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ARTICLE

Reputation on the (green) line: revisiting the ‘Plaza moment’ in United Nations peacekeeping practice, 1964–1966[†]

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Abstract

Appointing a United Nations (UN) mediator to work in tandem with the United Nations Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) in March 1964 led to fundamental shifts in how the UN Secretariat inner circle orientated the organisation’s presence in Cyprus. The escalating crisis between the two communities in Cyprus and political pressure from UN member states to respond before Cold War superpower nations became engulfed, prompted the creation of UNFICYP and the recruitment of a UN mediator on 4 March 1964. This article argues that the UN leadership intended to restore member state trust following the controversial Congo mission (ONUC) and expand the organisation’s diplomatic agency through the innovation of deploying the dedicated mediator alongside the armed mission. However, the success of the mediator was diplomatically limited by the localised dynamics of the Cyprus conflict and the willingness of the Guarantor parties to surrender their sovereign imaginaries of post-colonial Cyprus. Ultimately, the experiment in field-based mediation forced the UN Secretariat leadership to acknowledge the incompatibility of appeasing all member states on one hand whilst leading field-based political negotiations with the other.

Keywords: United Nations; peacekeeping; Cyprus; mediation; international diplomacy

In the wake of member state criticism towards the United Nations (UN) peacekeeping mission to Congo (ONUC) during 1960–1964, the international organisation weathered a ‘storm of criticism’ and ongoing financial difficulties, fostering an environment of anxiety within the UN Secretariat.¹ The UN leadership worried that the Congo mission had significantly damaged its international reputation and position within the international community, putting future UN diplomatic and peacekeeping operations at risk.² As outlined in the UN Charter, UN processes were intrinsically tied to support from its member states through the donation of troops, financial aid and votes in favour of extending peacekeeping mission mandates. Influential figures, such as the secretary-general U Thant and other members of the Secretariat inner circle,³ believed that the organisation needed to

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¹T. J. Hamilton, “U. N. Under Pressure: Financial Crisis and Criticism of Policy Beset World Organization,” *The New York Times*, 11 February 1962.

²N. J. Padelford, “Financial Crisis and the Future of the United Nations,” *World Politics* 15, no. 4 (1963): 531–68.

³The UN Secretariat executive inner circle in 1964–1966 included: U Thant, Alexander MacFarquhar (Under-Secretary for Personnel), Jose Rolz-Bennett (Under-Secretary for Special Political Affairs), Chakravarthi V. Narasimhan (Under-Secretary) and Dr. Ralph Bunche (Under Secretary for Special Political Affairs).

re-establish its legitimacy following widespread international criticism of the institution's efficacy and trustworthiness in international conflict response. These concerns were heightened in early 1964 when the UN adopted new responsibilities in Cyprus. Organisational anxieties about the reputation of the UN prompted the Secretariat leadership to innovate peacekeeping practices and appoint a dedicated UN mediator to complement the activities of the armed peacekeeping force in Cyprus (United Nations Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP)) and negotiate a political settlement. This article traces the personalised responses of the two UNFICYP mediators to these pressures as they shifted between different mediatory approaches, more or less oriented towards external states' interests. It examines how their mediation activities made the organisation vulnerable to accusations of partiality or exceeding the agreed remit of mediation, jeopardising the host states' consent for the mission as a whole. With mounting fears of organisational fragility and competition in the sphere of diplomatic negotiations, local and international reception to UN mediation in Cyprus held a strategic, procedural and political significance for those in the New York headquarters who hoped that UNFICYP mediation would set a precedent for future UN field-based diplomacy.

By unearthing how UN peacekeeping staff attempted to navigate the Cyprus conflict in the aftermath of ONUC, this article also demonstrates the centrality of UN peacekeeping missions in making and remaking sovereignty during the era of decolonisation. UN peacekeeping missions provided liberal internationalists a legitimate instrument to police the internal affairs of vulnerable states and intervene in territorial disputes without invalidating sovereignty protections for powerful nations. Liberal internationalism was a transnational vision that considered 'the state' as the central unit of world politics. The UN Charter enshrined liberal internationalism as the political norm within the organisation in 1945 as part of the organisation's purpose as an instrument of conflict prevention and democratic hegemony. Rather than being an ideology limited to diplomatic exchange within UN headquarters, state departments and embassies across the Global North, the liberal internationalist vision was put into practice through UN peacekeeping missions. This vision encouraged and entitled mid-level UN staff to use their authority within host states to interfere in the political direction of the territory, perpetuate relationships with ex-colonial powers and silence critical populations as practical experiments in the interests of liberal peacebuilding. Thus, liberal internationalism manifested on the ground through peacekeeping missions as a form of multilateral imperialism, with international UN staff making decisions that prioritised their control of law and order and restoring 'peace' over the rights of host populations. UN staff imposed, or attempted to impose, democracy onto decolonising and post-colonial territories in order to control their trajectory towards liberal peace, believing that democratic states would be less likely to engage in armed inter-state conflict. Thus, there was unequal respect for sovereignty at the heart of the peacekeeping project.

This unevenness was driven by the geopolitical position of a state within the international order, differentiating national access to sovereignty. The UN Secretariat's respect for sovereignty was, therefore, underpinned by colonial models of civilisation and geopolitical inequality; a state's right to non-intervention was determined by its perceived geopolitical position until it reached a certain 'standard' of liberal politics. As Adom Getachew has argued, 'The protections that guarantees of sovereign equality and non-intervention afforded were unevenly distributed, making new and weak post-colonial states vulnerable to arbitrary interventions and encroachments at the hands of larger, more powerful states as well as private actors'.⁴ UN peacekeeping practices during decolonisation ensured that liberal internationalism shaped the post-colonial international order; sovereignty became, simultaneously, inviolable and violable (through multilateral intervention) depending on a state's geopolitical position and perceived value. From the field, mid-level peacekeeping staff set the standards for 'acceptable', 'credible' or 'stable' nationalist politics or leadership and paternalistically assumed a gatekeeping role of policing the ideological future of

⁴A. Getachew, *Worldmaking After Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), 113.

decolonising populations. Thus, in Cyprus, the inclusion and exclusion of political voices and positions through UN mediation strategies helped to further entrench this transformation to broader sovereignty processes; field-based international staff were on the front-line and at the negotiating table as they helped to shape the design, politics and geopolitical allegiance of post-colonial nations under the guise of conflict response.

Scholarship on Cyprus during the 1950s and 1960s has predominantly drawn on state archives such as the British National Archive, Greek National Archive and American Presidential papers held in the Library of Congress in Washington DC, thus focusing on Anglo-American representatives' views and NATO security interests in the region.⁵ Building on this literature, this article uses UN archival documents to re-centre UNFICYP staff in diplomatic histories of the conflict and demonstrate the political role that the peacekeepers played in limiting the threat of superpower intervention in the Mediterranean. The island had become a hotspot for Cold War anxieties as Cyprus provided NATO countries a direct non-Arctic route to the Soviet Union.⁶ Geographically, the island represented a meeting point between Europe and the Middle East and was proximate to the Black Sea as well as NATO-aligned nations, especially those within the newly constructed 'Southern Flank', such as Greece and Turkey.⁷ Post-Suez Crisis, the British government was increasingly protective of their military bases on the island and the UN leadership grew concerned about the lengths that NATO-aligned nations would go to in an attempt to protect their strategic access. In a Security Council meeting in early 1964, Thant emphasised the danger of the conflict to international peace and security and the catastrophic ramifications if the island became the site of Cold War military aggression.⁸ The second UNFICYP mediator, Galo Plaza, characterised the UN as crucial to not only the restoration of peace in the 'eastern Mediterranean area [but] possibly the world as a whole'.⁹

Historical attention to the UN has largely focused on examining the personalities and events involved in the origins of the organisation as the victorious allies formalised their vision, international norms emerged and lawyers and diplomats drafted foundational declarations.¹⁰ There are two main approaches to the history of the UN during decolonisation. The first focuses on the UN's role as a diplomatic forum, a setting for member state instrumentalisation. These works argue the General Assembly, and its supplementary committees, was crucial, if ambiguous, incubatory spaces for international human rights and anti-colonial discourses. By examining different

⁵W. R. Louis, "Harold Macmillan and the Middle East Crisis of 1958," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 94 (1997): 207–28; A. Varnava, "Reinterpreting Macmillan's Cyprus Policy, 1957–1960," *The Cyprus Review* 22, no. 1 (2010): 79–106; C. Hitchens, *Hostage to History: Cyprus from the Ottomans to Kissinger* (London: Quartet Books, 1984).

⁶J. Ker-Lindsay, *Britain and the Cyprus Crisis, 1963–1964* (Berkeley: Bibliopolis, 2009), 9.

⁷For more on the development of NATO's "Southern Flank," see D. Chourchoulis, *The Southern Flank of NATO, 1951–1959: Military Strategy or Political Stabilization* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014).

⁸"Cyprus Crisis Goes To U.N. Today," *The Times*, 17 February 1964; "Makarios Backed in Cyprus: Deepening of Conflict Feared if His Proposals Are Rejected," *The New York Times*, 2 January 1964.

⁹UN Archives (Henceforth UNA), S-0869-0001-10-00001, "Report of the United Nations Mediator on Cyprus to the Secretary-General, 26 March 1965," 49.

