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Great Powers, Counter Secession and Non-Recognition: Britain and the 1983 Unilateral Declaration of Independence of the “Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus”

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Abstract

The role of great powers in processes of secession and recognition has attracted increasing attention from scholars in recent years. This article examines how Britain rallied international opposition to the November 1983 unilateral declaration of independence (UDI) of the “Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus” (“TRNC”). As is shown, the British Government tried hard to prevent the UDI. Once it occurred, Britain led efforts to condemn the move. This resulted in UN Security Council Resolution 541, which declared the “TRNC” to be illegal and called on states not to recognise it. As well as exploring the diplomacy behind the counter-secession efforts, the article also answers a long-standing question as to whether any countries aside from Turkey ever recognised the TRNC. It also challenges the widely-held view amongst Greek Cypriots that Britain invariably supports the Turkish Cypriots on the Cyprus Problem.

Keywords: Cyprus, Britain, United Nations, secession, recognition, diplomacy

At one time, the subject of secession and recognition was the unchallenged realm of International lawyers.¹ It was all but ignored by those working politics and international relations.² This has now changed. In recent years, there has been a rapid growth in interest in how the international community reacts to territories that have unilaterally seceded. Scholars are increasingly examining the way in which these territories – otherwise known as de facto states, unrecognised states or contested states³ – attempt to forge a place in the international system,⁴ and the steps that parent states, as the countries that they have broken away from are usually known, can take to prevent them from being recognised.⁵

Within this field, an area that has attracted considerable attention is the role of great powers in counter secession efforts. In this context, great powers may be understood as states that “wield the most financial, strategic, political and military power” – a group that includes the five permanent members of the Security Council (Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States); “economic powerhouses” (Germany, Italy and Japan); and, possibly, non-declared nuclear powers (Israel, India and Pakistan).⁶ Their influence, particularly that of the five permanent members of the Security Council, is incontrovertible. As Coggins notes, “Great Power’ recognition decisions are the most important. Their disproportionate material capabilities give them substantial influence over other states’ recognition behaviour.”⁷ Great powers are invariably the key to the success, or more usually failure, of an attempt by a territory to unilaterally secede. For instance, the only country to have unilaterally seceded and become a full member of the United Nations (UN) – Bangladesh in 1972 – did so only after securing support from all the permanent members of the UN Security Council.⁸ Great power

influence in counter-secession efforts can take two key forms. In the first instance, it can be done through bilateral lobbying initiatives. Through direct diplomacy, the great power in question can attempt to dissuade the target state from recognising the breakaway territory. The second key mechanism is through a process of collective non-recognition. This occurs when groups of states, acting in concert, agree jointly not to extend recognition to a secessionist territory. In the modern international system, the most powerful and effective form of collective non-recognition is a UN security Council resolution condemning an act of secession.⁹

This article examines one of the most interesting and enduring cases of secession in the modern era. The “Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus” (“TRNC”), which declared independence in 1983, is one of the few cases of *de facto* statehood that predates the end of the Cold War. In this case, Britain was the great power that took the lead in efforts to prevent the Turkish Cypriot state from being internationally recognised. Drawing primarily on the declassified records from the British National Archives, the article starts by examining the emergence of the Republic of Cyprus and its relationship with Britain. It then analyses the way in which Britain sought to prevent the unilateral declaration of independence (UDI) from occurring. Finally, it explains how, once the Turkish Cypriots had seceded, Britain sought to prevent countries from recognising the TRNC and rallied international support for a UN resolution declaring the UDI illegal.

On 1 April 1955, the Greek Cypriots launched an armed uprising to end almost eighty years of British Colonial rule and unite the island with Greece (*enosis*).¹⁰ Over the next few years, the campaign became increasingly violent. This raised the risk of a full scale civil war with the island’s Turkish community, which represented about 20 per cent of the population and was increasingly demanding that the island be partitioned between Greece and Turkey (*taksim*). Fearing that the violence could lead to direct confrontation, Athens and Ankara agreed that Cyprus should become an independent state. A complex power sharing agreement was drawn up. At the same time, Britain, Greece and Turkey agreed to guarantee the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the new state. In addition, Greece and Turkey were permitted to station military contingents on the island and Britain was granted 99 square miles of territory in perpetuity – the Sovereign Base Areas (SBAs) for military use.

The Republic of Cyprus came into being on 16 August 1960. Despite the tensions that existed between the Greek Cypriots and Britain, both sides seemed keen to forge a new relationship following independence. Although Cyprus did not join the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), it did become a member of the United Nations and, significantly, the Commonwealth. However, the internal problems between the Greek and Turkish communities continued to simmer. While the Turkish Cypriots were broadly content with the power-sharing agreement that gave them an equal say in the management of the state, the Greek Cypriots resented the fact that they had been denied the ambition to join with Greece and now had to accept that the much smaller Turkish Cypriot community had a fully equal status. By 1963, major disagreements existed across a variety of policy areas – such as the formation of municipalities, taxation and even the structuring of the armed forces.¹¹ In response, the Greek Cypriot president of the Republic, Archbishop Makarios, proposed a series of constitutional amendments. These were rejected by Turkey. In December 1963, violent clashes broke out between the two communities. Britain, fearing for the security of the Bases, quickly established a joint peacekeeping force – the Joint Truce Force – with the Greek and Turkish military contingents on the island. However, this could be no more than an interim measure. After trying to look for alternative options, including a NATO-based

force, Britain took the matter before the UN Security Council. On 4 March 1964, UN Security Council Resolution 186 established the United Nations Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) and appointed a Mediator to oversee peace talks.¹²

In the decade that followed, the UN was unable to broker an agreement between the two communities. However, apart from a serious outbreak of fighting in 1967, tensions between the Greek and Turkish Cypriots subsided. Far more worrying was the emergence of violent divisions within the Greek Cypriot community between the majority that came to accept that *enosis* was no longer a feasible aspiration and a minority determined to maintain the struggle for union with Greece. In 1974 these tensions came to a head when Makarios ordered the military junta in Athens to remove all the Greek officers commanding the Cyprus National Guard. On 15 July, Athens ordered a coup to oust the Archbishop and bring about *enosis*. With British help, Makarios managed to escape from the island. Meanwhile, Turkey, under the terms of the Treaty of Guarantee, sought to enlist Britain's participation in an armed intervention. London refused.¹³ On 20 July 1974, Turkey invaded unilaterally. Within days, Turkish troops established a bridgehead on the island, the military junta fell and democracy was restored in Greece. This opened the way for a peace conference in Geneva. However, this failed after the and Turkey launched a second wave of its invasion. By the time a final ceasefire was brokered, Turkish troops had managed to occupy 36 per cent of the island.¹⁴

Following the division of the island, the United Nations resumed its efforts to reach a solution. However, the fundamental parameters of a solution had by now changed. Whereas previously, efforts had been focused on providing strong minority rights for the Turkish Cypriot community, they now demanded that they have executive powers over their own territorial unit. In 1976, the "Turkish Federated State of Northern Cyprus" (TFSC) was established to pave the way for a federal settlement. Reluctantly, the Greek Cypriots accepted that any future settlement would be based on a bizonal, bicomunal federation. This was confirmed by the leaders of the two sides in 1977, just months before the death of Archbishop Makarios. In 1979, this arrangement was reconfirmed by the new Greek Cypriot leader (and President of the Republic of Cyprus), Spyros Kyprianou, and the Turkish Cypriot leader, Rauf Denktash. In the years that followed, the UN continued its efforts to broker a solution – without success – based on these two 'High Level Agreements'.

In February 1983, rumours emerged that Denktash, who was widely understood to oppose reunification,¹⁵ was preparing the way for a unilateral declaration of independence.¹⁶ While there had long been felt that this had always been his ultimate objective, the Foreign Office now prepared a memorandum outlining the steps it could take if it did occur.¹⁷ First and foremost, there was no question of recognising a Turkish Cypriot state. If it did happen, a public statement expressing strong disapproval should be made, noting that not only was the move contrary to the 1960 treaties, but that it also harmed the ongoing UN talks. At the same time, it was recommended that relations with the Turkish Cypriots should be downgraded. However, any suggestion that Britain could join the Greece and Greek Cypriots in imposing sanctions against the Turkish Cypriots was viewed unfavourably. It was felt that this would harm the Turkish Cypriots more than the Denktash "government".¹⁸

The catalyst for the eventual UDI came on 13 May 1983. Despite the concerns of the British Government,¹⁹ the United Nations General Assembly passed Resolution 37/253.²⁰ Reaffirming the illegitimacy of armed occupations, it stressed the Assembly's full support for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity of the Republic of Cyprus and called on all members to help the Cypriot Government secure those rights. Denktash was furious. In an

interview with *The Times*, he announced that on his return to the island he would propose the declaration of an independent state in Northern Cyprus.²¹

