by RFBR and EISR according to the research project No. 19-011-31389 'Traditional and Emerging Powers: Discussions on Sovereignty and Conflict Management'.

confrontation with each other.² The relations of the USSR and Cyprus could not overcome the logic of the Cold War, escape from realistic pragmatism and the harsh reality of military-political balancing. Nevertheless, the ties between the USSR and Cyprus turned out to be even more intense and diverse than similar ties of the superpower with many other States at the time. Moreover, relations between the two States during this period (1960-1980s) cannot be considered outside the context of the Cyprus dispute, which formed a knot of attraction in world politics, in whose orbit the leading world and regional powers were involved.

Relations between Cyprus and Russia are largely influenced by the history of bilateral relations during the Cold War. Soviet diplomacy pursued a friendly strategy towards the Republic of Cyprus to make up for its assertiveness towards Greece and Turkey in the aftermath of the Second World War. The USSR, and later Russia, opposed the positions of the western countries within the UN regarding the resolution of the Cyprus conflict and has always been insisting on the unification of two communities in a single State. Both the USSR and Russia had their pragmatic reasons to support this type of solution, which generally corresponds to the interests of the Republic of Cyprus.

The Start of the Cold War: Soviet Assertiveness towards Greece and Turkey

Soviet relations with Cyprus should be analysed within a wider context of Soviet relations with other allies after the Second World War (WWII) regarding Greece and Turkey. Soviet relations with Greece and Turkey attracted more scholarly attention in Russia in the 1990s with the opening of some Soviet archives. However, the archives of the military and secret services are still classified, which limits the scope of the historiographic analysis. The most important issue for Russian historians is Soviet policy during the Civil War in Greece and the early post-WWII years in the framework of balancing the interests of western allies in the Balkans and the Mediterranean. The declassification of some western archives in the second half of the 1980s also renewed the interest in the role of the UK in the aftermath of the Second World War, especially regarding Greece and the conflict in Cyprus.

² K. Artamonova, (2011) 'Pozitsiya SSHA i SSSR v otnoshenii kiprskoy problemy (1960-1974 gg.)' ['US and SU Stances on Cyprus Problem (1960-1974)'], *Aktual'ni problemi vitchiznyanoi ta usesvitn'oi istorii*, No. 4 [in Russian].

For example, in December 1944, the Joint Intelligence Subcommittee in the UK published a report *Russia's Strategic Interests and Intentions from the point of view of Her Security*. According to the mentioned report, the USSR would agree to leave Greece within the sphere of the UK's interests after the war if its relations with Great Britain remained satisfactory.³ The report's authors expected the Soviet Union to strive for regional dominance in the Black Sea region, although not by way of occupying any territories. The USSR would try to keep Turkey from closer relations with the west and, potentially, make Turkey a Soviet ally, but it would be equally probable to expect Soviet territorial claims regarding the Kars region, lost after the First World War.⁴ The subsequent events demonstrated that the conclusions of this report were quite accurate and managed to grasp Soviet intentions.

The analysis of the US official documents of 1946-1949 shows the importance of events in and around Greece and Turkey in the beginning of the Cold War.⁵ By autumn 1946, the US political establishment was certain that the USSR was trying to include both Greece and Turkey in its sphere of interests and ideological influence, which was perceived as part of a wider Soviet expansionist strategy in the Mediterranean. The Civil War in Greece was analysed by American politicians through the lenses of the bipolar confrontation. The crisis in Greece was used as a pretext for launching the doctrine of containment of communism, based on the fear of what later became known as the 'domino effect'.⁶ Thus, the Civil War in Greece became a starting point for the bipolar rivalries and the Cold War.

However, during the first years of Greece's Civil War, the Soviet Union did not support the Greek communists, despite the fact that, by 1944, they managed to control two-thirds of the territory of Greece. Stalin decided not to use this opportunity because of the agreement reached in May 1944 to divide the spheres of in-

³ UK NA. FO 371/47860. N 678/20/G38. J.I.K. (44) 467 (0), (Final), *Report by the Joint Intelligence Subcommittee. Russia's Strategic Interests and Intentions from the point of view of Her Security*, 18 December 1944, quoted in D. Portnyagin, (2014), 'Vneshnyaya politika SSSR v otsenakh ob'edinennogo razvedyvatelnogo komiteta Soedinennogo Korolevstva Velikobritanii i Severnoy Irlandii 1944-1947 gody' ['Foreign Policy of the USSR in the Assessments of the Joint Intelligence Committee of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland in 1944-1947'], *Vestnik SPBGU, Seriya 6 Politologiya Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya*, No. 1 142 [in Russian].