¹⁰S. Wertheim, "Instrumental Internationalism: The American Origins of the United Nations, 1940–3," *Journal of Contemporary History* 54, no. 2 (2019): 265–83; A. Balasubramanian and S. Raghavan, "Present at the Creation: India, the Global Economy, and the Bretton Woods Conference," *Journal of World History* 29, no. 1 (2018): 65–94; M. Sherwood, "'There's No New Deal for the Blackman in San Francisco': African Attempts to Influence the Founding Conference of the United Nations, April–July, 1945," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 29, no. 1 (1996): 71–96; A. Williams, "France and the Origins of the United Nations, 1944–1945: 'Si La France ne compte plus, qu'on nous le dise'," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 28, no. 2 (2017): 215–34; S. C. Schlesinger, *Act of Creation: The Founding of the United Nations* (New York: Basic Books, 2004); D. Plesch, *America, Hitler and the UN: How the Allies Won World War II and Forged a Peace* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010); E. Borgwardt, *A New Deal for the World: America's Vision for Human Rights* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005); E. S. MacKinnon, "Declaration as Disavowal: The Politics of Race and Empire in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights," *Political Theory* 47, no. 1 (2019): 57–81; O. Hathaway and S. Shapiro, *The Internationalists: And Their Plan to Outlaw War* (London: Penguin, 2017).

factions within the UN, these scholars have drawn attention to the organisation as a principal stage for diplomatic inter-state interaction during the twentieth century and emphasised the organisation's human rights credentials.¹¹ This article takes a different tack, in line with a second body of literature, which focuses on the field and operational practices of assistance during the processes of decolonisation. This strand of historiography emphasises the individual decision-making of UN staff, such as international civil servants, on shaping sovereignty norms and state-building discourse during decolonisation.¹² Their works forge a more complicated understanding of how international staff shaped post-colonial nationalism from the field in often unexpected ways, such as through international development projects and political consultation. By tracing neglected or obscured sources of power within UN operations and revealing who directed the technical, operational and political policies of the organisation, this article similarly draws attention to the conflicting practices within the organisation's bureaucracy as mid-level and headquarters staff attempted to repair the UN's position in the international community through field-based activities.

The invention of UN peacekeeping missions transformed the international organisation from a functionally limited forum for inter-governmental debate into an important military and diplomatic agent in the field, and as such it played a constitutive role in shaping the post-colonial international order. This article highlights a paradox in UN field practices and its functional direction: post-ONUC, UN staff were fundamentally reactive, attuned to issues of reputation and the urgent operational demands of the mission. But, this myopic focus on *ad hoc* responses to the immediate situation provided important, wide-ranging consequences to the future of peacekeeping. By examining the UN leadership's decision-making whilst feeling 'under threat', this article highlights the moment that organisational leadership reckoned with the incompatibility of the principle of host-state consent and dynamic mediatory functions in the field.

The geopolitical conditions surrounding the UN's intervention

The ONUC mission attracted international criticism and controversy throughout its operations from 1960–1964, damaging the UN's reputation (particularly with Afro-Asian nations) and spiralling into a financial crisis for the organisation. In November 1960, the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organisation (AAPSO) created a fund to counteract post-colonial nations' economic dependence on the UN and ensure autonomy from the organisation.¹³ Katherine McGregor and Vanessa Hearman have argued that this fund was set up 'because after the events of Congo [Afro-Asian nations] no longer trusted the UN'.¹⁴ The kidnap and murder of Patrice Lumumba and two of his colleagues by Katangan leadership and CIA officers in February 1961¹⁵ further fuelled distrust in Afro-Asian nations and prompted international riots and

¹¹J. Eckel, *The Ambivalence of Good: Human Rights in International Politics Since the 1940s* (Oxford: OUP, 2019), 136; S. Moyn, "Imperialism, Self-Determination, and the rise of Human Rights," in *The Human Rights Revolution: An International History*, eds. A. Iriye, P. Goedde and W. I. Hitchcock (Oxford: OUP, 2012); M. Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2009).

¹²G. Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015); M. Terretta, "We Had Been Fooled into Thinking that the UN Watches over the Entire World: Human Rights, UN Trust Territories, and Africa's Decolonization," *Human Rights Quarterly* 34, no. 2 (2012): 329–60; E. Muschik, "Managing the World: The United Nations, Decolonisation and the Strange Triumph of State Sovereignty in the 1950s and 1960s," *Journal of Global History* 12, no. 1 (2018): 121–44; G. F. Sinclair, *To Reform the World: International Organisations and the Making of Modern States* (Oxford: OUP, 2017); A. O'Malley, *The Diplomacy of Decolonisation* (Manchester: MUP, 2018).

¹³K. McGregor and V. Hearman, "Challenging the Lifeline of Imperialism: Reassessing Afro-Asian Solidarity and Related Activism in the Decade 1955–1965," in *Bandung, Global History, and International Law: Critical Pasts and Pending Futures*, eds. L. Eslava, M. Fakhri, and V. Nesiah (Cambridge: CUP, 2017), 171.

¹⁴McGregor and Hearman, "Challenging the Lifeline," 171.

¹⁵For more detail on the actors involved in the assassination of Lumumba, see L. de Witte, *The Assassination of Lumumba* (London: Verso, 2001).

protests against the ONUC mission. Outside the UN building in New York and across European cities, demonstrators blamed UN leadership for failing to protect the Congolese Prime Minister.¹⁶ In February 1961, the Security Council authorised the expansion of ONUC's military functions in Congo and, by September, the mission leadership had launched Operation Morthor (Hindi for 'smash') to eliminate mercenaries from the southern region.¹⁷ However, the violence swiftly escalated into open warfare once the ONUC troops seized control of Elizabethville, and Hammarskjöld decided to personally mediate the situation.¹⁸ As Hammarskjöld travelled to visit Tshombe in neutral territory, his plane was shot down by a Belgian mercenary near Ndola, Northern Rhodesia, on 18 September 1961.¹⁹ The resulting shock and fallout within the UN was felt on the ground within the ONUC bureaucracy as the ONUC troops struggled to contain the violence in Katanga, threatening the stability of the nation and revealing the impotence of the mission. Hammarskjöld's death brought further instability to the organisation and attracted greater international scrutiny to UN peacekeeping practices and military presence in Congo; member states no longer trusted mission staff to make the 'correct' decisions or saw them as experts in conflict response.

The Security Council's appointment of U Thant in November 1961 prompted a shift in ONUC's approach from defensive to offensive and the mission expanded its military functions once more, suggesting that Thant would be more reactive to the demands of the Afro-Asian bloc than Hammarskjöld had been. However, from December 1961, the expense of the mission in Congo became a source of criticism from multiple member states, in particular the United States, as they criticised Thant for not being able to end the violence in Congo despite the expanded mandate.²⁰

With financial, geopolitical and military pressures mounting in 1962–1963, and the reputations of Thant and the organisation at risk, intervening in another complex civil war with superpower interests was initially low on the secretary-general's agenda.²¹ Although the conflict in Cyprus was fought between the island's two ethno-nationalist communities (Greek- and Turkish-Cypriots), the interests of the Guarantor Powers – Britain, Greece and Turkey – guided the island's political and sovereign future.²² Both communities in Cyprus struggled for independence from British colonialism throughout the 1950s, and a stalemate in the counterinsurgency at the end of the decade led to the creation of the Republic of Cyprus. However, the British government

¹⁶"Riot in gallery halts U.N. debate," *The New York Times*, 16 February 1961; J. Feron, "U.N. takes steps to prevent riots: Guards armed with clubs – arrests to be made in future demonstrations," *The New York Times*, 17 February 1961; "Congo issue stirs rioting in London: Police halt mob's attempt to rush Belgian Embassy in Lumumba protest," *The New York Times*, 20 February 1961.

¹⁷UN Doc., S/4741, S/RES/161, "Security Council resolution 161 (1961) [The Congo Question]," 21 February 1961.

¹⁸D. Halberstam, "U.N. takes Katanga," *The New York Times*, 14 September 1961.

¹⁹Most recent evidence suggests that Hammarskjöld's plane was shot down by a Belgian RAF pilot acting on behalf of a Katangan mercenary group. See E. Graham-Harrison, et al., "Man accused of shooting down UN chief: 'Sometimes you have to do things you don't want to...'," *The Observer*, 12 January 2019.

²⁰T. J. Hamilton, "THE U.N.: Problems Over Goa, Congo and Finances Create New Crisis for World Organization," *The New York Times*, 24 December 1961; T. J. Hamilton, "U.N. Financial Troubles: Some Members' Failure to Pay Share Jeopardizes Future Operations," *The New York Times*, 3 December 1961.

²¹A. Cooke, "UN's debt collector faces hard task: Growing American criticism," *The Guardian*, 6 March 1963; R. Scott, "UN Advance went too far," *The Guardian*, 5 January 1963.

²²This argument has also been put forward in Arie Dubnov and Laura Robson's edited volume which offers a transnational history of partitionism. It situates the experience and interests of the British colonial administration at the centre of the social and political conditions which facilitated post-colonial, sectarian partitions in Ireland, Pakistan and Israel. A. Dubnov and L. Robson, eds., *Partitions: A Transnational History of Twentieth-Century Territorial Separatism* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2019); M. Given, "Maps, Fields, and Boundary Cairns: Demarcation and Resistance in Colonial Cyprus," *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 6, no. 1 (2002): 1–22; E. Bouleti, "Early Years of British Administration in Cyprus: The Rise of Anti-Colonialism in the Ottoman Muslim Community of Cyprus, 1878–1922," *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 4, no. 1 (2015): 70–89.

orchestrated the post-colonial constitutional drafting process and used the transnational negotiations in 1959 as a means of ensuring the retention of their Sovereign Base Areas on the island, which had become strategically significant since loss of the Suez Canal Company in 1956.²³ London and Washington officials regarded British control of the Sovereign Base Areas as essential to the protection of NATO military interests in the Mediterranean region.²⁴ The negotiations produced the London-Zurich Agreements or ‘the Treaties’ and were attended by representatives of Britain, Greece, Turkey and Cypriot communities. These talks were instrumental in outlining the constitutional quotas that would shape the political character of the newly independent nation and which would eventually inspire an outbreak of inter-communal hostilities and violence across Cyprus.