Despite the general concerns about a possible secession, the initial reaction from London was rather relaxed. As noted, Denktash had said such things before.²² The British High Commission in Nicosia agreed. Although other Turkish Cypriots officials had been echoing Denktash's line, they believed that Turkey would continue to restrain the Turkish Cypriots.²³ The British Embassy in Ankara, while noting that Turkey, which was still under military rule following a coup in September 1980, had been "irritated" by the UN resolution, also believed that the Turkish authorities would continue to restrain Denktash – even though the Turkish Foreign Minister, İler Türkmen, had not excluded a possible declaration of independence by the Turkish Cypriots.²⁴ In reply, the Foreign Office asked the Embassy to tell the Turkish Government that a declaration of independence would be contrary to the 1960 treaties and that there would be no question of British recognition.²⁵ Over in Athens, the Greek government was incensed by Denktash's remarks; although they too believed that the Turkish Cypriot leader would not follow through on his threat.²⁶ Meanwhile, the Cypriot Permanent Representative to the UN submitted a letter to the Secretary-General and the Security Council drawing their attention to the "provocative and ominous statements" and calling for action.²⁷

Denktash was unbowed. In further comments, he announced that the declaration of independence would occur at a "secret" session of the Turkish Cypriot assembly and then be confirmed in a referendum.²⁸ He also said that he planned to boycott the next round of UN discussions. Concern was now mounting that maybe the Turkish Cypriot leader was being serious this time. The Turkish Government warned London against believing that Denktash could only act with Ankara's permission. It also suggested that the situation could be eased if the next major UN resolution, on the renewal of UNFICYP, which was due just a week or two later, was balanced. Britain replied that it had experience of a previous UDI [Rhodesia] and that it would not be happy to see a repeat of such a situation.²⁹ Meanwhile, the United States also began to put pressure on Turkey to restrain the Turkish Cypriots.³⁰

On 3 June, the Turkish Cypriot parliament convened. Although it had been expected to discuss independence,³¹ Denktash told representatives that the issue would not be revisited until after the UNFICYP debate.³² On 15 June, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 534, extending UNFICYP's mandate. Two days later, the Turkish Cypriot assembly passed a resolution. Reaffirming the place of the Turkish Cypriots as the "co-founder partner" of the 1960 Republic of Cyprus, and condemning the Greek Cypriots for their actions, the document nevertheless emphasised that the Turkish Cypriots had created their own political institutions and had "the exclusive right of self-determination."³³ Soon afterwards, the British High Commissioner in Nicosia, William Wilberforce, met with Denktash. He explained that while the British Government "understood and even sympathised" with Turkish Cypriot concerns over the UN General Assembly Resolution, a law enabling a referendum would "start a chain of events that would be inconsistent with the 1960 treaty arrangements". Denktash, noting that Turkey had said the same to him, claimed that he would do his best to stop any further moves towards independence.³⁴ A few days later, he called on the Assembly to delay any further steps until after he had met with the UN Secretary-General, on 4 July.³⁵ But few believed that it would produce any positive results. As UN officials saw it, the Turkish Cypriots were "no longer interested in serious intercommunal negotiations."³⁶

Meanwhile, relations between Britain and the Turkish Cypriots now came under strain. Answering a question in the House of Commons, the British prime minister, Margaret Thatcher, said that Britain hoped to see "Cyprus continue in a state of unity, as it did nine years ago, before it was rudely upset." Denktash immediately wrote to her to express his "disappointment and distress" at the comment.³⁷ He also sent a letter to Baroness Young,

Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, in which he again raised the prospect of independence.³⁸ Considering this, the Foreign Office continued its contingency planning. While recognition was off the table, it still faced a delicate balancing act. While Britain's role as a guarantor required it to be "actively disapproving", going too far would reduce any British influence on the Turkish Cypriots. Several options were raised. These included an economic embargo; scaling down or cutting off "unofficial" contacts with Turkish Cypriots in Nicosia and London; an attempt to cut off European Community (EC) aid to the Turkish Cypriots; and a refusal to issue travel documents to Turkish Cypriots.³⁹ Discussions also touched on the practical implications of any UDI, such as tensions between Greece and Turkey in NATO; the effects on the UN talks; and the problems Britain would face, both in terms of specific bilateral issues as well as regarding Britain's role as a Guarantor Power.⁴⁰ As for timing, attention turned to the forthcoming general elections in Turkey, which were due to be held in November. This would see Turkey return to civilian rule after three years of military-led government. Already there were concerns that Denktash could try to exploit the situation to his advantage.⁴¹

As summer came to an end, attention turned to the annual UN General Assembly meeting in New York. On 30 September, the UN Secretary-General, Javier Perez de Cuellar met separately with Foreign Minister Türkmen and President Kyprianou. The next day he saw Denktash. Although Kyprianou was "reasonably constructive" about further discussions, Türkmen and Denktash rejected de Cuellar's ideas. Denktash instead wanted a summit meeting with Kyprianou. The Greek Cypriot leader was cautious about the proposal.⁴² In London, concern was rising about the Turkish Cypriot leader's intentions. While Britain had concluded that the changeover of government in Ankara would not fundamentally affect the situation as Turkish policy remained consistent,⁴³ it nevertheless believed that Denktash was possibly trying to prepare the ground for UDI.⁴⁴ Considering this, London increased its pressure on Ankara. Others also joined the effort. However, these interventions appeared ineffective. Turkey was not particularly receptive to European pressure. This was due to Council of Europe's decision to bar Turkish MPs from the Parliamentary Assembly and the fact that Cyprus was represented in the body.⁴⁵ Even the United States seemed to have limited influence. A warning from Washington that a declaration of independence could see Congress disrupt the delivery of security assistance went down badly. Ankara merely noted that this would have severe repercussions on the United States-Turkish relationship.⁴⁶ Meanwhile, questions were now starting to be asked as to whether Turkey could even stop the Turkish Cypriot leader from pressing ahead with his plans. As a "mid-level" official at the Turkish mission in New York explained:

If Denktash failed to get this satisfaction [of equality between the communities in the UN talks] he would almost certainly proceed to UDI as (a) there would be nothing to lose by so doing; (b) domestic opinion in the TFSC was in favour and Denktash had threatened, or hinted at, UDI so often that his credibility might suffer if he failed to make good the threat; and (c) after UDI, a new Turkish state of Cyprus, even if largely unrecognised by world opinion, could only be brought to negotiate on a basis of "equality" with the Greek Cypriot government. Denktash had already taken informal soundings and was counting on support from a handful of countries including Pakistan, Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia.⁴⁷

Crucially, the report noted that the diplomat believed that the Turkish Cypriots would declare independence and that, although a UDI would cause problems for Ankara, Turkey would "have to go along" with it. Domestic opinion in the country was increasingly isolationist and the General Assembly resolution on Cyprus had been badly received.⁴⁸

All the while, Denktash continued his threats. As he prepared to return to Cyprus, he announced that he now intended to rename the TFSC and that the new state would quickly be recognised by 10 to 15 countries and become a full member of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC).⁴⁹ Worryingly, back on the island, a Turkish Cypriot MP tabled an amended referendum bill that would allow the executive to make a proclamation of independence without a popular vote, “should communal, national and international conditions dictate and should there be harm in further delay.”⁵⁰

London now began to consider the wider repercussions of a UDI.⁵¹ It was especially worried about the Socialist PASOK government in Greece, led by Andreas Papandreou. Viewed as an “extreme government”, the concern was that Greece that could withdraw the country from NATO.⁵² It was at this point that the British Ambassador in Athens, Sir Peregrine Rhodes, first raised the possibility that, if a declaration of independence did occur, Britain should take the lead at the United Nations. As he explained, “This would show recognition of our special responsibilities in Cyprus and would...help to pre-empt the sort of resolution for which we could not vote. A British veto to protect Turkey should be avoided at all costs...The proposed statement by HMG [Her Majesty’s Government] should surely be strengthened by a reference to the action taken by Denktash as contrary to international law and to the 1960 Treaty of Guarantee.”⁵³ Additionally, efforts were made to try to ensure that the Greek Cypriots would take a calm approach. As London noted, “if Denktash declared UDI he (Kyprianou) will in effect have lost the game. Although the Turks would come in for a great deal of international opprobrium for letting Denktash slip, Kyprianou should be under no illusion that they would give up. He would be faced with a partitioned Cyprus for the indefinite future.”⁵⁴ Kyprianou appeared to appreciate the danger he faced. Speaking to the press, on 12 October, he noted that his administration was making every effort to avert a Turkish Cypriot declaration of independence.⁵⁵ Significantly, Ankara was also trying to talk up the UN process and calm fears about an imminent Turkish Cypriot UDI. In an interview with *Milliyet*, a leading Turkish newspaper, Türkmen noted that the Turkish Cypriot leader’s latest comments had not been what Ankara had “expected”.⁵⁶ London saw Türkmen’s comments as a “slap on the wrists” for Denktash, but also recognised that while Turkey was evidently aware of the wider consequences of a UDI – especially the fact that it would receive little, if any, international support – they had little room for manoeuvre:

They are keenly aware that while UDI might have psychological appeal for the Turkish Cypriots (and many Turks) and would only be recognition of a de facto independent government already in existence there probably are far more disadvantages than advantages if UDI is declared. Turkey would have to continue (and even increase) financial aid, few countries would recognize the new state and superpowers would ensure that it did not gain admission to the UN... However, as we have previously reported, there are limits to how much pressure the Turks can out on Denktash as any indication Turkish authorities are not firmly in support of Turkish brothers in Cyprus would be politically unthinkable.⁵⁷

Arriving back in Cyprus from New York, Denktash made it clear that he had taken no notice of the rebuke from Türkmen. He told waiting crowds that the time had come to give the TFSC a name the world understood: The North Cyprus Republic. However, he also acknowledged, he might have to wait until he could persuade Ankara that further talks with the Greek Cypriots were pointless.⁵⁸ Still, Britain continued its efforts to try to prevent a declaration of independence. As well as expediting further UN talks,⁵⁹ the possibility of some form of letter to President Kenan Evren, or to the new Turkish Prime Minister after the elections, was raised.⁶⁰ The British Defence Secretary, Michael Heseltine, who was in Turkey

for a visit at the time also raised London's worries about developments.⁶¹ Although the US was rather more "sanguine about the prospects for UDI that London at this stage",⁶² Britain also stepped up its efforts to encourage other EU and NATO members to put pressure in Turkey.⁶³ Most were receptive to the idea. France, however, demurred on the grounds of its poor relations with Ankara and because it did believe that a UDI was imminent.⁶⁴ More helpfully, the NATO Secretary-General, Joseph Luns said he would speak to the Turkish Permanent Representative. This was viewed as a "useful development" given his "good-standing" with the Turks. Indeed, it was even suggested that he might use his "good offices further on this matter";⁶⁵ although it was later decided that it would probably be better if he kept his engagement informal.⁶⁶

As well as trying to head off UDI, London continued to think ahead to possible options should it happen. There were a range of considerations that needed to be taken into account, including the need to be seen to fulfil international obligations; the desirability of maintaining good relations with Cyprus and Greece; limitation of damage (in Cyprus, in NATO and so far as possible, to Turkey's relationship with the West).⁶⁷ The British Permanent Representative at the UN in New York, Sir John Thomson, emphasised that it would be to Britain's advantage if it immediately called for consultations and the adoption of a resolution. The greater the delay, the more Russia and "others" would have to make "mischief". In a particularly revealing comment, it was also noted that Britain could, "presumably gain good marks with the Greek side for reacting promptly." Having said this, it was also argued that consultations with the Greek Cypriots should be avoided as they might ask for "unwelcome" elements to be introduced into the resolution, such as sanctions. To this extent, the view was to move quickly and then explain the content of the resolution to the Greek Cypriots to get "at least their tacit approval for the resolution so that we were not stymied by them in the Council before the resolution came to a vote."⁶⁸

All the while, Britain kept up the pressure on Denktash. Visiting Cyprus, Baroness Young crossed the Green Line to meet with the Turkish Cypriot leader. Over the course of a long lunch, she repeated London's concerns over UDI and noted that it would be viewed by many countries as a dangerous precedent. Acknowledging that he was under pressure from Turkey and other Western states, Denktash shied away from committing himself to UDI. Britain therefore concluded that the threat was now receding.⁶⁹ The United States agreed.⁷⁰

Although there may have been a sense in London and Washington that the Turkish Cypriot leader had been dissuaded from declaring independence, one major challenge still lay ahead. As British diplomats noted, the general elections in Turkey presented Denktash with an ideal opportunity to put his plan into action as Ankara would not be able to respond to a Turkish Cypriot initiative.⁷¹ Clearly the Turkish Government was also worried about this too. Speaking on television the night before the election, Türkmen stated that while no one denied the Turkish Cypriot community's right of self-determination, Turkey still believed that the best solution to the Cyprus issue was not the division of the island, but a federal solution – and was constantly advising the Turkish Cypriots as much.⁷²

On 6 November, Turkey went to the polls to elect a new civilian government. Despite all the fears, there was no UDI. By way of explanation, Denktash told the press that it had now been put on hold due to the decision of Kyprianou to accept a high-level meeting.⁷³ Despite this, the Turkish media continued to report that Denktash had not shelved his plans. Rather, he would now use the period leading up until the formation of a government in Turkey to declare independence. This would be ideal as a declaration at that time not embarrass the outgoing government nor the incoming one.⁷⁴ On 10 November, the Turkish Cypriot Assembly held a special meeting to discuss a draft law on extraordinary situations that gave the Turkish Cypriot administration, on the recommendation of the commander of the security forces, a two-month period to take a range of special measures, including

imposing curfews and control publications. While this was seen by some as evidence that something was potentially afoot, on balance the British High Commissioner still felt that a declaration of independence was “improbable”. As he saw it, this was more about Denktash putting pressure on the Greek Cypriots.⁷⁵ In a report prepared on 14 November 1983, the British Embassy in Ankara also stated that it felt that a UDI was not imminent. Yet again, the United States concurred. As Washington saw it, Denktash was trying to “alarm the Greek Cypriots”.⁷⁶ He would not want to upset his relations with the new Turkish prime minister, Turgut Özal. Nor would President Evren want UDI while his attention was focused on the creation of a new Turkish government. Instead, the view was that Denktash would now wait to see how his meeting with Kyprianou went. The French, Germans and Italians were broadly in agreement as well.⁷⁷

At 8am (6am GMT) on 15 November 1983 the Turkish Cypriot Assembly passed a resolution “approving the establishment of the Turkish Republic of North Cyprus and the Declaration of Independence”.⁷⁸ The timing took everyone by surprise, including the Turkish Government.⁷⁹ In Nicosia, High Commissioner Wilberforce and the US Ambassador, Raymond Ewing, immediately agreed that the first step should be for the Foreign Office and State Department to express their “surprise and displeasure at the Turkish Cypriot move” to the Turkish Government.⁸⁰ In London, the Foreign Office swung into action. Ministers quickly approved the contingency plan that had been put together in the event of UDI.⁸¹ Speaking with Kyprianou by phone, Thatcher insisted that Britain would not recognise the Turkish Cypriot state.⁸² Soon afterwards, the Foreign Office issued a statement deploring the purported declaration of independence and stressing that the British Government only recognised one Cypriots state under the Government of President Kyprianou. It also announced that it was calling for consultations with the Greek and Turkish governments under the provisions of the Treaty of Guarantee and that it would be in touch with “other interested governments including EC and NATO partners.”⁸³ Addressing the House of Commons that afternoon, the Foreign Secretary, Geoffrey Howe, reiterated that there was no question of recognising “more than one Government for Cyprus”,⁸⁴ and that Britain was approaching the President of the Security Council “with a view to securing an early meeting”.⁸⁵ The British mission at the UN was also instructed to circulate the draft resolution that had been prepared to the Greeks and Cypriots, as well as the Americans, French, Dutch and other relevant parties.⁸⁶

Other Western states quickly lined up to condemn the Turkish Cypriot decision as well. The State Department issued an initial statement expressing “surprise and dismay” at the Turkish Cypriot move; with a stronger one to follow.⁸⁷ Likewise, France, Australia, Germany and Italy, amongst others, also condemned the move.⁸⁸ The Greek Government, then holding the rotating presidency of the European Community, circulated a draft text for consideration by the ten members,⁸⁹ noting that if no comments were received by 10am the following morning it would be issued as a joint statement.⁹⁰ Needless to say, hopes for a joint statement by NATO were prevented by Turkey.⁹¹ However, some other countries, such as Norway, also noted their concerns about any actions that “might exacerbate inter-allied relations”.⁹² As the day progresses, condemnations emerged from around the world. Sonny Ramphal, the Commonwealth Secretary-General, wrote to Thatcher to say that he was sure that all Commonwealth Governments would immediately wish to denounce the purported declaration of independence and express their solidarity with the Republic of Cyprus.⁹³ And yet, while much of the West and many Commonwealth members quickly voiced their support for the territorial integrity of Cyprus, the Soviet Union and the Eastern Europeans were conspicuously quiet. This did not go unnoticed by Greece, which summoned the relevant ambassadors to the Foreign Ministry.⁹⁴

