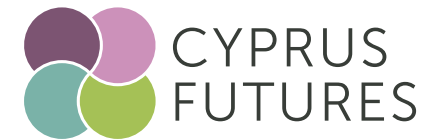


POSSIBLE FUTURES OF CYPRUS

2022

2035



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

POSSIBLE FUTURES OF CYPRUS

2022

2035

The Cyprus Scenarios are imagined stories of the future of Cyprus.

They speak about what *could* happen in the future.



They were created in 2022 by a diverse group of 36 individual Cypriots, who represent a cross-section of Cypriot society.

Introduction

The **Cyprus Futures** scenarios are stories about what could happen in the future – not what *will* happen (forecasts) or what *should* happen (proposals or recommendations). They consider the period from 2022 to 2035 in and around Cyprus, including relevant political, economic, social, cultural, environmental, and international dynamics.

The co-authors of the scenarios are a “Scenario Team” of 36 outstanding individual Cypriots from a wide diversity of perspectives, across sectors, professions, generations, beliefs and political views. Half of them are Turkish Cypriot and half are Greek Cypriot, religious minorities are included, and the group is gender balanced. To develop the scenarios, they volunteered several weeks of their time to work constructively together. They gathered for intense conversation over the course of three workshops, followed by collective writing and re-writing and informal ad hoc gatherings.

The assignment of the Scenario Team was to create stories of the future of Cyprus that would be convincing, taking into consideration the realities of the world today. They were not asked to dream and engage in wishful thinking, but rather to create a set of stories that are plausible. They were also asked to make sure these stories would be relevant to the things that Cypriots are concerned about

today, and at the same time challenging, presenting new perspectives and angles and bringing underlying issues to the surface.

The result is a collective set of scenarios that none of the Scenario Team members could have crafted on their own and to which they have all contributed. Many ideas were tested and some scenarios that reflected individual hopes or preferences failed the test of plausibility. Those scenarios were not included because this particular group could not be convinced among themselves that these stories could actually happen. This does not mean that this set of scenarios is exhaustive or definitive – a different group might have arrived at different scenarios. Readers of this executive summary and the full report are welcome to consider the possibility of other futures as they reflect on the scenarios presented here.

The aim is for these scenarios to be useful in a wide and inclusive strategic conversation in and around Cyprus to address the challenges facing the island. They offer a map of the possible future landscape of Cyprus and a common language to support fresh and informed dialogue. The publication of the scenarios is not the end of the Cyprus Futures conversation, it is intended to be the beginning.

How to read the scenarios

This executive summary provides short descriptions and a comparison of the scenarios. We invite you to read the complete scenario report to be able to immerse yourself fully in each of the four possible futures.

As you read, imagine these futures coming to be. Think of them as a situation in which you might find yourself and which you might need to navigate.

As you read each scenario, consider:

→ Could this happen?

→ If it happened, what impact would it have on me, on the people I care about, on the groups that I am part of, and on Cypriots in general?

→ If it happened, what opportunities could I/we make the most of, and what threats or challenges would I/we face? What options would I/we have?

→ What can I/we do today to prepare for this possible future, to avert it or to help it to come about?

Having read all the scenarios, consider:

→ What other scenarios do I see?

→ What do I see now that I didn't see before?

→ What is my role? How may I influence the direction of the future through my actions today?

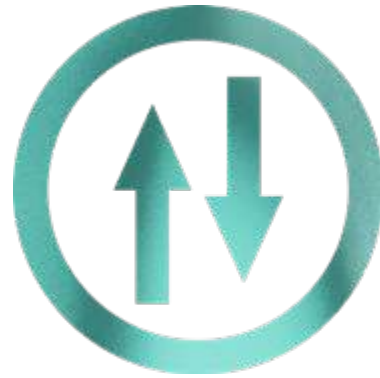
Scenario overview

There are many possible directions in which the future may go for Cyprus. The Scenario Team chose to elaborate four stories that they believe need to be told and understood about what could happen between now and 2035. Each of these scenarios is a separate “world”, a distinct future reality.