A precarious peace between the Greek- and Turkish-Cypriot communities was achieved during these negotiations in 1960, but with the British administration no longer in power, the communities each conceived of the other as the political obstacle to their sovereign imaginaries: *enosis* (union with Greece) for Greek-Cypriots or *taksim* (partition of the island into Greek and Turkish sides) for Turkish-Cypriots. On 30 November 1963, Archbishop Makarios, leader of the Greek-Cypriot community, publicly expressed his rejection of the new constitutional procedures as he perceived the municipal quotas and tax laws as unfeasible.²⁵ He announced his ‘13 Points’ for the functional and political improvement of the constitution, fracturing the precarious post-independence stability and provoking inter-communal violence. Central to his demands was a denunciation of the governmental quotas afforded to the minority Turkish-Cypriot community within the constitution, prompting evacuation by many within the Turkish-Cypriot community.²⁶ Violence erupted across the country in what soon became known as the ‘Bloody Christmas’ of winter 1963 as Makarios’ ‘13 points’ aggravated dormant prejudices within both communities.²⁷

The outbreak of violence was compounded by postcoloniality and the legacies of counterinsurgency on the island. The memory of British colonial rule and conflict manifested in the strategies that Greek-Cypriot forces used against Turkish-Cypriot citizens. In December 1963, Greek-Cypriot police rounded up hundreds of Turkish-Cypriot civilians and held them hostage in the same detention camps that the British had used five years earlier to hold Greek-Cypriot resistance fighters.²⁸ Turkish-Cypriot paramilitary groups were comparatively ill-resourced and were unable to defend their community and places of worship from desecration.²⁹ Misinformation and paranoia about the political intentions of each community spread between regions, and paramilitary clashes stretched to coastal provinces, causing displacement in the Turkish-Cypriot community and creating a humanitarian crisis.³⁰ International Committee of the Red Cross relief trucks began to distribute emergency food supplies and kerosene in January 1964 as Turkish-Cypriot refugees travelled to Nicosia, the capital city, to escape the violence in the villages and seek shelter.³¹

²³R. Holland, *Britain and the Revolt in Cyprus 1954–1959* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 330–31.

²⁴C. Nicolet, “The Development of US Plans for the Resolution of the Cyprus Conflict in 1964: ‘The Limits of American Power,’” *Cold War History* 3, no. 1 (2002): 95–126.

²⁵US Department of State, “293. Telegram From the Embassy in Cyprus to the Department of State,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963, Volume XVI*, Eastern Europe; Cyprus; Greece; Turkey, Nicosia, 4 November 1963.

²⁶Y. Ronen, *Transition from Illegal Regimes under International Law* (Cambridge: CUP, 2011), 62

²⁷C. Galatariotou, “Truth, Memory and the Cypriot Journey towards a New Past,” in *Cyprus and the Politics of Memory: History, Community and Conflict*, eds. R. Byrant and Y. Papadakis (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012), 249.

²⁸“Cyprus Violence Goes on as Isle Unifies Forces,” *The Washington Post*, 26 December 1963.

²⁹“Turk Cyprus Shrine Damaged by Bomb; Tension Runs High,” *The Washington Post*, 24 January 1964.

³⁰U. Keser, “Bloody Christmas of 1963 in Cyprus in the Light of American Documents,” *Journal of Modern Turkish History Studies* XIII, no. 26 (2013): 265–6.

³¹L. Fellows, “New Cyprus Tension Imperils Reopening of Roads,” *The New York Times*, 9 January 1964.

Although UN member states had discussed concerns about the colonial instability and inter-communal violence of Cyprus on and off throughout the 1950s, it was not until the bloodshed in December 1963 that the island became the focus of global attention.³² In a crowded diplomatic arena, there were multiple inter-governmental forums with international conflict response functions, meaning that the Guarantor Parties and Cypriot leadership could ‘shop around’ for the organisation where they believed their political position would be best received. Makarios sought to diversify the diplomatic actors involved in the international response to prevent the Guarantor Powers – Britain, Greece and Turkey – from controlling the direction of the negotiations; a fear connected to Greek-Cypriot political upset following the London-Zurich Treaties.³³ Makarios resisted persistent Anglo-American proposals for a NATO-led peacekeeping mission and demanded that the UN Security Council authorises a peacekeeping force.³⁴ Due to his networking at the Bandung Conference in 1955 and Turkey’s perceived Western alliances, he was confident in the support of the Afro-Asian bloc and the Soviet-bloc.³⁵ Makarios insisted that the UN Security Council was the ‘only appropriate international organ for the purpose’ and the greatest protection a ‘small country’ could acquire ‘in the light of the various dangers which are involved in the presence of an international force’.³⁶ The Turkish government was initially hesitant about this solution as it had fewer allies in the UN than in NATO due to being a signatory to the Baghdad Treaty.³⁷ However, the successful authorisation of the UN peacekeeping mission in the Security Council resulted from a rare unanimous vote as member states cited their concerns about the global ramifications of the Cyprus conflict if not contained.³⁸

The innovation of Tuomioja’s appointment

Previous UN pursuits in formal mediation had been led exclusively by the secretary-general or those within the UN Secretariat inner circle based in the New York headquarters.³⁹ Following the perceived success of then-secretary-general Dag Hammarskjöld in releasing eleven kidnapped American B-29 pilots during the Korean War,⁴⁰ the motto ‘let Dag do it’ or ‘leave it to Dag’

³²E. Johnson, “Britain and the Cyprus problem at the United Nations, 1954–58,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 28, no. 3 (2000): 113–30; E. Johnson, “Keeping Cyprus off the agenda: British and American relations at the United Nations, 1954–58,” *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 11, no. 3 (2000): 227–55; S. G. Xydis, *Cyprus: Conflict and Conciliation, 1954–1958* (Columbus: Ohio University Press, 1967); S. G. Xydis, “The UN General Assembly as an instrument of Greek policy: Cyprus, 1954–58,” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 12, no. 2 (1968): 141–58; D. Markides, “Britain’s ‘new look’ policy for Cyprus and the Makarios-Harding talks, January 1955–March 1956,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 23, no. 3 (1995): 479–502; H. Faustmann, “The UN and the Internationalization of the Cyprus Conflict, 1949–58,” in *The Work of the UN in Cyprus: Promoting Peace and Development*, eds. O. Richmond and J. Ker Lindsay (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001).

³³J. A. Stegenga, *The United Nations Force in Cyprus* (Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1968), 57–8; C. Dodd, *The History and Politics of the Cyprus Conflict* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 45.

³⁴J. Ker-Lindsay, *Britain and the Cyprus Crisis* (Berkeley: Bibliopolis, 2004), 53–65.

³⁵J. Ker-Lindsay, “Europe’s Eastern Outpost: The Republic of Cyprus and the Middle East,” *The Round Table* 97, no. 397 (2008): 537.

³⁶UN Doc., S/PV.1095, “Security Council official records, 19th year, 1095th meeting, 18 February 1964,” 22, paras. 124 and 126.

³⁷Markides, “Britain’s ‘new look’ policy for Cyprus and the Makarios-Harding talks,” 482.

³⁸A. James, *Keeping the Peace in the Cyprus Crisis of 1963–64* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 41.

³⁹The one exception to this was Count Folke Bernadotte who was UN mediator in Palestine during the UNTSO peacekeeping mission in accordance with UN resolution 186 of 14 May 1948. He was assassinated in 1948 and replaced by Secretariat official, Dr. Ralph Bunche, UN Doc., S/RES/57, “57 (1948). Resolution of 18 September 1948”.