The key question at this stage was how Turkey would respond. Word had emerged that the Turkish National Security Council would convene that afternoon and that the president, prime minister and foreign minister would all attend.⁹⁵ At this stage, Britain wanted to avoid antagonising Ankara. For example, Howe deliberately avoided blaming the Turkish Government for the situation. Instead, he placed responsibility firmly at Denktash's feet.⁹⁶ He also instructed the British Embassy in Ankara to approach the highest Turkish officials and tell them that Britain hoped that they would not associate themselves with the Turkish Cypriot decision. However, they were proving to be elusive. A request by the British Ambassador, Sir Mark Russell, for a meeting with President Evren was rebuffed as being against protocol.⁹⁷ The prime minister and foreign minister also refused to see the ambassador. Eventually, Russell had to make do with the Undersecretary at the Foreign Ministry, Ercüment Yavuzalp, who again insisted that the Turkish government had been surprised by the move.⁹⁸ He also noted that, as Türkmen had explained to the Greek ambassador a little earlier, Turkey had made efforts to stop Denktash, but could not control him.⁹⁹

At 3pm, Foreign Minister Türkmen emerged from the National Security Council meeting to read out a statement. After noting that the Turkish Government had only been informed of the Turkish Cypriot decision that morning, and that it had previously made its views known to Denktash, he announced that the Turkish Government "had decided to recognise the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus."¹⁰⁰ Despite this, London still hoped that the Turkish Cypriots could be persuaded to rescind the declaration. A little later that day, the British ambassador in Ankara finally saw Türkmen, who began by insisting that the Turkish Government and the Turkish Cypriots were still committed to UN talks. After noting that Britain had consistently emphasised its opposition to any attempted UDI to Turkish officials over the previous months, the ambassador forwarded a request by Thatcher to the Turkish president asking that he assist in securing a reversal of the declaration. Türkmen said that he would forward the message, but noted that, "there is no reverse gear in this car."¹⁰¹

Britain now pressed ahead with efforts to convene the UN Security Council. At this stage, it was unclear when it could be held. The Cypriot foreign minister, George Iacovou, was due to arrive in New York the next day, but Denktash would not be there until the day after.¹⁰² This led to differences of opinion within the Council – comprised at the time of China, France, Guyana, Jordan, Malta, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Poland, Togo, USSR, United Kingdom, United States, Zaire, Zimbabwe. The USSR and Nicaragua pressed for a meeting before the Turkish Cypriot leader arrived. The US, supported by Pakistan and Jordan, felt that the meeting should take place when Denktash could also be heard.¹⁰³ In the meantime, informal consultations indicated that the British draft resolution had been generally received favourably.¹⁰⁴ The US welcomed the draft resolution and saw no difficulty in supporting it.¹⁰⁵ The same went for the Dutch.¹⁰⁶ The Soviet Union said that the Council should wait to hear from the parties before taking a position.¹⁰⁷ Even though "different bits" of the resolution were disliked by the Athens and Ankara,¹⁰⁸ the Turkish permanent representation at the UN seemed relieved that Turkey was not directly condemned in the text.¹⁰⁹

While efforts continued in New York, concerns grew that other countries could follow Turkey's lead and recognise the TRNC. Attention was focused on Bangladesh, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Libya and Malaysia.¹¹⁰ London and Washington immediately began an intensive effort to stop them from doing so.¹¹¹ Despite this, on 16 November news emerged that Bangladesh had decided to recognise the Turkish Cypriot state. During a meeting with the Bangladeshi Foreign Minister, the British High Commissioner in Dhaka was told that Bangladesh had indeed "taken the decision in principle" to recognise the Turkish Cypriot state. As the Minister explained, "Bangladesh's centuries old links with Turkey meant that

they had a natural sympathy with the Turkish case.”¹¹² However, it was unclear whether this meant that Bangladesh had already recognised the TRNC, or was merely planning to do so. While the Turkish Foreign Ministry believed it had,¹¹³ the United States charge d’affaires in Dhaka said that he had been told by the foreign minister that while Bangladesh had informed Pakistan and Turkey that it recognised the TRNC, it was now “backing off” until it had had the chance to discuss the issue with other Muslim states, including Indonesia and Malaysia.¹¹⁴ Meanwhile, Pakistan also appeared to be on the verge of recognition. Its ambassador in Ankara told the Ambassador Russell that although he had yet to receive instructions, President Zia had promised to recognise a Turkish Cypriot state during his recent trip to Turkey.¹¹⁵ In contrast, Iraq indicated that it would go along with the majority view of the Non-Aligned Movement. It would not recognise the TRNC, even though this could complicate its relations with Turkey.¹¹⁶

Following discussions, the Security Council decided to meet on 17 November. Worryingly for Britain, the prospect of a damaging split within the Council had emerged.¹¹⁷ Arriving in New York, Iacovou expressed his concern about the speed with which Britain had moved in the Council and announced that the Greek Cypriots would be preparing their own draft resolution. As far as Nicosia was concerned, the resolution should simply have restricted itself to the UDI and calling on states not to recognise it. It should not have suggested that UN talks continue as before. Nicosia was also unhappy with the reference to the two communities. The emphasis should be on the Republic of Cyprus, which was not mentioned in the draft. That said, Iacovou hoped that the two drafts could be combined. Defending Britain’s actions, Ambassador Thomson said that he felt that Britain might not have moved fast enough given reports that Bangladesh had already recognised and that other might follow. He also noted that the British government had received more surprise and criticism from the Turks.¹¹⁸ Meanwhile, Iacovou met with several representatives of the Non-Aligned Contact Group on Cyprus, including Algeria, Mali, India, Sri Lanka, Yugoslavia, Cuba and Guyana. Ominously, this was the group that had initiated the UN General Assembly resolution earlier in the year that had caused such a strong reaction from Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots.¹¹⁹

Over the course of the day, discussions on the draft resolution also continued. As one official noted, “predictably, it is too weak for the Cypriots and too strong for the Turks.”¹²⁰ Although Britain sought to balance the wishes of the two sides, there was absolutely no doubt where its priorities lay: “Given the need to maintain good relations with the Greeks and Cyprus and our vital interest in the Sovereign Base Areas we must adhere to our position of deploring the Turkish Cypriot declaration and regretting Turkey’s recognition of it.” Nevertheless, London also recognised the need to “avoid unnecessarily (and probably to no good effect) antagonising the Turks in a way which would cause long-term deterioration in our relations”.¹²¹ Therefore, while Britain was determined to refer to the ongoing UN process, to placate the Greek Cypriots it was willing to replace “deplored” with the stronger “condemned” and make explicit reference to the Republic of Cyprus.¹²² Also, reference could be made to Cyprus’ non-aligned status. As for the Turks, it was suggested that references could be made to the breach of the 1960 treaties.¹²³ This would be read as an indirect criticism of the Greek Cypriots. Overall, though, it was already felt that Turkey would not pose a major problem in the process. Despite its earlier bravado, Ankara now appeared to want to minimise “international hostility”; especially from United States, which could yet withhold military aid. Crucially, in line with Britain’s wishes, the Turkish Government seemed keen to encourage the renewed Cyprus negotiations.¹²⁴

At the same time as negotiations continued over a draft a resolution in New York, Britain also continued its efforts to prevent any further recognitions. The focus of attention was on the two Security Council members that appeared to be wavering. Pakistan was a

source of concern as Islamabad had said that the matter was under “urgent consideration”.¹²⁵ In contrast, Jordan appeared to be moving in a different direction. The Foreign Ministry said it thought that it was unlikely that there would be any early move to recognise the Turkish Cypriot state as it wished to co-ordinate its position with other Islamic countries.¹²⁶ More generally, the threat of further immediate recognitions appeared to be receding. Ever increasing numbers of countries were now condemning the Turkish Cypriot UDI.¹²⁷ By far the most important of these was the Soviet Union. After initially prevaricating, it now issued a strong statement in which it shared the “profound concern” now being “expressed everywhere”. Noting that the Turkish Cypriot action was directly aimed at partitioning the island, and should be repealed, it too stressed the need to resume the UN intercommunal talks “as soon as possible”.¹²⁸ Although this certainly strengthened the British position on the matter, the Greek Cypriots held firm. Meeting with Thatcher in London, Kyprianou argued that while it was important to pass the resolution quickly, he remained concerned about a call for the resumption of negotiations.¹²⁹

On 17 November, two days after the UDI, the Security Council met to discuss the situation. There were three speakers in the morning session: the UN Secretary-General and the foreign ministers of Cyprus and Greece.¹³⁰ Once again, de Cuellar insisted that he intended to continue his mission of good offices. Taking the floor, Iacovou said that the Turkish Cypriot declaration was null and void. Criticising both the Turkish Cypriots and Turkey, which so obviously supported the Turkish Cypriots, he insisted that the UDI was a direct result of Turkey’s use of force in 1974 and that any decision to recognise the Turkish Cypriot act would be a breach of UN principle. The Greek foreign minister, Ioannis Charalambopoulos, followed the same line. Condemning the Turkish Cypriot UDI as a “criminal act”, he called Denktash “Turkey’s puppet”. He also launched a broadside against Greece’s NATO allies, insisting that, “Turkey’s policy in Cyprus was only possible because of its military power, as those who supplied Turkey with military equipment should remember.” In the afternoon, eight speakers addressed the Council: Denktash and the representative of Turkey, Nicaragua, India, Seychelles, Australia, Algeria and Canada. Emphasising that he had not come to say sorry for his actions, the Turkish Cypriot leader did apologise for taking the step as the Secretary-General was intensifying his efforts to find a solution. However, as he saw it, the Greek Cypriots were not serious about the moves.¹³¹ The Turkish representative said that Turkey had asked the Turkish Cypriots to wait, but had to respect their decision. He reiterated that the move “was faithful to the High Level Agreements” and that Turkey had no territorial designs for Cyprus. As the floor was opened to others, all the rest of the speakers, to a greater or lesser degree, condemned the Turkish Cypriot move.