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ A. Kalinin, (2012) 'Krasnaya ugroza Gretsii v otsenakh amerikanskih diplomatov v 1946-1949 gg' ('"Red Threat" to Greece in the Assessments of American Diplomats in 1946-1949)', *Vestnik VyatGU*, No. 4-1 [in Russian].

⁶ Ibid. 64.

fluence with the UK, which had to be responsible for military operations in Greek territory, while the USSR had to do the same in Romania.⁷

Anti-Soviet sentiment increased in Greece after the Paris Peace Conference in 1946, where Soviet diplomacy supported Albania and Bulgaria against Greek territorial claims. The head of the Soviet diplomatic mission, Molotov, called Greece an 'aggressive non-democratic State'. The USSR, at the time, was interested in supporting communist Albania and Bulgaria against Greece, and in using Greek territorial claims concerning the Northern Epirus as a bargaining point to get a military or a trade base in the Mediterranean. However, the western allies strongly opposed this Soviet strategy of trying to acquire a maritime foothold.⁸ Although both the US and the UK agreed with the USSR that Greece's territorial claims should be declined, the American and British leadership managed to present the situation as if the Soviets were the most opposed to the said claims.⁹

The Soviet relations with Turkey were not cloudless too. Some Russian historians explain the Turkish decision to join NATO in 1952 as a reaction to quiet an assertive Soviet stance after the end of the Second World War.¹⁰ Culturally and politically, Turkey was not a western country; moreover, it remained neutral during the greater part of the Second World War. Stalin perceived Turkish neutrality positively until October 1943, when he stated that Turkey needed to prove that it had a right to join the club of the victor countries. The Soviet Union did not expect Turkey to declare war with Germany, but Turkish reluctance to enter the war on the side of the allies created grounds for the Soviets to formulate territorial claims against Turkey. These claims were voiced in March 1945 and, later, at the Potsdam Conference in July-August 1945, where the USSR stated that the 1921 Treaty of Brotherhood was concluded while the young Soviet State was weak, thus, the USSR

⁷ N. Vasileva, (2010) 'Balkanskaya politika SSSR i grazhdanskaya voyna v Gretsii v kontekste nachalnoy fazy holodnoy voyny: nekotorye diskussionnye voprosy v svete dokumentov rossiyskih arhivov. *Imagines Mundi Almanah issledovaniy vseobshchey istorii XVI-XX vv*' ['The USSR's Policy in the Balkans in the Context of the Initial Stage of the Cold War: Some Questions in the Light of Documents from Russian Archives], No. 7, *Ser. Balkanika Vyp* 2 164 [in Russian].

⁸ For details, see A. Kalinin, (2016) 'Grecheskiy aspekt poslevoennogo territorialnogo uregulirovaniya v otnosheniyah SSSR I SSHA v 1945 1946 gg' ['Greek Aspects of Territorial Settlement in the Relations between the USSR and the US in 1945-1946'], *Izvestiya Uralskogo federalnogo universiteta, Ser. 2 Gumanitarnye nauki*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (148) [in Russian].

⁹ *Ibid.* 195.

¹⁰ S. Moshkin, (2009) 'Ruka Moskvy v istorii vstupleniya Turtsii v NATO' ['The Hand of Moscow in the History of Turkish Accession to NATO'], *Politehks*, Vol. 4 [in Russian].

wanted to reclaim its territories ceded to Turkey under the Treaty of Moscow. The Soviet claims were framed as a restoration of justice towards 'Soviet Armenia'.

Western allies did not support the USSR in these claims and tried to persuade the Soviet Union to deal with this issue on a bilateral level, but the Soviet leadership persisted with its efforts to internationalise the territorial dispute. This persistence led to the western countries uniting in their desire to contain Stalin's territorial appetites, including a potential strengthening of the Soviet positions in the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern regions in general. Turkey turned towards the west in order to balance Soviet influence and, in 1952, joined NATO simultaneously with Greece. Thus, assertive Soviet diplomacy in the aftermath of the victory of the Second World War pushed both Turkey and Greece into the hands of the West. Later on, after the change of power in the USSR caused by the death of Stalin, the Soviet Union's diplomacy became more pragmatic. This pragmatism, along with the understanding of the previous mistakes made by Soviet diplomacy in the Mediterranean, led to a friendly strategy towards the newly founded independent Cyprus in 1960.