⁴⁰Brian Urqhart’s description of the crisis places Hammarskjöld’s diplomatic weight as the primary reason for the successful release: “In Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai, Hammarskjöld was dealing with a fellow intellectual. In an epic negotiation over the six following months, first the four fighter pilots were released. The crew of a B-29, with much intelligence equipment on board the plane, took longer, but on Hammarskjöld’s fiftieth birthday, at a remote fishing village in southern Sweden, he received Zhou’s telegram. The eleven B-29 crew members were on their way out of China and the

became popular parlance within the international community to indicate confidence in his personal mediatory skills.⁴¹ Similarly, U Thant was a key mediatory figure in negotiations between Washington and Moscow during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, according prestige to the secretary-general from within the US State Department.⁴² Therefore, before UNFICYP, UN mediation efforts were highly dependent on the popular personality, international respect and professional weight of the person leading the negotiations. The UN secretary-general's rank as the Head of the UN Secretariat offered significant political and diplomatic authority, despite the instability of the organisation, a valuable tool in international mediation. As the military functions of the organisation expanded, the UN leadership invested in the development of the organisation's field-based diplomatic expertise. In 1964, Thant could not afford to devote himself to complex negotiations requiring extensive consultations in several countries. Recognising that the UNFICYP military operations and mediatory activities could work together to produce a peaceful settlement,⁴³ the secretary-general saw the activities of the UN mediator as integral to the UNFICYP mandate, to 'seek out a durable solution' to the Cyprus question, and his plans to broaden peacekeeping practices to include international diplomacy.⁴⁴

The designation of a diplomat whose role was solely to focus on the mediation of the conflict was, therefore, an innovation for the Cyprus mission. It divorced mediatory processes from the political weight available to a secretary-general or inner circle diplomat, thus, requiring greater focus on the negotiations producing solutions in and of themselves. Yet, finding an adequate mediator proved tricky. Thant first looked within the UN Secretariat. Initially, Thant suggested his colleague Jose Rolz-Bennett, a senior-ranked UN Secretariat civil servant, in March 1964.⁴⁵ However, Rolz-Bennett was swiftly rejected by the Turkish government due to Turkish officials' perception of his unfamiliarity with the region and lack of qualification for the task.⁴⁶ Turkey's veto put Thant under pressure. He struggled to find a mediator acceptable to all the parties who would also refrain from 'prima donna' behaviour.⁴⁷ Although Thant had intimated that he was hoping to have close oversight of the mediation process, Anglo-American diplomats expressed concern, both to him and each other, and reminded him to avoid too great an involvement in this 'controversial and time-consuming assignment'.⁴⁸ Reacting to the time pressure presented by the emergency on the ground, Thant shifted his hiring practices to search externally to the New York headquarters inner circle.⁴⁹

By examining the biographical details and information relating to UN staffing and recruitment selections, organisational biases and political intentions can be better understood. The first UN mediator who was approved and assigned the role in March 1964 was Finnish banker, politician and international diplomat Sakari Tuomioja.⁵⁰ This appointment was praised by Makarios who

Chinese government sent its best wishes on Hammarskjöld's fiftieth birthday." B. Urqhart, "The Evolution of the Secretary-General," in *Secretary or General: The UN Secretary-General in World Politics*, ed. S. Chesterman (Cambridge: CUP, 2007), 20.

⁴¹R. Lipsey, *Hammarskjöld: A Life* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013), 308.

⁴²O'Malley, *The Diplomacy of Decolonisation*, 148.

⁴³UNA, S-0869-0003-04-00001, "General Directive No 1 – 1964, from the Secretary-General to General Gyani," 27 March 1964.

⁴⁴UN Doc., S/5575, "The Cyprus Question: 186 (1964). Resolution of 4 March 1964," 2.

⁴⁵UNA, S-0079-0007-10, "CYE 26 Galo Plaza I - Draft of Section of Report to the Security Council on Question of Mediator," 11 March 1964.

⁴⁶"Turks Reject U. N. Mediator," *The New York Times*, 10 March 1964.

⁴⁷US Department of State, "479. Telegram From the Mission to the United Nations to the Department of State," *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Vol. XXXIII, Organization and Management of Foreign Policy*; United Nations, 5 March 1964.

⁴⁸US Department of State, "479. Telegram."

⁴⁹S. P. Brewer, "U.N. Is Assured on Force To Keep Peace in Cyprus: Finland, Ireland and Sweden Confirm Commitment on Troops," *The New York Times*, 15 March 1964.

⁵⁰UN Doc., S/5625, "Report by the Secretary-General on the Organisation and Operation of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus," 26 March 1964.

emphasised the importance of Tuomioja's appointment as a non-state actor, rebuffing the US State Department's attempts to nominate a 'leading American' as an assistant to the mediator.⁵¹ Following an unsuccessful presidential bid in Finland in 1956, Tuomioja turned to leadership positions within UN commissions and a 'trouble-shooting' mission to Laos in 1959 before returning to the Finnish Government to accept a series of international posts for the Foreign Ministry until 1962.⁵² His reputation within the UN as chair of the Laos Economic Commission and an experienced arbitrator qualified him, in Thant's eyes, for the mediator role in Cyprus.⁵³ Crucially, as a Finnish national, Tuomioja's appointment did not rouse any superpower objections. Once appointed, Tuomioja focused on the international scope, interests and ramifications of the conflict in Cyprus and the geopolitical impact of an expanded conflict in the Mediterranean. He organised talks with Turkish, Greek and British representatives and, therefore, legitimised the continued involvement of these Guarantor powers in the future sovereign character of Cyprus. During these meetings, he began drafting reports to the secretary-general, covering details of his mediatory activities on the island and his preliminary recommendations for conflict resolution. These reports would then be published as a Security Council document, demonstrating to the member states the multifaceted utility of peacekeeping missions and the diplomatic expertise of UN field-based personnel.

Examining the mediatory processes during UNFICYP helps to reveal the voices unheeded, unacknowledged in reports or uninvited entirely during these talks and, vitally, provides insight into how Tuomioja hierarchised the value of the state representatives involved in the inter-communal crisis. Although undertaking official and unofficial discussions with representatives and individual citizens of Cyprus, Tuomioja's mediatory strategy concentrated on facilitating negotiations between the 'three external governments [Britain, Greece, and Turkey] which have been directly concerned with the problem of Cyprus'.⁵⁴ Basing himself in Nicosia, Cyprus from 2 April 1964 until the end of May, Tuomioja spent a large portion of that time travelling to Ankara, Athens and London, revealing where he believed a settlement would be meaningfully sought. Following preliminary visits in Ankara on 17–18 April and 4 June, Athens on 26–27 April and 3 June and London on 30 April, 4 May and 12 June, he arranged for representatives of these three governments to meet in the European Office of the UN in a series of intensive discussions, referred to internally as the 'Geneva talks', beginning on 5 July 1964.⁵⁵ Tuomioja recorded in his mediator report to Thant that the attendance of representatives from Greek- and Turkish-Cypriot communities would only be arranged 'as and when required', further exposing his belief that only an external solution to the crisis would be worth pursuing and entrenching the disconnection of the Cypriot population from their political future.⁵⁶ However, the Cypriot leadership were willing and able to attend the 'Geneva talks'. On 17 July 1964, Spyros Kyprianou, Minister for Foreign Affairs for the Cyprus government, attended the Palais de Nations in Geneva to meet privately with Tuomioja.⁵⁷ The mediator's prioritisation of the Guarantor Powers – Britain, Greece and Turkey – was publicised in the UNFICYP magazine, *The Blue Beret*, 'Having familiarised himself with the situation in Cyprus he judged it useful at this stage to concentrate, in meetings in Geneva, on the views of the three [external] governments'.⁵⁸ When discussing the arrangements for the 'Geneva talks' with the US State Department on 26 June 1964, Tuomioja commented that, although he accepted that the Cypriot representatives

⁵¹W. G. Blair, "Cyprus bars idea of a new advisor: Makarios's Stand Rules Out U.S. Offer to Assist U.N.," *The New York Times*, 2 July 1964.

⁵²"Mediator for Cyprus."

⁵³"Mediator for Cyprus: Sakari Severi Tuomioja," *The New York Times*, 26 March 1964.

⁵⁴UNA, S-0870-00001-01-0001, "Draft Report to the Secretary-General by the United Nations Mediator on Cyprus," 73/74.

⁵⁵UNA, "Draft Report," 74/75.

⁵⁶UNA, "Draft Report," 74/75.

⁵⁷UN Information Office, "Mediator Talks with Kyprianou," *The Blue Beret: UNFICYP Edition*, 18 August 1964, 1.

⁵⁸UN Information Office, "Cyprus and its Mediator," *The Blue Beret: UNFICYP Edition*, 21 July 1964, 3.

should not attend these talks, they could ‘perhaps be available somewhere nearby’ to avoid accusations of excluding their views from negotiations. The State Department representative noted that, ‘Mr. Tuomioja made clear he regarded this as window dressing at this stage’.⁵⁹ The efforts dedicated to ‘window dressing’ for the ‘Geneva talks’ suggested that Tuomioja had no intention to include Cypriot leadership from either community in negotiations during his period as mediator, but that he recognised the diplomatic value of the pretence.

However, American anti-Soviet foreign policy and suspicions of Tuomioja during these talks resulted in an overt State Department presence and pressure on UN mediatory activities, reminding the UN leadership of the potential for the Cyprus conflict to expand to global proportions. The American representative at the Cyprus talks, Dean Acheson, regarded the mediator suspiciously and described him as ‘a veritable phantom Finn’ due to his constant travelling from capital city to capital city.⁶⁰ Acheson devoted attention to assessing various plans for a political solution to the crisis that would disadvantage the Soviet Union, regardless of the subsequent destabilisation of the region. All diplomatic efforts exerted by the US government during this ‘crucial’ decade were concentrated on the macro achievement of containing the Communist threat through micro-managing political relationships in fragile regions across the globe.⁶¹ Telegrams from the American Embassy in Athens to the State Department in Washington asserted that Tuomioja was adopting a pro-Greek approach to the Cyprus dispute, stopping short of encouraging complete *enosis*.⁶² This belief was also promoted in a CIA Briefing to the US President, Lyndon B. Johnson, encouraging a sceptical attitude towards Tuomioja’s ‘quasi-federal’ plans for the island.⁶³ The US government’s scepticism was especially glaring in appraisal of the mediator’s proposed arrangement for Turkish-Cypriots whose territorial autonomy would be limited to ‘only five or six regions’.⁶⁴ In other reports, American diplomat Henry Labouisse indicated that the US Mission to the UN, then led by Ambassador Adlai Stevenson II, had criticised Tuomioja’s partiality. Labouisse argued that ‘a personal opinion favouring one extreme or the other . . . could only serve to cause trouble at this juncture’.⁶⁵

US efforts to police the UN mediator indicated a growing fear in the expansion of a non-state actor’s political agency through the performance of mediation and, thus, cause a reduction of influence for the American government. The US diplomats argued that the impartial ‘performance’ of the UN mediator was crucial for successful negotiations; the mediator would balance the other antagonistic positions and convey an active, yet not hostile, momentum to the discussions that would be suspicious from a state, especially superpower, representative. The American representatives were quick to remind the UN mediator that public knowledge of his partiality towards a Greek-Cypriot majority form of federalism would damage the negotiating process, despite US mediator Dean Acheson’s ‘Acheson Plan’ encouraging a not dissimilar solution to Tuomioja.⁶⁶ However, US officials’ expectations of a position of ‘impartiality’ in such negotiations of political settlement and territorial sovereignty were incompatible with how the UN mediator conceived of his role: an active negotiator, rather than a passive facilitator.