Meanwhile, Britain and Cyprus had been working on a text “all day”.¹³² It was not easy. The Greek Cypriots had consistently pushed for a stronger text. Moreover, it was now being reported that two other – “extreme” – drafts were now being circulated.¹³³ In one, circulated by Guyana, the sole aim was to condemn the Turkish Cypriots. If this passed, it would remove all Turkish influence over Denktash. Also, any insistence on withdrawing the UDI prior to further negotiations would play into Denktash’s hands as it would allow him to stop any further talks. Turkey therefore made it known that, “at worst”, it could accept the British text.¹³⁴ To win over the Greek Cypriots, London offered references to the Republic of Cyprus and its non-aligned status. While both were accepted, Iacovou countered with a raft of other changes that he claimed had been agreed by Thatcher and Kyprianou. These included replacing “deplores” with “condemns”, and deleting several operative paragraphs; such as paragraph 5, which “calls upon the parties to fully co-operate with the Secretary-General in his mission of good offices”, and paragraph 8, which “calls upon all States and the two communities in Cyprus to refrain from action that might exacerbate the situation” – a

phrasing that Nicosia saw as giving equality between the Cyprus government and the Turkish Cypriots. The British representative explained that these changes would “bust the negotiations”.¹³⁵ After further consultations, it was agreed that operational paragraph 2 would state that the Turkish Cypriot declaration was legally invalid. Iacovou was then told there would be no further concessions.¹³⁶

As expected, Denktash was livid at the text and threatened to call off any further intercommunal talks if the resolution was passed.¹³⁷ At an informal Security Council meeting held later that evening, Pakistan attempted to introduce a series of amendments that favoured the Turkish and Turkish Cypriot positions. However, these were defeated when Guyana, Nicaragua and Zimbabwe announced that if discussions were reopened they would introduce pro-Cyprus amendments. The text was now finalised. In a telegram to London, British officials noted that, “barring last minute hitches the Council should vote on the text tomorrow morning (18 November) with at least 13 votes in favour.”¹³⁸

The next morning, Türkmen met with Howe at the Foreign Office. Once again, he insisted that Turkey could not control Denktash and that it had been against the UDI. He also reiterated that once the declaration had been made Ankara had no choice but to accept it. Looking ahead, there was no chance that the UDI would be reversed. The key task now was to resume UN talks. As for the draft resolution, he raised several objections. He opposed the reference to only one administration in Cyprus, noting that it had been agreed in 1975 in Geneva that there were “two administrations” in Cyprus. He also rejected the “very strong addition” of a statement that the declaration of independence was legally invalid. As he saw it, the international community now had to accept that a new state existed and that if Denktash was pushed into a corner, he would not negotiate. He was also very critical of the position London had taken. As he noted, while Turkey had expected Britain’s reaction to the UDI to be unfavourable, it had been “surprised by its vehemence.”¹³⁹ Howe agreed that the British response had been strong, but he argued that this had been “right and necessary” given the pressures it faced in the UN. The Turkish government, in opposing UDI before it took place, had surely recognised that the Turkish Cypriot move would necessarily be a change for the worse. As Howe explained, the results had been entirely foreseeable:

We had earlier made it very clear that we were firmly opposed to a declaration of independence. We deplored Denktash’s action. It would not contribute to a solution. We regretted that Turkey had recognised and were disappointed that our representations had not been heeded. Denktash’s actions and its timing were a severe setback to the Secretary General’s initiative. The Turks could hardly have been surprised by our resolution. It represented our view and the view of the majority of the UN members.¹⁴⁰

By this point, the danger of further recognitions had all but disappeared. Although there were reports that Indonesia was considering it,¹⁴¹ Bangladesh had by now told the Commonwealth Secretary-General that it had not recognised the TRNC and that it would not do so until after the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, which was due to be held in India the following week.¹⁴² Pakistan was also holding off. A statement put out by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed sympathy for the Turkish Cypriot people and regret at the lack of progress in the intercommunal talks, but made no mention of recognition.¹⁴³

At 4.30pm on 18 November 1983, three days after the unilateral declaration of independence, the Security Council convened for its 2500th meeting. Despite the agreement that had been reached the night before, prior to the meeting the Greek Cypriots attempted to introduce a set of new amendments. These included changing the word “authorities” to “leadership” and omitting operative paragraph 8, which called “on all states and the two communities in

Cyprus to refrain from any action which might exacerbate the situation”.¹⁴⁴ The British resisted. The text that had been accepted was tabled. UN Security Council Resolution 541 received 13 votes in favour. Pakistan voted against it. Jordan abstained. Crucially, the Council not only deplored the purported declaration of independence by the Turkish Cypriot authorities, it considered it to be legally invalid and called on states not to recognise any Cypriot state other than the Republic of Cyprus. Summing up the responses to the resolution in a telegram back to London, the British permanent representation noted that the “Greek Cypriot and Greek reaction is one of euphoria tinged with regret that the resolution had not tilted further in their direction. The Turkish Cypriot and Turkish reaction is one of rejection.”¹⁴⁵

While the international community has a deep-seated aversion to acts of secession, great powers have an important role to play in marshalling international opposition to specific attempts by territories to break away. As noted, this can be done through bilateral lobbying and through broader multilateral diplomatic initiatives. In the case of the Turkish Cypriot unilateral declaration of independence, throughout the whole period leading up to the UDI, and in the period afterwards, Britain was quite clearly the most closely involved of all the permanent members of the Security Council. The United States certainly took a very close interest in the situation, and worked alongside Britain to try to prevent the UDI, and then to rally opposition to the move. However, Washington saw London as the lead actor in the process. France also voiced its opposition to the attempted secession, but did little to try to tackle the situation directly, largely because of its exceedingly poor relations with Turkey at the time. The Soviet Union was particularly slow to act, but when it did it came down firmly against the Turkish Cypriot decision. Interestingly, China appears not to have featured in the discussions at all, even though it did vote in favour of Resolution 541.

From the very start, London consistently tried to prevent any UDI. It stressed to Turkey and to Denktash that under no circumstances would Britain recognise such a move and attempted to exert leverage over the Turkish Cypriot leader. However, from the record, Denktash was very much his own man. Contrary to widespread perceptions, he knew that he exerted as much control, if not more, over Turkey as Turkey exerted over him. He also proved to be a consummate game player, constantly keeping everyone wondering whether and when he would take the plunge and declare independence. While London continually wavered as to whether he would in fact go through with an attempt to secede, from the first moment it became a distinct possibility Britain drew up contingency plans to address an eventual secession. Moreover, as soon as the UDI occurred, London began a concerted effort to lobby countries not to recognise the purported secession. Reaching out to its allies and partners in the EC, NATO and the Commonwealth, there can be no question as to Britain’s commitment to stopping the Turkish Cypriot UDI from succeeding. While there is a good case to say that a UN Security Council resolution would have passed without Britain’s concerted efforts – as noted, it was all but certain the US and the Soviet Union would have blocked its membership of the UN, the so-called “gold standard” of universal international recognition¹⁴⁶ – there was a distinct possibility that several other states would have recognised the TRNC before this occurred. As states are often reluctant to reverse recognitions once they have taken place, it is certainly possible that the TRNC would have more recognitions today had it not been for the quick and concerted effort by Britain to stop them.

This in turn raises another very interesting, and rather obscure, question concerning the 1983 declaration of independence that has confused observers for many years: did any

country apart from Turkey ever recognise the TRNC? It had long been suggested that either Bangladesh or Pakistan did. Reviewing the documents, it is certain that Pakistan did not. It certainly may have wanted to do so. It may even have intended to do so. However, it did not do so. Bangladesh is a rather more interesting, and confusing, case. It appears the government did take the decision to recognise the TRNC. Moreover, it then communicated this decision to Turkey. However, there is no evidence to suggest that it communicated the fact directly to the Turkish Cypriot authorities, which would be expected, or made a public statement to confirm that it had recognised the TRNC. Perhaps the clearest indication of what happened came from a conversation between the Pakistan and British ambassadors in Dhaka:

Pakistan ambassador tells me that at 0835 local (0235) GMT on 17 November Bangladesh Foreign Minister telephoned him in order to inform him that Bangladesh had recognised Turkish Cypriot Government with effect from 0800, and asked him to report as much to his government – later Doha expressed his irritation that Pakistan had not followed suit, and admitted that Bangladesh had wished to be the first to do so, in confident expectation that others would follow. Ambassador told him that if he had checked beforehand, he would have been told that this was unlikely.¹⁴⁷

On balance, therefore, it seems that Bangladesh did in fact recognise the TRNC, but quickly regretted the decision and so decided to pretend that it had not.