Relations between the USSR and Cyprus: 1960-1991

Cyprus gained special importance for USSR's foreign policy, owing to its geographical position in the Mediterranean. Cyprus was regarded as a potential ally in opening access to the Middle East for the Soviet Union. In addition, friendly relations with Cyprus could potentially bring geopolitical benefits for the USSR as one more reinforcement factor in the Black Sea straits. The Black Sea Straits had been a problem for several centuries, since the Russian Empire also sought to guarantee the safety of the straits and to access the Mediterranean Sea and the Middle East. Due to conflicts in Cyprus as well as between the guarantor powers bound to safeguard the integrity of the Republic, the USSR was concerned about Cyprus abandoning the policy of neutrality and joining the western bloc, namely NATO.¹¹ Therefore, the USSR tried to play on disputes among the NATO countries in order to weaken its eastern flank. Finally, for the Soviet Union, interest in cooperating with Cyprus was further stimulated by the activity of the influential communist party (AKEL) in the Republic – in other words, it was determined by an ideological factor.

AKEL (Progressive Party of Working People) was an influential political force in Cyprus. The first government of the independent Cyprus, led by the country's

¹¹ J. Sakkas and N. Zhukova, (2013) 'The Soviet Union, Turkey and the Cyprus Problem, 1967-1974', *Les Cahiers Irice*, Vol. 10.

first president, Archbishop Makarios III, did not hinder the activities of this party, believing that real grassroots support for communists would decline over time, while an official ban on its activity would not have the same effect.¹² For the Soviet Union, AKEL's activity became an important factor in its foreign policy towards the Republic. Many AKEL members were educated in socialist countries, with the party pursuing a course of solidarity with the Communist Party of the USSR on foreign and domestic policy issues. However, it was important that Moscow cooperated equally with the centrist Makarios government.

Although conducting a policy of non-alignment, Cyprus, due to historical and geopolitical reasons, was tilting toward the West.¹³ Even so, President Makarios did not seek to pursue an exclusively pro-western policy, despite fears in Moscow. The foreign policy of the Makarios government aimed at ensuring the most favourable environment for Cyprus, which meant manoeuvring between the western bloc, the socialist camp and the non-aligned States. Constructive dialogue with AKEL allowed Makarios not only to gain respect between the socialist countries but also to balance and suppress the influence of nationalist and irredentist forces inside the country. Friendly relations with the USSR and other countries of the Warsaw Pact were also a trump card in Makarios' hands. Such a policy allowed him to enhance his international standing and speak more boldly in the international arena.

In 1952, Greece and Turkey joined NATO, and the US sought to use its influence to resolve the Cyprus question, and the aggravation of the said dispute was associated with the strengthening of the national liberation movement on the island against Britain and the gradual implementation of the *enosis* policy (the Greek movement for incorporating the regions they inhabit into Greece). Under these conditions, as early as in the 1950s, the Soviet Union sought to internationalise the Cyprus question¹⁴ and to bring it up for discussion in the United Nations; the USSR would pursue this 'internationalisation' policy until its own disintegration.

Diplomatic relations between the USSR and Cyprus were established on 18 August 1960. The USSR became one of the first States to recognise the newly formed

¹² I. Ashm, 'The Soviet Union and Cyprus in 1974 Events', (2016) *Athens Journal of History*, Vol. 2, No. 4, 251.

¹³ E. Solsten (ed.), *Cyprus: A Country Study* (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1991), available at <http://countrystudies.us/cyprus/>.

¹⁴ C. Melakopides, *On the 'Special' Nature of the Russia–Cyprus Relationship* (Russian Council on Foreign Affairs, 20 June 2017), available at <http://russiancouncil.ru/en/analytics-and-comments/analytics/on-the-special-nature-of-the-russia-cyprus-relationship-/>.

Republic.¹⁵ The Soviet Union spoke in favour of the indisputable unity of Cyprus and its complete demilitarisation (the ousting of the two British military bases on the island), while it strongly opposed any possibility of division. The roots of such a position were geopolitical in their nature, since the USSR was concerned that, in case of a definite partition, at least part of the island might become a territory of NATO, severely undermining the Soviet influence in the region.