⁵⁹US Department of State, “76. Memorandum of Conversation,” Ball Papers: Lot 74 D 272N, 26 June 1964.

⁶⁰US Department of State, “106. Telegram from the Mission in Geneva to the Department of State (Repeated to Ankara and Athens),” Central Files, POL 23-8 CYP, 7 August 1964,

⁶¹D. B. Kunz, ed., *The Diplomacy of the Crucial Decade: American Foreign Relations During the 1960s* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1994).

⁶²US Department of State, “Telegram From the Embassy in Greece to the Department of State,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Vol. XVI*, Cyprus; Greece; Turkey, 8 June 1964.

⁶³US, CIA, “Central Intelligence Briefing,” 9 May 1964, accessed July 18, 2019, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP79T00975A007600450001-8.pdf>

⁶⁴US, CIA, “Central Intelligence Briefing.”

⁶⁵US Department of State, “Telegram From the Embassy in Greece to the Department of State,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968, Vol. XVI*, Cyprus; Greece; Turkey, 8 June 1964.

⁶⁶“Trip to Three Capitals, Focus of Optimism, Canceled – Acheson Presses Task,” *The New York Times*, 17 August 1964.

Unexpectedly, in the midst of the ‘Geneva talks’ and drafting his report for the Security Council, Tuomioja collapsed from a stroke.⁶⁷ His surviving analysis of the talks is absent in his posthumous report to the secretary-general, with the sentence ‘Paragraph to be inserted concerning outcome of the Geneva talks’ acting as a stopgap in his drafted report.⁶⁸ However, his drafted recommendations clearly suggest that any amendments to the Cypriot constitution could only be enacted ‘with respect for the international obligations . . . and in conformity with the principles governing the procedure established by the constitution’.⁶⁹ In simpler terms, he suggested that the consent of the three external governments, whom he had invited to Geneva, should remain integral to any sovereign configuration of the island. US records indicate that immediately following Tuomioja’s collapse, Acheson attempted to assume a more authoritative position in Geneva, despite Makarios rejecting his eponymous plan on 13 August.⁷⁰ Acheson stepped in and served as ‘principal go-between’ for the Turkish and Greek representatives until the ‘Geneva talks’ concluded on 1 September 1964.⁷¹ Although Tuomioja’s passing was reported in *The Blue Beret* as a ‘cruel reverse’ to what had appeared to be a ‘ray of hope’ in the Cyprus conflict,⁷² his *The New York Times* obituary recorded his non-state ‘presence’ as his contribution to the talks rather than his unique ability as a mediator, yet even his presence at talks was reportedly inconsistent.⁷³ Acheson took advantage of Tuomioja’s death and briefly usurped the UN’s position in the Cyprus negotiations, feeding into broader organisational anxieties and threatening the status of the UNFICYP mediator. As Thant hastened to recruit a new UN mediator, he was anxious to ensure that the organisation swiftly replaced its principal presence on the ground so as to defend the UN’s status within the conflict and restore its reputation within the international community.

The ‘Plaza moment’

Although Thant hoped for a smooth transition from Tuomioja’s interrupted negotiations, the new UN mediator was determined to bring his own perspective and experience to the role. It was during this period of institutional anxiety and vulnerability that Galo Plaza was appointed the new UN mediator for UNFICYP on 16 September 1964. Following Tuomioja’s death in September 1964, Thant understood the importance of retaining the negotiatory momentum established in Geneva and immediately obtained a replacement mediator who would be acceptable to the Cypriot government as well as the three Guarantor Powers.⁷⁴ He opted for Plaza, Ex-Ecuadorian President and polymath. This choice was considered unsurprising by *The New York Times* due to Plaza’s political experience, in addition to his previous employment by the UN on field-based placements to Congo, Lebanon and Cyprus.⁷⁵ At the time of his promotion, Plaza was special representative to the secretary-general for UNFICYP and was thus familiar not

⁶⁷Tuomioja’s mediator’s report was compiled by his legal and political advisers from his notes after he became ill: UNA, S-0870-0001-01, “Letter from Robert T Miller to U Thant,” 28 August 1964.

⁶⁸UNA, S-0870-00001-01-0001, “Draft Report to the Secretary-General by the United Nations Mediator on Cyprus,” 103.

⁶⁹UNA, S-0870-00001-01-0001, “Second Draft: First Periodic Report to the Secretary-General by the United Nations Mediator in Cyprus – Secret,” 54.

⁷⁰“American Plan for Cyprus ‘unacceptable,’” *Cyprus Mail* 65, no. 6 (13 August 1964), 553.

⁷¹“Spinelli in Geneva Talks,” *The New York Times*, 22 August 1964; T. Szulc, “Acheson to Leave Deadlocked Talk on Cyprus Crisis,” *The New York Times*, 1 September 1964.

⁷²UN Information Office, “Secretary-General’s Press Conference Cyprus,” *The Blue Beret: UNFICYP Edition*, 25 August 1964, 3.

⁷³“Sahari [sic] Tuomioja, U.N. Mediator In’ Cyprus Dispute, Dead at 53,” *The New York Times*, 10 September 1964.

⁷⁴Temporary UN mediator, Pier Spinelli, Director General of the UN Office in Geneva, was appointed for the period between Tuomioja’s withdrawal and Thant’s appointment of a new and approved UN mediator, UNA, S-0869-0001-13-00001; “Spinelli Gets Temporary Post,” *The New York Times*, 19 August 1964.

⁷⁵S. Pope, “Problem for Thant,” *The New York Times*, 18 August 1964; K. Teltsch, “Ecuadorian Given UN Cyprus Role,” *The New York Times*, 12 May 1964.

only with the Cyprus conflict but also the diplomatic burdens of the dual-mandate peacekeeping mission. On accepting the role of UN mediator in Cyprus, Plaza considered himself, an Ecuadorian, to be the correct choice, remarking at a 1964 press conference that, 'as a Latin American he felt he had a special understanding of Mediterranean problems'.⁷⁶ In a quote for *The Blue Beret*, he clarified that this 'special understanding' was because '...he was of Spanish origin and by ancestry a Mediterranean himself' which made it possible, he said, 'not to believe in extreme positions'.⁷⁷

Plaza's mediatory processes contrasted with Tuomioja's strategy as he chose to refocus on Cypriot politicians rather than on the external Guarantor Powers. Plaza built upon his experience and connections from his time as UNFICYP special representative which had given him the opportunity to observe mission operations, meet with belligerent parties and draft reports for the Secretariat from the mission headquarters in Nicosia.⁷⁸ During that period, he was able to introduce himself to Greek- and Turkish-Cypriot leaders and elite community spokespersons, enabling him to begin his role as mediator with a comprehensive understanding of the history, politics and regional geography of the inter-communal conflict.⁷⁹ In contrast to Tuomioja's professional preference to 'mediate in comfort' from Geneva,⁸⁰ Plaza organised for the UN mediator's headquarters to be established in Nicosia alongside the UNFICYP base.⁸¹ He embarked on three complete rounds of consultations with a range of official and unofficial community representatives in Nicosia in addition to meeting with governmental diplomats in Ankara, Athens and London.⁸² Following Tuomioja's death and the transition to a vastly different mediation strategy, international and local reception to Plaza's personality and expertise became critical for UNFICYP to maintain legitimacy and, more concerningly, consent to stay in the field.

During Plaza's final round of talks, predictions of his recommendations began to circulate in Nicosia and the Guarantor Powers, inflaming tensions and building expectations for his final report. Telegrams between the US Department of State and the US Embassy in London in February 1965 revealed concerns regarding what would be suggested in Plaza's report.⁸³ Additionally, the US Secretary of State Dean Rusk encouraged the Embassy in London to prepare a unified Anglo-American front to whatever might be recommended in Plaza's report.⁸⁴ These telegrams also confirmed that both Greek and Turkish governments were similarly anxious about the nature of Plaza's recommendations before the publication of the report.⁸⁵ Newspapers around the world reported on the rumours circulating about the report, building a crescendo of transnational interest awaiting his official recommendations and the governments' responses.⁸⁶

⁷⁶UNA, S-0869-0003-14-00001, "Press Release CYP/110: Secretary-General's Special Representative Returns to Cyprus, 15 August 1964," 104.

⁷⁷UN Information Office, "Galo Plaza Returns to Cyprus," *The Blue Beret: UNFICYP Edition*, 18 August 1964, 3.

⁷⁸UN Doc., S/5671, "Report to the Security Council on the operations of the United Nations Peace-Keeping [sic] Force in Cyprus" 29 April 1964, Annex I, 2, paragraph 4; W. G. Blair, "U.N. Aide Reaches Cyprus," *The New York Times*, 15 May 1964.