Finally, the events of 1983 raise a very important point about the relationship between Britain and the Republic of Cyprus – or, more specifically, the Greek Cypriots. There is a common tendency for many Greek Cypriots to regard Britain as sympathetic to Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots, and that it has always looked out for their interests. Equally, they believe that Britain is somehow implacable hostile to the Greek Cypriots. As the events of 1983 showed, this is not the case. From the outset, London was aware that it had to play a delicate balancing act. While it recognised the need to take immediate action in the event of UDI, and stress that such a move was contrary to international law and the 1960 treaties underpinning the Republic of Cyprus, it did not want to wholly alienate Turkey or the Turkish Cypriots, such as by imposing economic sanctions. That said, it is clear from the documents that, when faced with a choice, Britain's key interest lay with trying to keep the Greek Cypriots satisfied. As seen, although there may have been some differences between London and Nicosia in terms of the final resolution put before the Security Council, Britain consistently and persistently warned the Turkish Cypriots against a unilateral declaration of independence, and then, once it had happened, took the lead in rallying international opposition to the attempted secession. This was warmly welcomed by the Cypriot Government.¹⁴⁸ Britain's central role in defending the territorial integrity of the Republic of Cyprus in the face of the Turkish Cypriot UDI deserves to be more widely recognised and acknowledged.

Notes on Contributor

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Endnotes

¹ For some of the key texts on the subject from an international law perspective see Hersh Lauterpacht, *Recognition in International Law* (Cambridge, 1947); Ti-Chiang Chen, *The International Law of Recognition* (London, 1951); Thomas D. Grant, *The Recognition of States: Law and Practice in Debate and Evolution* (Westport, 1999); John Dugard, *Recognition and the United Nations* (Cambridge, 1987).

² Pal Kolstø, "The Sustainability and Future of Unrecognized Quasi-States," *Journal of Peace Research*, 43/6, 2006, 727; Mikulas Fabry, *Recognizing States: International Society and the Establishment of New States Since 1776* (Oxford, 2009), 2.

³ Pegg, Scott, *International Society and the De Facto State* (Aldershot, 1999); Deon Geldenhuys, Deon, *Contested States in World Politics* (Basingstoke, 2009); Caspersen, Nina and Gareth Stansfield (editors), *Unrecognized States in the International System* (London, 2010).

⁴ Eiki Berg and Raul Toomla, "Forms of Normalisation in the Quest for De Facto Statehood," *The International Spectator*, 44/4, 2009; Edward Newman and Gezim Visoka, "The Foreign Policy of State Recognition: Kosovo's Diplomatic Strategy to Join International Society," *Foreign Policy Analysis*, Online Pre-Publication 2016.

⁵ James Ker-Lindsay, *The Foreign Policy of Counter Secession: Preventing the Recognition of Contested States* (Oxford, 2012).

⁶ Milena Sterio, *The Right to Self-determination Under International Law: "Selfistans", Secession and the Rule of the Great Powers* (Abingdon, 2013), 58-59.

⁷ Bridget Coggins, *Power Politics and State Formation in the Twentieth Century: The Dynamics of Recognition* (Cambridge, 2014), 9.

⁸ For a full analysis of this case, see Janice Musson, "Britain and the Recognition of Bangladesh in 1972," *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 19/1, 2008, 125-144.

⁹ For a full discussion on collective non-recognition, see James Crawford, *The Creation of States in International Law*, 2nd Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 157-172.

¹⁰ Robert Holland, *Britain and the Revolt in Cyprus, 1954-59* (Oxford, 1998); David French, *Fighting EOKA* (Oxford, 2015).

¹¹ Diana Weston Markides, *Cyprus 1957-63: From Colonial Conflict to Constitutional Crisis: The Role of the Municipal Issue* (Minnesota, 2001).

¹² For more on this period see Makarios Drousiotis, *The First Partition: Cyprus 1963-64* (Nicosia, 2008); Alan James, *Keeping the Peace in the Cyprus Crisis of 1963-64* (Basingstoke, 2002); James Ker-Lindsay, *Britain and the Cyprus Crisis, 1963-1964* (Mannheim, 2004).

¹³ Any suggestion that this was done to assist Turkey have been comprehensively refuted. See Andreas Constandinos, "US-British Policy on Cyprus, 1964-1974," in Hubert Faustmann and Emiliou Solomou (editors) *Independent Cyprus 1960-2010: Selected Readings* (Nicosia, 2011), 63-94. Indeed, Britain and Turkey almost clashed during the subsequent invasions. Francis Henn, "The Nicosia airport incident of 1974: A peacekeeping gamble," *International Peacekeeping*, 1/1, 1994.

¹⁴ For more on this see, Jan Asmussen, *Cyprus at War: Diplomacy and Conflict During the 1974 Crisis* (London, 2008). Mehmet Ali Birand, *Thirty Hot Days* (Lefkosa, 1985).

¹⁵ Denktash's opposition to a settlement of the Cyprus Problem is universally accepted. See, inter alia, David Hannay, *Cyprus: The Search for a Solution* (London, 2005), 18-19.

¹⁶ For a more on the declaration of independence from a Turkish Cypriot perspective, see M. Necati Munir Ertekun, *The Cyprus Dispute and the Birth of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus* (Nicosia, 1984).

¹⁷ "Cyprus: UDI in the North", 18 February 1983, FCO [Foreign and Commonwealth Office Archives, National Archives, Kew, London, UK] 9/3914.

¹⁸ "Turkish Cypriot UDS", FCO 9/3914.

¹⁹ Telegram FCO to Ankara, 12 October 1983, 9/3915.

²⁰ 103-5 votes, with 20 abstentions. The five votes opposing votes were cast by Bangladesh, Malaysia, Pakistan, Somalia and Turkey.

²¹ 'Denktas to Propose Independent State', *The Times* (17 May 1983).

²² "Turkish Cypriot Unilateral Declaration of Statehood", 17 May 1983, FCO 9/3914.

²³ Telegram Nicosia to FCO, 18 May 1983, FCO 9/3914.

²⁴ Telegram Ankara to FCO, 18 May 1983, FCO 9/3914.