Thus, from the very establishment of the Republic of Cyprus, the Soviet Union took a tough stance supporting the integrity and independence of the State, opposed interference in Cyprus' domestic policy from Greece, Turkey or the western 'guarantors' –the US and the UK– and called for the withdrawal of British military bases from the island. Yet, the possible rapprochement between Cyprus and the USSR was perceived in the west as an imminent threat.¹⁶

With the onset of an internal crisis in the Republic of Cyprus in 1963, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev made a pointed statement against the position of Turkey and the western world regarding events on the island as an attempt to violate the integrity of Cyprus and NATO's attempt to gain influence over Cyprus.¹⁷ Khrushchev supported Makarios, perceiving him as the only person capable of maintaining the independence of the Republic.

The Soviet Union criticised the outcomes of the London Conference, which considered deploying a NATO contingent to resolve the crisis in the Republic of Cyprus, as it would be a defeat for Soviet diplomacy in the region. Moreover, the USSR condemned the so-called Acheson Plan, devised in the US, which aimed at dividing the island. In these circumstances, the USSR also advocated the idea of initiating a peace process under the auspices of the UN Security Council and achieved to gain international support.¹⁸ The unanimously adopted resolution of the UN Security Council of 4 March 1964 became a compromise option and was in line with the interests of the USSR; the resolution called for an end to the bloodshed in the country and recommended establishing a UN mediator for Cyprus and sending the UN Peacekeeping Force to the island for up to three months. The integrity, sovereignty, independence, and the neutrality of Cyprus was maintained with substantive sup-

¹⁵ C. Melakopides, *Russia-Cyprus Relations: A Pragmatic Idealist Perspective* (London: Palgrave, 2016) 50.

¹⁶ Artamonova, 'Pozitsiya SSHA i SSSR' 159 [in Russian].

¹⁷ Sakkas and Zhukova, 'The Soviet Union, Turkey and the Cyprus Problem, 1967-1974'.

¹⁸ Ashm 'The Soviet Union and Cyprus' 251.

port from Moscow.¹⁹ UN troops, originally deployed for three months, remain on the island until this day.

Thus, the USSR resorted to the UN mechanism to resolve the conflict in the Republic of Cyprus. The consistent perseverance of Moscow in solving the Cyprus problem within the framework of the UN, was not theoretical. It reflected the support for the legitimate government of Makarios and adherence to the principles of territorial integrity and independence of Cyprus, solidarity with the people of the State, as well as the will to use legitimate international institutions for settling a conflict and ironing out the differences among the powers concerned.

Surprisingly, it was during the crisis of 1963-1964 that Moscow demonstrated its willingness for closer cooperation with Cyprus through the conclusion of new bilateral agreements, including a treaty on air traffic. In the following years, the Warsaw Pact countries, and first of all the USSR, the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and Czechoslovakia, supplied arms and military equipment to the Republic of Cyprus for more than USD 70 million.²⁰ The Soviet Union also supplied weapons to ensure the protection of the Cypriot leader Makarios against assassination attempts masterminded by the nationalist organization EOKA.

In 1971, President Makarios paid an official visit to the Soviet Union, sojourning in not only Moscow but also Kiev, Volgograd, Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) and even Zagorsk (now Sergiev Posad, the centre of Russian Orthodoxy). During his visit, Makarios attended the enthronement ceremony of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus' Pimen. The very fact of inviting Makarios to the enthronement symbolised the significant role that the Soviet Union attached to relations with Cyprus.

Meanwhile, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Turkey experienced visible changes in its foreign policy. Among other things, there was a definite rapprochement with the USSR. Flirting with Moscow, Turkey could achieve a more advantageous bargaining position vis-à-vis both the US and Europe. Moreover, it sought to gain the support of the socialist bloc on international issues, including the Cyprus question. At the same time, interest in relations with Turkey increased in the Soviet Union after Leonid Brezhnev came to power in 1964.²¹ Then, in a joint communiqué, which was signed following the visit of the Turkish Foreign Minister to the Soviet

¹⁹ Melakopides, *Russia-Cyprus Relations* 55.

²⁰ Artamonova, 'Pozitsiya SSHA i SSSR', 158 [in Russian].

²¹ Sakkas and Zhukova, 'The Soviet Union, Turkey and the Cyprus Problem, 1967-1974'.