⁷⁹W. G. Blair, "U.N.-Patrolled 'Free Zone' To Divide Foes on Cyprus: zone on Cyprus will divide foes," *The New York Times*, 8 July 1964; "Deteriorating Cyprus," *The New York Times*, 20 May 1964.

⁸⁰US Department of State, "Telegram From the Department of State to Secretary of State Rusk, at The Hague," Central Files, POL 27 CYP, 10 May 1964.

⁸¹UN Doc., S/6253, "Report of the United Nations Mediator on Cyprus to the Secretary-General," 26 March 1965, 3.

⁸²UN Doc., S/6253, "Report of the United Nations", 3-5.

⁸³US Department of State, "Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in the United Kingdom," Central Files, POL 27 CYP, 25 February 1965.

⁸⁴US Department of State, "Telegram."

⁸⁵US Department of State, "Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in the United Kingdom," Central Files, POL 27 CYP, 25 February 1965.

⁸⁶"Mr Galo Plaza under attack again," *The Cyprus Mail*, 5 March 1965; "Mediator report said to advice independence," *The Cyprus Mail*, 14 March 1965; A. Jacob, "M. Galo Plaza souhaiterait disposer d'une plus grande liberté de manœuvre pour résoudre le problème de Chypre," *Le Monde*, 4 March 1965; G. Artieri, "Blue Helmet," *Il Tempo*, 4 March 1965.

The mediator's activities, by mixing rounds of local and international negotiations alongside research for his report, reinforced excitement surrounding the unpredictability of his recommendations and encouraged a sense of expectancy in Cyprus. Details of who Plaza spoke to, what was discussed and the location of his negotiations were scrutinised by Anglo-American diplomats for indications of what would be his suggestions for the political settlement of the island. This level of oversight signified the perceived importance of Plaza's report for not only those directly interested in the Cyprus conflict but also for parties anxious about the future politics of a non-state mediator if this experimental position became a more permanent fixture to UN responses to territorial disputes.

At the core of international concerns about the Plaza report was a concern about the mediator's suggestion that the involvement of external Guarantor powers in Cypriot politics should be diluted. Until Plaza, the UN mediation policy towards the conflict was to perpetuate the colonial practice of British or mainland nations' interference in the politics of the territory, rather than to consult with the newly independent population about how it imagined its post-colonial future: 'My first concern,' Plaza argued, 'was to return the scene of mediation to the island of Cyprus'.⁸⁷ Plaza's recommendations stated that the Guarantor Powers – Britain, Turkey and Greece – should no longer be prioritised in the mediatory process and that the political opinions of the Cypriot leadership population should be re-centred in negotiations.⁸⁸ Tuomioja had accepted the London-Zurich Agreement and the 1960 constitution and had used the Guarantor Powers' interests in the island as the foundation for his recommendations before he passed away. Plaza's decision to immediately change tack and announce that, 'the very fact that a Mediator had been appointed was proof that a new solution had to be found', also concerned other state actors, such as the Turkish government, which intended on retaining its interests on the island.⁸⁹ In his report, Plaza's focus on the 'final solution' of the Cyprus Force mission and his rejection of the London-Zurich Agreement in his 1965 report gave him a more radical stance than Tuomioja, threatening established legal and diplomatic ties between the Guarantor powers and the island.⁹⁰

Before Plaza had finished writing his report, Thant developed a diplomatic and security strategy to control the release of the document, indicating that he was wary about a potential surge in violence on the island and in the surrounding region. The stakes of this reputational and military risk to publish publicly in the Security Council, whilst aware of the various state interests centred on the island, demonstrate Thant's willingness to gamble the precarious ceasefire on the island for an attempt to restore the reputational value of the organisation. Following six months of meetings, travelling and negotiations, Plaza's 66-page report finally arrived on Thant's desk on 26 March 1965.⁹¹ Thant instructed the UNFICYP Force Commander, General Thimayya, to take preparatory security measures on the island in order to anticipate any negative local reactions. To facilitate this function, the secretary-general sent the UN special representative and General Thimayya an advance copy of Plaza's report as part of a confidential 'pouch' delivered to Nicosia.⁹² Thant also ensured that the Cypriot leaders and Guarantor Powers received the report over the weekend of the 27 and 28 March 1965,⁹³ anticipating that these governments would require the extra time to construct formal diplomatic responses to the report before it was published as an official Security

⁸⁷UNA, S-0869-0001-10-00001, "Report of the United Nations Mediator on Cyprus to the Secretary-General, 26 March 1965," 38.

⁸⁸UNA, "Report of the United Nations Mediator," 38.

⁸⁹UNA, S-0869-0001-09-00001, "Notes on Galo Plaza Conference, 25 September 1964," 17.

⁹⁰UNA, S/5691, "Report on the organization and operation of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus," 11 May 1964, 1.

⁹¹UN Doc., S/6253, "Report of the United Nations Mediator on Cyprus to the Secretary-General," 26 March 1965.

⁹²UNA, S-0869-0001-10-00001, "Suggested Action for the Transmission of the Mediator's Report," 22 March 1965, 4.

⁹³"Cyprus Mediator Urges Talks Now," *The New York Times*, 28 March 1965.

Council document on 30 March 1965.⁹⁴ Thant also prepared to transmit advance copies of unofficial sections of the report to member states of the Security Council ‘for their confidential information’ on 29 March.⁹⁵ To the published Security Council document, Thant attached an endorsement note but emphasised that Plaza’s report was not meant to be the conclusion to negotiations; Plaza had plans to return to Cyprus in one month’s time to continue consultations and put ‘himself at the disposal of the parties in any way he may usefully serve’.⁹⁶ Short sections of the report were later published in *The Blue Beret* in the 7 April 1965 edition, broadcasting the report to the UNFICYP troops and administrative personnel.⁹⁷ Staggering the release of the Plaza report may have been an attempt by Thant to pre-empt escalatory reactions and to retain control of the information. However, while Thant delayed the public distribution of the report in the Security Council, Athens-based and pro-Greek newspaper, *Eleftheria*, printed extensive details and excerpts from the leaked report on 28 March.⁹⁸ These quotes were swiftly dispatched to the international media, drawing global attention to the reactions of the governments involved and dispelling any deescalating efforts by Thant to stagger its release – and, therefore, responses. These reactions to the Plaza report illustrate the significance of the international organisation in shaping the evolving processes of post-colonial sovereignty and territorial disputes during this era of geopolitical transformation. UN peacekeeping staff’s opinions directly impacted on the political debates of the nation future, making – and remaking – norms and turning international discourse to UN-identified recommendations.

Backlash to Plaza’s report

Wrapped up in the potential of the Plaza report to provide a meaningful solution to the Cyprus conflict were hopes within the UN bureaucracy for a reputational boon. In the aftermath of ONUC, a financial crisis and ongoing member state criticism, those within the UN Secretariat anticipated that Plaza’s recommendations could help to recast the organisation as a locus of diplomatic expertise and reflect well on the UNFICYP mission. Internally, senior UN officials pronounced the report as ‘brilliant’ to *Guardian* reporter Hella Pick.⁹⁹ However, these officials also emphasised that they were aware of the complicated nature of the political context in Cyprus and thus they were reportedly ‘sanguine’ that any of Plaza’s perceived wisdom would be transformed into a practical solution.¹⁰⁰

To the chagrin of the UN Secretariat, the Greek and Turkish governments held opposing responses to the report, provoking further conflict on the island as the two communities were once more divided. Political opinion on the Plaza report became bound with sectarian meaning, and both communities stood polarised on Plaza’s continuation as UNFICYP mediator. The Greek-Cypriot representative Glafcos Clerides, President of the Cypriot Parliamentary House and advisor to Makarios, was the first politician to make an official comment on Plaza’s report, and he reacted positively to the recommendations. In an article in the *Cyprus Mail* on 1 April 1965, Clerides’ is quoted promising to, ‘give careful consideration to the report of the UN

⁹⁴The date of the distribution of the official Security Council report is disputed among scholarship on Cyprus. 30 April 1965 is reported in *The Blue Beret: UNFICYP Edition* as the date that the document was released and so this is the date accepted by the author: UN Information Office, “Mediator recommends early meeting of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities – ‘procedure most likely to produce fruitful results’,” *The Blue Beret: UNFICYP Edition*, 7 April 1965, 4.

⁹⁵UNA, S-0869-0001-10-00001, “Suggested Action for the Transmission of the Mediator’s Report,” 22 March 1965, 4.

⁹⁶UNA, S-0869-0001-10-00001, “Suggested Action for the Transmission of the Mediator’s Report,” 22 March 1965, 4.

⁹⁷UN Information Office, “Mediator recommends early meeting of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities – ‘procedure most likely to produce fruitful results’,” *The Blue Beret: UNFICYP Edition*, 7 April 1965, 4.

⁹⁸“Cyprus Mediator Urges Talks Now,” *The New York Times*, 28 March 1965.

⁹⁹H. Pick, “Two sides urged to meet in Cyprus: Senor Galo Plaza’s report,” *The Guardian*, 31 March 1965.

¹⁰⁰H. Pick, “Two sides.”