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- ²⁵ Telegram FCO to Ankara, 20 May 1983, FCO 9/3914.
- ²⁶ Telegram Athens to FCO, 20 May 1983, FCO 9/3914.
- ²⁷ “Letter dates 23 May 1983 from the Permanent Representative of Cyprus to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General,” S [UN Security Council Document]/15788, 25 May 1983.
- ²⁸ Telegram Ankara to FCO, 25 May 1983, FCO 9/3914.
- ²⁹ Telegram Ankara to FCO, 2 June 1983, FCO 9/3914. Rhodesia’s UDI, in November 1965, was not a case of secession. Instead, it centred on the terms of its independence after many decades of self-rule. For more see Carl Watts, *Rhodesia's Unilateral Declaration of Independence: An International History* (Basingstoke, 2012).
- ³⁰ Teleletter Washington to London, 3 June 1983, FCO 9/3914.
- ³¹ ‘Turkish Cypriots would like Independence’, *Reuters* (3 June 1983). As he explained, the Turkish Government had stopped him, but also emphasised that he was still under a lot of pressure from his community to push ahead with his plans. Letter from Lord Spens to Baroness Young, 15 June 1983, FCO 9/3914.
- ³² Teleletter Washington to London, 3 June 1983, FCO 9/3914.
- ³³ “Loose Translation of the Resolution Adopted by the Legislative Assembly of the Turkish Federated State of Kibris on 17 June 1983”, Turkish Federated State of Kibris [sic], Press Release 18 June 1983, FCO 9/3914.
- ³⁴ Telegram Nicosia to FCO, 1 July 1983, FCO 9/3914.
- ³⁵ Telegram Nicosia to FCO, 4 July 1983, FCO 9/3914.
- ³⁶ Telegram UK Mission New York to FCO, 29 June 1983, FCO 9/3914.
- ³⁷ Letter from Rauf Denktash to the Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher MP, 10 August 1983, FCO 9/3914.
- ³⁸ Letter from Rauf Denktash to Baroness Young, 11 August 1983, FCO 9/3914. Nevertheless, he also emphasised that, “even when we declare statehood and seek recognition the door will be fully open to the re-establishment of a partnership state in the form of a bi-zonal Federal Republic.”
- ³⁹ Letter from HNH Synott to David Dain, FCO, 30 August 1983, FCO 9/3914; Contingency Planning 6 June 1980, WSC 014/3.
- ⁴⁰ “Possible Turkish Cypriot Declaration of Statehood”, 30 September 1983, FCO 9/3914. Interestingly, questions were also raised on relatively small practical matters, such as how British aid to the Turkish Cypriots should be handled and what would happen to the TFSC office in London and British Council activities for the Turkish Cypriots.
- ⁴¹ Letter from David Dain to HNH Synott, FCO, 21 September 1983, FCO 9/3914.
- ⁴² “Cyprus: Secretary-General’s Meetings with President Kyprianou, Mr Turkmen and Mr Denktash”, Telegram UK Mission New York to FCO, 3 October 1983, FCO 9/3914.
- ⁴³ RG Short to David Dain, 4 October 1983, FCO 9/3914.
- ⁴⁴ UK Mission to New York to FCO, 4 October 1983, FCO 9/3914.
- ⁴⁵ Telegram Ankara to FCO, 5 October 1983, FCO 9/3914.
- ⁴⁶ Telegram Washington to FCO, 6 October 1983, FCO 9/3914.
- ⁴⁷ United Kingdom Mission to the United Nations, 023/1, 7 October 1983, FCO 9/3914.
- ⁴⁸ United Kingdom Mission to the United Nations, 023/1, 7 October 1983, FCO 9/3914.
- ⁴⁹ ‘Turkish Cypriot President Plans to Rename State’, *Reuters* (11 October 1983).
- ⁵⁰ Telegram Nicosia to FCO, 12 October 1983, FCO 9/3915.
- ⁵¹ Telegram UK Mission New York to Washington, 13 October 1983, FCO 9/3915; Telegram Ankara to FCO, 13 October 1983, FCO 9/3915.
- ⁵² Soon after taking office, Papandreou had announced that Greece had partially suspended its co-operation with NATO. ‘Greece Announces ‘Partial Suspension’ of NATO Commitments’, *Washington Post* (9 December 1981).
- ⁵³ Teleletter from Athens to FCO, 11 October 1983, FCO 9/3915.
- ⁵⁴ Telegram Ankara to FCO, 13 October 1983, FCO 9/3915.
- ⁵⁵ Telegram Nicosia to FCO, 13 October 1983, FCO 9/3915.
- ⁵⁶ Telegram Ankara to FCO, 15 October 1983, FCO 9/3915.
- ⁵⁷ Telegram Ankara to FCO, 17 October 1983, FCO 9/3015.
- ⁵⁸ Telegram Nicosia to FCO, 17 October 1983, FCO 9/3915.
- ⁵⁹ Telegram Nicosia to FCO, 18 October 1983, FCO 9/3915; Telegram UKMIS New York to FCO, 21 October 1983, FCO 9/3915.
- ⁶⁰ “Turkish Cypriot Declaration of Independence”, 18 October 1983, FCO 9/3915.
- ⁶¹ “Record of a Meeting Between the Secretary of State and the Turkish Foreign Minister, Mr Turkmen, Held in the Turkish Foreign Ministry at 0915 Hours on 18th October 1983”, FCO 9/3915.
- ⁶² “Turkish Cypriot Declaration of Independence”, 20 October 1983, FCO 9/3915
- ⁶³ Telegram Rome to FCO, 14 October 1983, FCO 9/3915; “Cabinet, 20 October: Points to Make: Cyprus”. FCO 9/3915; Telegram Ankara to FCO, 19 October 1983, FCO 9/3915.

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- ⁶⁴ Telegram Paris to FCO, 19 October 1983, FCO 9/3915 Interestingly, a few days earlier, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “wondered if Denktash’s threats were not more a manoeuvre aimed at sinking Perez de Cueller’s initiative than preparation for UDI.” Telegram Paris to FCO, 14 October 1983.
- ⁶⁵ United Kingdom Delegation to the North Atlantic Council NATO, 14 October 1983, FCO 9/3915.
- ⁶⁶ Teleletter FCO to UKDEL NATO, 27 October 1983, FCO 9/3915. Interesting, the note also made it clear that Luns should not “be encouraged to raise the question [of UDI] with the Greeks.”
- ⁶⁷ “Turkish Cypriot Declaration of Independence”, 20 October 1983, FCO 9/3915. On the last point, concerning damage to Turkey’s relations with the West, the note in fact stated, “any such action on our part would risk jeopardising our currently good relations with Turkey with consequent implications for trade and, in the wider context, Turkey’s relations with the West generally.”
- ⁶⁸ Teleletter UKMIS New York to FCO, 21 October 1983, FCO 3/3915
- ⁶⁹ “Cyprus Problem: Lady Young’s Visit”, Telegram Nicosia to FCO, 24 October 1983, FCO 9/3915.
- ⁷⁰ UKMIS New York to FCO, 26 October 1983, FCO 9/3915
- ⁷¹ “Possible Turkish Cypriot Declaration of Statehood”, letter from HNH Synott, Southern European Department, to RG Short, Ankara, 25 October 1983, FCO 9/3915. As Sir Mark Russell, the British Ambassador in Ankara, replied a few days later: “the priority which Cyprus has in the view of any Turkish Government is a complex question. The Turks are usually pre-occupied with their internal affairs, for example, Cyprus has achieved only a token mention during the present election campaign. Its importance to Turkey is largely negative: ie they are concerned to protect their community in Cyprus. They really have no ambition beyond that.” “Possible Turkish Cypriot Declaration of Statehood”, RG Short to HNH Synott, 2 November 1983, FCO 9/3915
- ⁷² Telegram Ankara to FCO, 7 November 1983, FCO 9/3915
- ⁷³ Telegram Nicosia to FCO, 7 November 1983, FCO 9/3915. In fact, the High Commission believed that Denktash had himself spread the rumour in order to keep everyone guessing, and to “soften up the Greek Cypriots”.
- ⁷⁴ “Threats of UDI”, Telegram from Nicosia to FCO, 11 November 1983, FCO 9/3916
- ⁷⁵ “Threats of UDI”, Telegram from Nicosia to FCO, 11 November 1983, FCO 9/3916
- ⁷⁶ “Cyprus: Possible Turkish Cypriot Declaration of Independence”, 14 November 1983, FCO 9/3916; Teleletter Washington to FCO, 14 November 1983, FCO 9/3916
- ⁷⁷ Teleletter Washington to FCO, 14 November 1983, FCO 9/3916
- ⁷⁸ Telegram Nicosia to FCO, 15 November 1983, FCO 9/3919. An English translation of the text of the “Declaration” can be found in FCO 9/3919.
- ⁷⁹ Telegram Ankara to FCO, 15 November 1983, FCO 9/3919; Telegram Nicosia to FCO, 15 November 1983, FCO 9/3919. The sequence of events in Ankara is described in a telegram from Ankara to FCO, 15 November 1983, FCO 9/3919
- ⁸⁰ Telegram Nicosia to FCO, 15 November 1983, FCO 9/3919
- ⁸¹ Again, this noted that British reactions should be coloured by the need to be seen to fulfil treaty obligations; “the desirability of maintaining good relations with the Republic of Cyprus in order to preserve our use of the SBAs” and for broader reasons, avoiding a serious conflict with Greece; and “the need to limit damage (in Cyprus, in NATO and in Turkey’s relationship with the West).” Telegram FCO to Nicosia, 15 November 1983, FCO 9/3919
- ⁸² Telegram FCO to Nicosia, 15 November 1983, FCO 9/3919. Indeed, Thatcher noted that Denktash had that very morning sent a letter to the British PM explaining his actions. “We shall not of course reply.” The text of the letter from Denktash can be found in FCO 9/3919.
- ⁸³ Telegram FCO to Athens, 15 November 1983, FCO 9/3919
- ⁸⁴ Cyprus (Turkish Community), Hansard, Volume 48, Column 730, 15 November 1983.
- ⁸⁵ “Sir Geoffrey Howe”, 15 November 1983, FCO 9/3919. Interestingly, the draft answers for supplementary questions emphasised that Britain did not view the issue as a military problem and was opposed to sanctions because Britain “would not want to do anything that will make an eventual settlement to the Cyprus problem even more difficult to find.” “Notes for Supplementaries”. 15 November 1983, FCO 9/3919
- ⁸⁶ Telegram from FCO to UK MIS New York, 15 November 1983, FCO 9/3919. The text of the draft resolution can be found as a separate telegram (number 746), with the same date.
- ⁸⁷ Telegram Washington to FCO, 15 November 1983, FCO 9/3919. A more detailed statement was indeed given later that day calling on the Turkish Cypriots to reverse their actions.
- ⁸⁸ “Cyprus: French Government Communique”, French Embassy in London, 16 November 1983, FCO 9/3921; “Cyprus – Declaration of Independence by Turkish Sector: Following is Text of a Press Release Issued by Mr Hayden on 15 November 1983”. FCO 9/3919; Telegram Bonn to FCO, 15 November 1983, FCO 9/3919; Telegram UKMIS NATO to FCO, 15 November 1983, FCO 9/3919
- ⁸⁹ Telegram Athens to FCO, 15 November 1983, FCO 9/3919