Union, it appeared that both States recognised the 'legitimate rights of the two national communities' of Cyprus.²²

The situation became aggravated in 1974, during a coup against Makarios with the support of the Greek military junta that had come to power in Athens. As a result, Archbishop Makarios was removed from power, and a group of radicals, led by Nikos Sampson, the representative of the Greek organisation EOKA-B, took control of the island and advocated for the accession of Cyprus to Greece (*enosis*). Taking advantage of this, Turkey sent its troops and occupied one third of the island. For the USSR, both *enosis* and *taksim* (Turkish Cypriots' policy for partition of the island) meant the accession of the territory of Cyprus to Greece/Turkey and NATO. In its first official statements regarding the unfolding events, the Soviet Union expressed its opposition to the operations organised by the Greek military junta and 'certain circles within NATO' violating the neutral status of the Republic of Cyprus.²³ Turkey's actions, in the light of Greece's policy, looked quite reasonable to the USSR, from the viewpoint of the threat to the island's status by the guarantor of the Republic's independence.

However, the USSR soon realised that Turkey did not intend to disengage from the occupied territories. This was the reason for the intensification of actions in the UN Security Council. Even so, either the US and the UK or Turkey itself rejected all the constructive proposals outlined by Moscow regarding the condemnation of the 'double invasion' in Cyprus. Finally, Moscow supported another UNSC resolution calling for a peaceful settlement and, after Makarios' return to the Republic of Cyprus, it supported his re-election to the presidency.

In the following years, trade between the USSR and Cyprus intensified in accordance with the agreements on mutual deliveries of goods, as well as the 1975 agreement on economic and technical cooperation. Cultural cooperation also increased; for example, the construction of the Soviet Union's cultural centre in Nicosia was completed in 1978, and many Cypriot students were able to do an internship in the USSR.

The government of Mikhail Gorbachev repeatedly declared its interest in resolving the Cyprus question. In particular, in 1986 the USSR government prepared a draft proposal for a peaceful settlement of the situation in Cyprus. The proposal called for

²² Ibid.

²³ Melakopides, *Russia-Cyprus Relations*, 68.

the creation of a federal government and the withdrawal of all foreign troops from the country's territory,²⁴ including the British military bases, in other words, the island's complete demilitarisation. Since then, Moscow has repeatedly called for an international conference aimed at a peaceful settlement of the Cyprus problem.

From the 1960s through to the 1980s, although Cyprus did not and could not become central to Soviet foreign policy, their ties were gradually and consistently strengthened. The Soviet Union never changed its position on the Republic of Cyprus' sovereignty and integrity, while it has always opposed all external interference, especially the respective policies of partition (be it *enosis* or *taksim*). Since the establishment of bilateral diplomatic relations, the USSR steadily advocated for the independence and integrity of the Republic of Cyprus, and that can be seen in its attempts to formulate a mechanism for solving the issue through the United Nations as the most impartial arbiter. This very fact can be regarded as evidence of its commitment in achieving this goal, regardless of the changing international environment.

On the one hand, for the USSR the Cyprus question became a kind of litmus test for the possibility to project its superpower influence. On the other hand, relations between Cyprus and Moscow were not limited to the factor of power balancing but extended to the field of economic, commercial, humanitarian, religious, and cultural dialogue too. This laid down the important basis that preserved and significantly strengthened the ties between Cyprus and post-Soviet Russia in the 1990s and 2000s.

After the collapse of the USSR, the foreign policy course of the Russian Federation changed significantly. The confrontation with the west finally gave way to mutually beneficial relations, while Russian-Cyprus relations continued to develop along the same lines as Nicosia's affairs with the USSR. Cyprus was interested in maintaining strong diplomatic ties, remembering that Moscow provided an indispensable service to the island when it recognised Cyprus' independence in 1960. At the same time, after the collapse of the USSR, Russia did not abandon its support for Cyprus regarding the frozen conflict, and, after 1991, the solution of the Cyprus Problem remained the most pressing issue in relations between both countries²⁵.

In the 1990s, the possibility of an armed conflict was even higher, especially if we consider the events in the region in the context of the collapse of Yugoslavia and the military operations of NATO. The aim of Moscow, along with the UN, was to prevent

²⁴ Solsten, *Cyprus: A Country Study*.

²⁵ V.V. Lomako, (2015) 'Istorija razvitija rossijsko-kiprskih mezhgosudarstvennyh otnoshenij' ["The History of the Development of Russian-Cypriot Interstate Relations], *Klio*, Vol. 10, No. 106 [in Russian].

the repetition of the Yugoslav scenario in Cyprus, since some distinctive features of the Yugoslav conflict were also observed in the case of Cyprus,²⁶ such as the different religious affiliations of the largest ethnic groups, the Christian Greek Cypriots and the Muslim Turkish Cypriot community. Russia actively supported the dialogue with Cyprus, while the President of Cyprus flew to Moscow on a working visit in 1991 and 1992. Furthermore, Cyprus recognised Russia as a successor to the USSR and a contracting party, instead of the former USSR, in all bilateral treaties.