Mediator . . .’ and describing it as a ‘bold and welcome’ report.¹⁰¹ The Greek Government concurred, stating that ‘the continuation of Mr Plaza as Mediator would be an essential condition for the solution of the Cyprus problem’.¹⁰² Although the Greek Government complained that the report did not accept enosis as the solution to the conflict, largely politicians in Athens seemed to accept Plaza’s recommendations as a starting point for future negotiations.¹⁰³ In stark contrast, the Turkish Government and Turkish-Cypriot leadership’s public response to the report was to accuse Plaza of abusing of his mediatory jurisdiction and producing a pro-Greek-Cypriot document.¹⁰⁴ Orhan Erlap, Turkish Ambassador and Ambassador to the UN, called for Plaza’s resignation for ‘going beyond [the] terms of reference specified in the 4 March 1964 resolution of the Security Council’.¹⁰⁵ Thant promptly defended Plaza’s report in a message to Turkish Ambassador Erlap,¹⁰⁶ but the damage to Plaza’s reputation was permanent as they pressed Thant to fire the mediator.¹⁰⁷ Turkish-Cypriot representatives echoed Ankara’s rejection of the report. For instance, Fazıl Küçük, Turkish-Cypriot leader and Vice-President, argued that the conflict was mainly related to the political problems between Greece and Turkey, thus rejecting Plaza’s contention that the scene of mediation efforts should be concentrated on the island of Cyprus.¹⁰⁸ Küçük maintained that a lasting solution could only be reached within the context of Greco-Turkish-led negotiations.¹⁰⁹ Later in 1965, Rauf Denktaş, Turkish-Cypriot politician, spoke at the Security Council and described the Plaza report as ‘a shield for the [Greek] ulterior motives’.¹¹⁰

The international response to the dogmatism of the Turkish and Turkish-Cypriot governments was disbelief, especially as Plaza had indicated his hopes to return to the island in a month and revise his initial recommendations in line with national reactions.¹¹¹ NATO allies criticised Turkey for the vehemence of its reaction as many believed that Ankara’s rejection of the report seemed to be a transparent strategic move.¹¹² The US Department of State privately supported the majority of Plaza’s suggestions and internally vented its frustrations with the Turkish government for its response to Plaza’s report, ‘At the moment it is difficult to find any thread of rational strategy in their conduct. The purely negative position they have taken is not good enough’.¹¹³ The State Department’s position, however, was limited, and they concluded that their role should remain to, ‘encourage intensification GOT-GOG [Government of Turkey-Government of Greece] contacts’ and hope for a ‘final solution’ through the state actors involved in the conflict.¹¹⁴ The dispute over the mediatory personnel on the ground provided another opportunity for the

¹⁰¹“Clерides calls for ‘careful thought’: ‘End to wishful thinking’, Cyprus ‘at threshold of momentous decisions,” *Cyprus Mail*, 1 April 1965.

¹⁰²UNA, S-0869-0001-10-00001, “Clipping: *New York Times*, “Turkish Cypriots Cool to UN Plan”, Friday, 2 April 1965, 76.

¹⁰³UN Doc., S/6280, “Letter dated 8 April 1965 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece addressed to the Secretary-General,” 9 April 1965.

¹⁰⁴V. K. Fouskas and A. O. Tackie, *Cyprus: The Post-Imperial Constitution* (London: Pluto Press, 2009), 43; “Turkish Cypriots Cool to UN Plan,” *The New York Times*, 2 April 1965.

¹⁰⁵UNA, S-0869-0002-04-00001, “Letter from Erlap, Turkish Permanent Mission to the UN to U Thant, 31 March 1965,” 10.

¹⁰⁶UN Doc., S/6267, “Exchange of letters between the Permanent Representative of Turkey and the Secretary-General regarding the report of the United Nations Mediator in Cyprus,” 2 April; S. Pope, “Cyprus Mediator Backed by Thant: UN Leader says Turkey’s move against Plaza could wreck settlement hopes,” *The New York Times*, 3 April 1965.

¹⁰⁷UN Doc., S/6279, “Letter dated 3 April 1965 from Dr Fazıl Kuchuk addressed to the Secretary-General,” 9 April 1965.

¹⁰⁸UNA, S-0869-0001-10-00001, “Report of the United Nations Mediator on Cyprus to the Secretary-General, 26 March 1965,” 38.

¹⁰⁹UN Information Office, “U Thant continues to back Plaza,” *The Blue Beret: UNFICYP Edition*, 21 April 1965, 6.

¹¹⁰R. Denktaş, “Speech Two: 5 August 1965,” in *Rauf Denktaş at the United Nations: Speeches on Cyprus*, ed. M. Moran (Huntingdon: Eothen Press, 1997), 142.

¹¹¹UNA, S-0869-0001-10-00001, “Draft letter from the Secretary-General to the parties concerned,” n. d., 4.

¹¹²UNA, S-0869-0001-10-00001, “Clipping: *The Washington Post*, “The UN and Cyprus”, Wednesday, 7 April 1965,” 77.

¹¹³US Department of State, “186. Telegram from the Department of State to Secretary of State Rusk, at Tehran, 6 April 1965,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-68, Volume XVI*, Cyprus, Greece, Turkey.

¹¹⁴US Department of State, “187. Telegram From the Embassy in Greece to the Department of State, 9 April 1965,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-68, Volume XVI*, Cyprus, Greece, Turkey.

Guarantor Powers, in particular the Turkish government, to stymie any political solution to the conflict that had not been orchestrated with its interests in mind.¹¹⁵ The shock of the Turkish government's 'prompt and unexpected rejection of Mr Plaza's report' reverberated around the globe as it appeared to other interested states that this rejection of Plaza would disqualify the mediator from returning to the island and potentially jeopardise the future of the UNFICYP mission.¹¹⁶

The consequences of the Turkish government and Turkish-Cypriot representatives' reaction to the report ricocheted further than the diplomatic circles of NATO as UNFICYP troops reacted to the international response and braced themselves for military repercussions on the ground. In Nicosia, peacekeepers' letters and articles published in the troop magazine, *The Blue Beret*, emphasised their anxieties regarding the ability of Plaza to overcome the criticism of the Turkish-Cypriots and return to his position in Nicosia, threatening unknown consequences for those deployed to the dual-mandate mission.¹¹⁷ The Secretariat leadership had designed the mission to pursue both military and mediatory objectives, conceiving of them working in tandem together to support the settlement of the conflict. Without a functioning UN mediator, how could the UN peacekeeping mission withdraw from the island with a completed mandate?

Thant refused to dismiss Plaza for a report that he had 'found nothing in . . . which could I could consider as going beyond the functions of the Mediator as defined'.¹¹⁸ Despite the controversy, Thant requested that Plaza remain in the mediatory role until the next General Assembly meeting in December,¹¹⁹ although absent from Nicosia, and available to the parties for further consultation if requested.¹²⁰ However, Plaza recognised that continuing as mediator with the perception of unprofessionalism from two of the central parties, Turkey and the Turkish-Cypriot leader, to the conflict would be a Sisyphean task.¹²¹ Plaza's report remained at the centre of debates about the 'Cyprus Question' within the UN deliberative forums for the rest of the year, and it was re-distributed as a General Assembly document in late September 1965 at the request of the UN Permanent Representative of Cyprus, Zenon Rossides.¹²² Once the General Assembly discussions on 18 December 1965 failed to dislodge the Turkish government's position and reveal 'the hidden motivations which stand in the way of any efforts at mediation', Plaza submitted his resignation letter.¹²³ The Greek representatives publicly agreed with Turkey's demand for separate Greco-Turkish talks on the conflict, and Plaza recognised that remaining in the role would ostracise the UN from any future negotiations.¹²⁴

Although Plaza left the role, his period as UN mediator helps to illuminate the influence of mid-level UN peacekeeping staff in impacting on post-colonial discourse and issues of territorial sovereignty despite limited room to manoeuvre. Plaza's personalised mediation strategy of extensive travel and international consultation contributed to a sense of expectation as a political solution appeared possible. He reoriented the geography of international mediation to Nicosia rather than London, Ankara or Geneva, thus using the UN's peacekeeping presence in Cyprus

¹¹⁵In the aftermath of Turkey's rejection of the report, Ankara threatened to invade Cyprus. A dispatch from *The Times* in London to *The New York Times* reported, "In the last few days since Turkey's abrupt rejection of a report submitted by the United Nations Mediator for Cyprus, Galo Plaza Lasso, there has been rising anti-Western feeling in Turkey combined with bitter criticism of Greece. The Turks feel let down by the West over Cyprus, 'Turks' Intervention in Cyprus is Hinted," *The New York Times*, 9 April 1965.

¹¹⁶Greeks will confer on report by Plaza," *The New York Times*, 4 April 1965.

¹¹⁷UN Information Office, "U Thant continues to back Plaza," *The Blue Beret: UNFICYP Edition*, 21 April 1965, 1, 6.

¹¹⁸W. Fulton, "Thant Spurns Turk Plea to Fire Mediator," *Chicago Tribune*, 3 April 1965.

¹¹⁹UNA, S-0869-0001-09-00001, "Letter from U Thant to Mr G Plaza," 16 June 1965, 27.

¹²⁰UN Doc., S/7001, "Report by the Secretary-General on the United Nations Operation in Cyprus," 7 December 1965, 52.

¹²¹G. Plaza, "Interview with President Galo Plaza by Diego Cordovez," *United Nations Digital Library*, 28 March 1984, 6.

¹²²UN Doc., A/6017, "Question of Cyprus: Letter dated 27 September from the Permanent Representative of Cyprus to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General," 27 September 1965.

¹²³UNA, S-0869-0001-09-00001, "Letter from Mr G Plaza to U Thant," 11 March 1966, 30.