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- ⁹⁰ Telegram ATH COREU to ALL COREU, 15 November 1983, FCO 9/3919
- ⁹¹ Telegram FCO to Nicosia, 15 November 1983, FCO 9/3919
- ⁹² Telegram UKMIS NATO to FCO, 15 November 1983, FCO 9/3919
- ⁹³ “Following Urgent from Secretary-General Ramphal”, 15 November 1983, FCO 9/3919
- ⁹⁴ Telegram 663, Athens to FCO, 16 November 1983, FCO 9/3919. As the Greek Deputy Foreign Minister, Ioannis Kapsis, stated, their response had been “bloody awful”.
- ⁹⁵ Telegram Ankara to FCO, 15 November 1983, FCO 9/3919
- ⁹⁶ Cyprus (Turkish Community), Hansard, Volume 48, Column 730, 15 November 1983.
- ⁹⁷ Telegram Ankara to FCO, 15 November 1983, FCO 9/3919
- ⁹⁸ Telegram Ankara to FCO, 15 November 1983, FCO 9/3919
- ⁹⁹ Telegram 550, Ankara to FCO, 15 November 1983, FCO 9/3919. The fact that the Turkish foreign minister would see the Greek ambassador, but not the British, was viewed as evidence that Turkey was trying to limit damage to relations with Athens. Telegram 551, Ankara to FCO, 15 November 1983, FCO 9/3919. It was unsuccessful. Greece suspended all talks with Turkey. Telegram 663, Athens to FCO, 16 November 1983, FCO 9/3919.
- ¹⁰⁰ Telegram Ankara to FCO, 15 November 1983, FCO 9/3919
- ¹⁰¹ Telegram Ankara to FCO, 15 November 1983, FCO 9/3919
- ¹⁰² Telegram UKMIS New York to FCO, 15 November 1983, FCO 9/3919
- ¹⁰³ Telegram UKMIS New York to FCO, 15 November 1983, FCO 9/3919
- ¹⁰⁴ Telegram UKMIS New York to FCO, 15 November 1983, FCO 9/3919
- ¹⁰⁵ Telegram Washington to FCO, 15 November 1983, FCO 9/3919
- ¹⁰⁶ Telegram 331, The Hague to FCO, 16 November 1983, FCO 9/3919
- ¹⁰⁷ Telegram 1359, UKMIS New York to FCO, 16 November 1983, FCO 3/320
- ¹⁰⁸ Telegram UKMIS New York to FCO, 15 November 1983, FCO 9/3919
- ¹⁰⁹ Telegram UKMIS New York to FCO, 15 November 1983, FCO 9/3919
- ¹¹⁰ Telegram 356, FCO to Dhaka, 16 November 1983, FCO 9/3920; Telegram Washington to FCO, 15 November 1983, FCO 9/3919
- ¹¹¹ “Emergency Meeting of EC Foreign Ministers, Brussels, 18 November”. FCO 9/3916; Telegram Washington to FCO, 15 November 1983, FCO 9/3919
- ¹¹² Telegram Dhaka to FCO, 17 November 1983, FCO 9/3919
- ¹¹³ Telegram 558, Dhaka to FCO, 16 November 1983, FCO 9/3920
- ¹¹⁴ Telegram Dhaka to FCO, 17 November 1983, FCO 9/3919
- ¹¹⁵ Telegram 556, Ankara to FCO, 16 November 1983, FCO 9/3920
- ¹¹⁶ Telegram 719, Baghdad to FCO, 16 November 1983, FCO 9/3920
- ¹¹⁷ Telegram 1359, UKMIS New York to FCO, 16 November 1983, FCO 3/320
- ¹¹⁸ Telegram 160, UKMIS New York to FCO, 16 November 1983, FCO 3/3920
- ¹¹⁹ Telegram 1359, UKMIS New York to FCO, 16 November 1983, FCO 3/320. An assessment of the positions of the non-aligned members of the Council noted that while Pakistan and Jordan were insisting that they had yet to receive instructions, the sense was that they would be leaning more towards the Turkish Cypriots. Togo and Zaire would follow a French lead. Guyana, Nicaragua and Zimbabwe would probably support the Greek Cypriots.
- ¹²⁰ Telegram 1934, FCO to Washington, 17 November 1983, FCO 9/3920
- ¹²¹ Telegram 565, Ankara to FCO, 17 November 1983, FCO 9/3920
- ¹²² Telegram 759, UKMIS New York to FCO, 17 November 1983, FCO 9/3920
- ¹²³ Telegram 001, Ankara to UKMIS New York, 17 November 1983, FO 9/3920
- ¹²⁴ Telegram 565, Ankara to FCO, 17 November 1983, FCO 9/3920
- ¹²⁵ Telegram 519, Islamabad to FCO, 17 November 1983, FCO 3/3921
- ¹²⁶ Telegram 528, Amman to FCO, 17 November 1983.
- ¹²⁷ Press Statement, EXTOTT to Ankara, 16 November 1983, FCO 9/3921; Telegram 628, Madrid to FCO, 17 November 1983, FCO 9/3921; Telegram 231, Berne to FCO, 17 November 1983, FCO 9/3921; Telegram 138, UKDEL Strasbourg to FCO, 17 November 1983, FCO 9/3921; Telegram 135, UKDEL Strasbourg to FCO, 17 November 1983, FCO 9/3920
- ¹²⁸ “TASS Statement”, 17 November 1983, FCO 9/3921
- ¹²⁹ “Record of a Conversation between the Prime Minister and the President of the Republic of Cyprus at 1815 Hours on Thursday, 17 November 1983 at No.10 Downing Street”, FCO 9/3922. Summary contained in Telegram 767, FCO to UKMIS New York, 17 November 1983, FCO 9/3921
- ¹³⁰ The morning debate was recounted in Telegram 1373, UKMIS New York to FCO, 17 November 1983, FCO 9/3921

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- ¹³¹ The afternoon debate was recounted in Telegram 1387, UKMIS New York to FCO, 17 November 1983, FCO 9/3921
- ¹³² Telegram 567, Ankara to FCO, 17 November 1983, FCO 9/3921
- ¹³³ Telegram 1386, UKMIS New York to FCO, 17 November 1983, FCO 9/3921. It was noted that one, being circulated by Guyana, was sponsored by the NAM and called for sanctions. The second was circulated by the Cypriots was a “much strengthened” version of the British draft.
- ¹³⁴ Telegram 567, Ankara to FCO, 17 November 1983, FCO 9/3921
- ¹³⁵ Telegram 1386, UKMIS New York to FCO, 17 November 1983, FCO 9/3921
- ¹³⁶ Telegram 1386, UKMIS New York to FCO, 17 November 1983, FCO 9/3921
- ¹³⁷ Telegram 567, Ankara to FCO, 17 November 1983, FCO 9/3921
- ¹³⁸ Fax from CTW Humfrey at UKMIS New York to WA Harrison at FCO, 17 November 1983; FCO 9/3921 Telegram 1386, UKMIS New York to FCO, 17 November 1983, FCO 9/3921
- ¹³⁹ Tekleham 315, FCO to Ankara, 8 November 1983, FCO 9/3921
- ¹⁴⁰ Telegram 315, FCO to Ankara, 8 November 1983, FCO 9/3921.
- ¹⁴¹ Telegram 206, UKMIS New York to Jakarta, 18 November 1983, FCO 9/3921.
- ¹⁴² Telegram 364, FCO to Dhaka, 18 November 1983, FCO 9/3921; Telegram 474, Dhaka to FCO, 19 November 1983, FCO 9/3922.
- ¹⁴³ Telegram 520, Islamabad to FCO, 18 November 1983, FCO 9/3921.
- ¹⁴⁴ Telegram 1396, UKMIS New York to FCO, 18 November 1983, FCO 9/3922.
- ¹⁴⁵ Telegram 1396, UKMIS New York to FCO, 18 November 1983, FCO 9/3922.
- ¹⁴⁶ Keating, Joshua, “How to Start Your Own Country in Four Easy Steps,” *Foreign Policy*, February 2008.
- ¹⁴⁷ Telegram 473, Dhaka to FCO, 20 November 1983, FCO 9/3922.
- ¹⁴⁸ Kyprianou sent a message to Thatcher: “The president of the Republic of Cyprus warmly welcomes the action taken by the United Kingdom Government in regard to the purported secession and establishment of an independent state in the Turkish occupied part of the Republic of Cyprus, The President of the Republic further wishes to thank Her Majesty’s Government for its prompt response.” Telegram Nicosia to FCO, 15 November 1983, FCO 9/3919.