Moscow continued military support for Cyprus. Given the assertiveness of Turkey's policy, Moscow declared that it would protect Cyprus's right to modernise its air defence system. According to information from the Russian TASS news agency,²⁷ in 1995 and 1996 Cyprus received 43 Russian BMP-3s, worth USD68 million. In March 1996, Russia and Cyprus signed an agreement on military-technical cooperation, under which Russia received the right to use Cyprus' ports as military bases for the Russian navy. This was followed by a resonant political decision to sell Nicosia its S-300 missile system. According to some reports, the deal value amounted to USD 230 million. However, due to political disagreements between Cyprus and Turkey and pressure from the US and the UK, the Cypriot authorities were forced to abandon the installation of these systems on their territory. This process could have even become a pretext for war, as Ankara declared its determination to strike at the Russian ships that transported to the island the missiles. As a result, Greece took delivery of them, and Russia instead delivered an anti-aircraft missile system to Cyprus. At the same time, the purchase of Russian weapons increased Cyprus' defence capability, while they still serve as a deterrent for Turkey.

In 1995, Cyprus began a dialogue with the European Union on joining the organisation. It is important to note that this had no negative effects on Russian-Cypriot relations. On the contrary, relations continued to strengthen; Russia continued to supply Cyprus with the most advanced weapons. In 2001, four Grad multiple rocket launchers and 12 Mi-35P transport and combat helicopters were supplied to Cyprus; in June 2009, a contract for the delivery of 41 T-80U tanks was also signed.²⁸

²⁶ S.S. Novikov, (2008) 'Detal'nyj analiz raspada socialisticheskoy federativnoj respubliki Jugoslavija' ['Detailed Analysis of the Collapse of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia], *Vestnik Vladimirovskogo juridicheskogo instituta*, Vol. 2, No. 7 [in Russian].

²⁷ TASS News Agency, 'Voenno-tehnicheskoe sotrudnichestvo Rossii i Kipra' ['Military-Technical Cooperation of Russia and Cyprus], TASS News Agency (24 February 2015), available at <https://tass.ru/info/1787557> [in Russian].

²⁸ Ibid.

The EU and Russia found a common language in the settlement of the Cyprus question, and at that time, this common position had a beneficial effect in strengthening the Russian-European partnership. A new initiative to resolve the conflict was proposed by the EU in view of the beginning of the Cyprus' accession process in order to prevent a potential worsening of EU-Turkish relations. The EU has relied on the economic factors, believing that a rise in the standard of living, an increase in the investment attractiveness of Cyprus, and the emergence of new business opportunities will help to reduce the severity of interethnic hostility. Moreover, the EU advocated for the establishment of a 'bi-communal and bi-zonal federation' as an adequate way for the reunification of Cyprus.²⁹

Since the collapse of the USSR, Russia had to manoeuvre constantly between Athens and Ankara on the Cyprus dispute, while supporting the European compromise project. Another reason for Russian support was the desire to keep the positive experience of bilateral relationships with Cyprus as an important player in the Mediterranean after its accession to the EU. After more than two decades of existence of the unrecognised so-called 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus' (TRNC), Turkish Cypriots positively assessed the prospects for joining the EU, but they simultaneously insisted on the recognition of the independence of the so-called TRNC. As a result, Turkey and the so-called TRNC declared that resolving the crisis under the conditions of the EU's one-sided policy towards Cyprus was not acceptable.³⁰

At the same time, another peace plan was formulated in 2004. The plan for resolving the Cyprus crisis, proposed by the UN Secretary, General Kofi Annan, provided for a referendum. Trying to observe the interests of both sides, Greek and Turkish, the UN undertook a number of mutually beneficial measures, which did not meet the needs of the Greek Cypriots. When, despite protests from the Greek side, the UN began to put pressure on Nicosia, Russia stood up for Cyprus. The Deputy Ambassador of the Russian Federation to the UN said that the UN resolution on the Cyprus conflict was unacceptable because it did not solve the most difficult issues related to property rights, the fate of Turkish settlers and the withdrawal

²⁹ S.V. Starkin and E.V. Lebedeva, (2013) 'Kiprskaja problema v kontekste realizacii strategii ES po uregulirovaniju jetnokonfessional'nyh konfliktov' ['Cyprus Problem in the Context of the Implementation of the EU Strategy to Resolve Ethnic and Religious Conflicts], *Obshhestvo: filosofija, istorija, kul'tura*, Vol. 4 33-36 [in Russian].