¹²⁴"Plaza Resigns UN Post as Mediator in Cyprus," *The New York Times*, 10 January 1966.

to encourage the devolution of diplomatic spaces and to have greater political significance to the population to which the talks relate. Rolz-Bennet wrote a letter to Plaza following the publication of his report indicating the benefit Plaza's efforts on the momentum of a potential solution, stating, 'Your report has dramatised the need and urgency of such negotiations, and by the impact has made, has improved the prospect of bringing them about. In this respect, it has achieved its primary objective of dislodging the Cyprus problem from its "dead centre".'¹²⁵ Recognising the problem of stagnation like many other humanitarian organisations,¹²⁶ the UN leadership was faced with the decision of remaining on the ground and taking on a passive facilitator role or to withdraw their presence and risk the resurgence of violence across the island.¹²⁷

Initially, the role of UN mediator in Cyprus was left open following Plaza's resignation, reflecting the UN Secretariat's lack of direction on the Cyprus Question during the mid-1960s. Michael Harbottle, Chief of Staff for the Cyprus Force mission in 1966-1968, recorded in his 1970 memoir that this period represented a peak in hopelessness for the UNFICYP staff. He commented that, 'On the political side, matters were at an even greater standstill and no glimmer of light was visible; if anything the political scene by the middle of 1965 was probably as gloomy as it could be'.¹²⁸ In February 1966, Thant sent Secretariat official Rolz-Bennett to the Mediterranean region to scope the receptibility of the interested parties in the UN deploying a new mediator. He was also sent to keep the diplomatic channels of communication open with leaders in Cyprus, Ankara and Athens, whilst UNFICYP was still on the ground.¹²⁹ Following these visits, Rolz-Bennett's reported to Thant that, 'the prospects of appointing a new Mediator are very dim, to say the least'.¹³⁰ Harbottle also believed that 'mediation had gone out of the window, at least for the time being, and both Governments of Cyprus and Turkey, for very different reasons, opposed the appointment of a new Mediator'.¹³¹ The damage to the UN's operational reputation was severe and, for the Secretariat inner circle, the immediate concern was regaining the trust of the Cypriot leaders and Guarantor Powers and maintaining UNFICYP activities on the island by refocusing on the military mandate of the mission.

Steps to undo the mistrust between state actors and the UN representatives in Cyprus and rebuild negotiations, shifted the organisation's strategy to re-prioritise the interests of external state representatives in Athens and Ankara. On 2 March 1966, Thant extended the duties of his special representative to UNFICYP, Carlos Bernardes, to include the use of UN 'good offices' in talks with the belligerent parties, thus condensing the full-time UNFICYP mediator's dedicated activities into additional responsibilities for an existing official.¹³² Bernardes' expanded functions maintained space for UN personnel to participate, if in a limited sense, in relevant talks.¹³³ On 9 May 1966, Bernardes visited Ankara and began consultations with the Turkish government and then flew to Athens directly on 12 May to continue his efforts in Athens. Shifting from Plaza's engagement with formal and informal representatives of Greek- and Turkish-Cypriot communities, Bernardes believed that Greco-Turkish talks would result in a resolution to the conflict between the two communities. In response to the demands of the Turkish and Greek governments for separate talks, Bernardes' actions delivered a 'mortal blow' to the surviving suggestions made

¹²⁵UNA, S-0079-0007-10, "CYE 26 Galo Plaza I: Letter to Plaza, 14 April 1965".

¹²⁶F. Terry, *Condemned to Repeat?: The Paradox of Humanitarian Action* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002).

¹²⁷UNA, S-1070-0030-01, "Secretariat survey team to Cyprus: Confidential internal memo – Forthcoming Review by the Secretary-General of the Situation in Cyprus," undated 1969, 6.

¹²⁸Harbottle, *The Impartial Soldier*, 55.

¹²⁹UNA, S-0869-0001-11-00001, "UN Internal Memo, Cyprus Mediation, 2 February 1966," 3.

¹³⁰UNA, S-0869-0001-11-00001, "Cable from Rolz-Bennett to U Thant, Report of Talks in Ankara and Athens on Cyprus," 24 February 1966, 8.

¹³¹Harbottle, *The Impartial Soldier*, 56.

¹³²UN Document, S/7180, "Note by the Secretary-General," 4 March 1966.

¹³³UN Document, S/7180, "Note."

in Plaza's report.¹³⁴ The Turkish government's response to Plaza's report had highlighted the political vulnerability of the UN's presence and participation in conflict resolution. UN mediatory attention refocused on the potential political solutions offered by the mainland state actors rather than those from the Cypriot population, reinstalling the island's political representatives as 'window dressing' for Guarantor Powers' negotiation.

In the years following the 'Plaza moment', UN practices adapted to reassert and legitimise the importance of external state actors in the peace process on the island. A memo recorded by Rolz-Bennett stated, 'These misgivings [about stagnation] have been aggravated by the well-known experience of the Mediator, and more profoundly, by its significance for the general accepted principles of United Nations mediation. The mediation process has been proved capable of being stultified by the particular attitude of a single party to the dispute'.¹³⁵ Therefore, the state and organisational reactions to the 'Plaza moment' dislodged the centrality of UN personnel in Cyprus peace negotiations, transforming the character of the UNFICYP presence on the ground. This moment demonstrated how swiftly a key function of the UN peacekeeping mandate could be immobilised and pacified through state criticism. The same reputational anxiety that motivated Thant to expand the functions of the UN peacekeeping mission also provoked him to reorientate the UN mission's mediatory scope after Plaza's resignation. By 1967, UN mediation activities in Cyprus had devolved from being a proudly central function of the organisation's field-based operations, in collaboration with the 7,000 strong military effort, to a curtailed and side-lined process, an additional duty for an existing mid-ranking official.

Conclusion

This article has argued that state and institutional reactions to UN mediator Plaza's report caused a fundamental shift in the orientation of peacekeeping practices in the field. It has also illustrated the influence of UN peacekeeping staff in making and remaking sovereignty norms as the UN mediator navigated the grey area of political negotiations during an 'impartial' UN peacekeeping mission. The 'Plaza moment' highlighted the incompatibility of the organisation's efforts to simultaneously pursue military *and* diplomatic activities within such a politically complex conflict. As UN officials travelled around Europe to consult and make recommendations with different political leaders, they shaped the post-colonial discourse on Cypriot independence and national identity. Mediators' choices of who to consult, who to exclude and who to invite for 'window dressing' informed international conceptions of the conflict and had political ramifications for the Cypriot population.

By shedding light on the anxieties and priorities held by influential UN figures in the aftermath of the ONUC mission, this article has provided insight into the evolving perceptions and functions of the organisation through peacekeeping missions during the Cold War and the organisational fixation on repairing its reputation through experiments in field-based operations.

In reaction to international criticism and climbing debt post-ONUC, the UN leadership determined that recruiting a mediator for UNFICYP would enhance their efforts to revive their reputational in the field of conflict response. The international politics of the Cold War complicated this intention, and the UN leadership openly acknowledged the complexities of the civil war. By emphasising the stakes of the deployment, UN officials attempted to highlight courage of the organisation to undertake such a task, hoping that the international community would respect the 'do what needs to be done' humanitarian bravado. Thant publicly assessed that UNFICYP personnel were operating in 'the most delicate position that any UN mission has ever experienced, for it is not only in the midst of a bitter civil war, but it is dangerously interposed between the two

¹³⁴'Greco-Turkish talks urged on Cyprus,' *The Guardian*, 13 May 1966.

¹³⁵UNA, S-0079-0007-09, "CYE 25 Aide-memoire – Jose Rolz-Bennett's trip: Draft Aide Memoir," 5 November 1966, 1.

sides of that war'.¹³⁶ However, the expansion of the organisation's mediatory capacity to a dedicated mediator as part of an armed mission made the institution vulnerable to accusations of partiality, threatening the viability of the mission and contravening the organisation's foundational principles.

Interventions made by the US State Department when Tuomioja fell ill spoke to the political significance of expertise in territorial disputes during this transformative era as the mediation marketplace increasingly expanded to include non-state representatives. However, the UN leadership's decision to publicly distribute the Plaza report through the Security Council, rather than through more discreet channels or formal negotiations, made the UN leadership appear naïve to the delicate demands of international diplomacy rather than as a locus of expertise, especially following the reaction of the Turkish government. The decision to dilute the mediation function of the UNFICYP mission exposed the UN leadership's procedural and political vulnerability during this period of institutional fragility and geopolitical insecurity as they desperately sought to secure the UN's position within the international community.

Revisiting the 'Plaza moment' allows for a stronger understanding of how international organisations and, in particular, field-based personnel reinforced nation-state hegemony as a geopolitical formation during a period in which ideas about sovereignty were being renegotiated by a range of older and emerging global powers. Mediatory conceptions of stability, peace and 'successful' political settlement in Cyprus were framed by UN staff's liberal internationalist visions of geopolitics and statehood, at the expense of the political identity of ethnic, religious or communal minority groups and to the advantage of nation-state leadership. Thus, in the aftermath of the Plaza report, UN peacekeepers helped to re-entrench an uneven distribution of sovereignty in post-colonial Cyprus and legitimise hierarchies of power between stronger and weaker, larger and smaller, well-resourced and poorly resourced nations in future negotiations.

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¹³⁶UN Doc., S/5950, "Report by the Secretary-General on the United Nations Operation in Cyprus," 10 September 1964, 63, para. 221.