³⁰ Ibid.

of Turkish troops. Russia used its veto power, and the Cyprus issue remained open, but the Russian-Cypriot relations improved even more.

Apart from a history of constructive political relations post-1991, economic relations between the two States also demonstrate important growth and development. In the 1990s, Cyprus became a popular tourist destination for Russians, and the influx of tourists from Russia became an important source of income for the Cyprus economy.³¹ The share of tourism is about 11% of the entire economy of Cyprus,³² and for this reason, at meetings of the heads of the two States, the Cypriot side always mentions tourist flows from Russia. Thus, in November 2008, during a visit to Moscow, Dimitris Christofias, the president of Cyprus, said, 'As for our bilateral relations, I would like to express my satisfaction with their progressive development – literally with their growth in the field of economics and especially in the field of tourism. Russia is becoming one of the main countries supplying tourists to Cyprus, and I would like to thank you for that'.³³

The period of relations after 1991 is characterised by the intensification of mutual visits of the heads of two States. In 2008, the 'Joint Declaration on Further Intensification of the Relations of Friendship and Comprehensive Cooperation between the Republic of Cyprus and the Russian Federation' was signed. The declaration listed the spheres of mutual interest, while reaffirming that Russia supported a 'just and viable settlement in Cyprus' on the basis of the UN Security Council resolutions and High Level Agreements of 1977 and 1979, which called for the transformation of the unitary state into a bi-communal, bi-zonal federation with a single sovereignty, citizenship and international personality.³⁴

³¹ V.V. Lomako, 'Rossijsko-kiprskie otnoshenija: osobennosti turisticheckoj sfery sotrudnichestva' ['Russian-Cypriot Relations: Tourist Sphere of Cooperation'], in *Grecija i Kipr: jazyk, kul'tura, istorija, sovremennost'*. *Materialy IV Mezhdunarodnoj nauchno-praktičeskoj konferencii jellinistov* [Greece and Cyprus: Language, Culture, History, Modernity. Proceedings of the IV International Scientific Practical Conference of Hellenists], eds. I. Kakoliri and L.N. Miroshnichenko (Krasnodar: FGBOU VO KubGU, Centr grečeskogo jazyka pri Ministerstve obrazovanija Grecii, 2018) [in Russian].

³² M.A. Voronina, 'Osobennosti razvitija turizma v Respublike Kipr' ['Characteristics of Tourism Industry in the Republic of Cyprus'], in *Geografičeskie nauki i obrazovanie: Materialy X Vserossijskoj nauchno-praktičeskoj konferencii* [Geographical Sciences and Education: Proceedings of the X All-Russian Scientific and Practical Conference] (Astrakhan': Astrakhan' State University, 2017) 97-100 [in Russian].

³³ President of Russia, 'Nachalo rossijsko-kiprskih peregovorov v rasshirennom sostave' ['The Beginning of the Russian-Cypriot Negotiations in an Expanded Format'], Official Website (19 November 2008), available at <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/2125> [in Russian].

³⁴ Joint Declaration on Further Intensification of the Relations of Friendship and Comprehensive

In 2010, on the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the countries, the president of Russia, Dmitry Medvedev, came to Cyprus for the first official visit in the history of bilateral relations. The meeting of President Medvedev with President Christofias ended with the signing of multiple cooperation agreements in a wide spectrum of areas, the field of taxation included. The latter was very important not only for both States, but also for Russian companies. Revenues from servicing offshore businesses occupy the second highest position in Cyprus' economy after the tourism industry. Cyprus investments in the Russian economy are also steadily increasing, while Cyprus is steadily among the top three countries in terms of investment.³⁵

Cooperation between different regions of Russia and Cyprus enhance bilateral economic relations. Since 1992, the intergovernmental agreement with the Republic of Cyprus on cooperation in the development of the Black Sea region of Russia has been in effect, providing for the development of economic relations with the Krasnodar territory. Cypriot construction and financial companies also participated in investment projects of rebuilding Sochi for the 2014 Winter Olympics.

Russian-Cypriot cooperation also rely on strong historical and spiritual ties. An important aspect of the support of the Greek population was the Orthodox faith and the Russian-speaking population in Cyprus, which in some parts of the country amounts to a high percentage. For example, the Russian population in Limassol amounts to between 8 and 9%.³⁶

Dialogue between the countries did not stop after 2014, when Russia experienced international isolation after the start of the Ukraine crisis. While Greece joined anti-Russian sanctions, Cyprus, despite its membership in the European Union and extensive American and British influence on the island, maintained the same level of relations with Russia. Although there is EU pressure, the Republic

Cooperation between the Republic of Cyprus and the Russian Federation (19 November 2008), available at https://cyprus.mid.ru/web/cyprus_en/joint-declaration-on-further-intensification-of-the-relations-of-friendship-and-comprehensive-cooperation-between-the-republic-of-cyprus-and-the-russian-federation.

³⁵ V.V. Lomako, (2016) 'Rossijsko-kiprskie svjazi v sfere biznesa: istorija stanovlenija partnerskih ot-noshenij, osnovnye napravlenija sotrudnichestva' ['Russian-Cyprus Business Relations: The History of Partnerships, the Main Areas of Cooperation], *Klio*, Vol. 8, No. 116 [in Russian].

³⁶ C. Melakopides and M.N. Salvaridi, (2011) 'Rossija i Kipr – primer "pragmaticheskogo idealizma"' ['Russia and Cyprus – An Example of "Pragmatic Idealism"'], *Nauchno-analiticheskij zhurnal Obozrevatel' – Observer*, Vol. 8, No. 259 [in Russian].

openly criticises the sanctions imposed on Russia, saying that they will give rise to even greater economic complications for the EU.

Because of the anti-Russian sanctions, trade turnover between Russia and Cyprus decreased after 2014. According to the Federal Customs Service of the Russian Federation, in 2016, the turnover between Russia and Cyprus amounted to USD 334,5 million; in 2017 it amounted only to USD 216.4 million.³⁷ However, Cyprus continues investing in the Russian economy, and Russian tourists continue visiting Cyprus. According to the Bank of Russia, as of 1 January 2016, the amount of accumulated direct Cyprus investments in the Russian economy was USD 9.45 billion, the amount of Russian investments in the Cyprus economy was USD 92.2 billion. Rosstat reports that, in 2016, more than 800,000 Russians visited the country, which resulted in the fact that, in 2018, according to the Federal Customs Service of the Russian Federation, Russia's trade with Cyprus amounted to USD 798.5 million, an increase of 154% compared with 2017.³⁸ In March 2018, Cyprus and Russia concluded an agreement on the creation of a joint platform for the development of innovations.

Moreover, Russia and Cyprus began to increase military cooperation. In 2015, Russia and Cyprus renewed the expired Treaty on Military Cooperation. Pursuant to its provisions, the Russian navy is able to use the Limassol base, while Russian ships and aircrafts retained the right to use the Andreas Papandreou base, but only for the transportation of humanitarian aid. The ability to carry out humanitarian missions and repair ships of the Russian Navy in Cyprus is important in light of the Syrian civil war. At the same time, this friendly stance towards Russia to a certain extent aggravates Cyprus relations with its allies within the EU.

Conclusion

During the Soviet years, bilateral relations between USSR and Cyprus were more dependent on the interests of the Soviet Union, which was interested in having a friendly ally in the Mediterranean region. Relations between Russia and Cyprus in the period from 1991 were developing based on their traditional alliance and on a large number of executed agreements, which enhanced cooperation between the

³⁷ RIA Novosti, 'Mezhgosudarstvennye otnosheniya Rossii i Kipra' ['Interstate Relations of Russia and Cyprus'], *Ria-Novosti* (24 October 2017), available at <https://ria.ru/20171024/1506250481.html> [in Russian].

³⁸ Russian-Trade.com, 'Torgovlja mezhdru Rossiej i Kiprom v 2017 g' ['Trade Between Russia and Cyprus in 2017'], *Vneshnjaja torgovlja Rossii* (14 February 2018), available at <http://russian-trade.com/reports-and-reviews/2018-02/torgovlja-mezhdru-rossiej-i-kiprom-v-2017-g/> [in Russian].

two countries. Russia's position with regard to the Cyprus settlement remained unchanged and the ultimate goal was a unified state in terms that satisfy the Cypriot side. Cyprus, in turn, criticises western sanctions against Russia, although Cyprus is a member of the EU. The extension of the military treaty is also important for Russia in terms of ensuring military and humanitarian support for the Syrian operations, since it allows them to solve strategic tasks to ensure the combat capability of the Russian military base in Syria. No matter how pragmatic, Russian relations with Cyprus have remained friendly for decades despite the changing international environment.

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