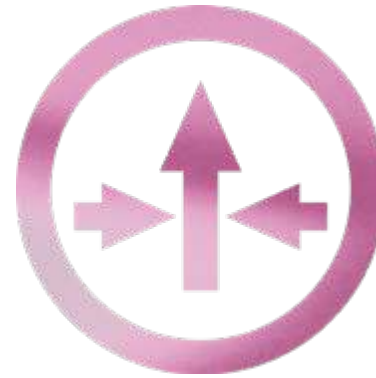
NO WAY

A scenario of stagnation
and inaction



MY WAY

A scenario of divergence
and opposition



THEIR WAY

A scenario of peace
under pressure



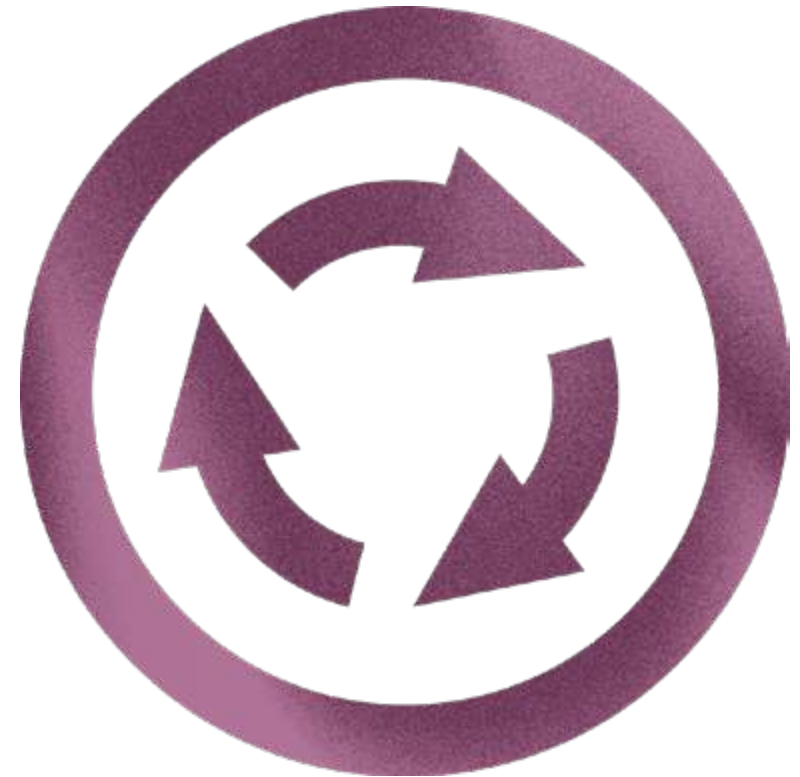
OUR WAY

A scenario of
resilient peace

THE WORLD OF 'NO WAY'

A scenario of stagnation and inaction

In the world of '**No way**,' hope for a better and more uplifting future comes and goes as new negotiations on the Cyprus problem begin and collapse once more. The resulting disappointment and recriminations further deepen divisions between Cyprus' two main communities. The pattern of multiple rounds of failed talks, combined with ongoing competing solution models, maximalist demands and a lack of transformative leadership, impede progress, feed inertia, and divert resources from tackling other challenges affecting daily life. The Turkish Cypriot administration continues to be increasingly dependent on and influenced by Türkiye*, and the northern part of Cyprus functions as a low-regulated zone for Türkiye's economy. For Greek Cypriots, the prospect fades of returning to land or property from which they were displaced in 1974, and attention is mainly focused on security in the context of enhanced presence of Türkiye and increased militarization of the island. Few believe in a renewed peace process, but no one is willing or able to completely give up on it either. As a result, everyone involved in and affected by the Cyprus problem is kept stuck in suspension as *de facto* separation solidifies.



**The scenarios use 'Türkiye' in line with the official name change registered with the United Nations since June 2022.*

Timeline No Way

A scenario of stagnation and inaction

2023

Focusing on survival

Feeling unable to influence what happens in Cyprus at the political level and increasingly worried about the economy, most people on both sides of the island focus their attention on securing their own economic survival.

Competing solution models

Inconclusive discussion takes place in various circles on the island about different solution models, but there are not enough people on either side focusing on any single option to make it happen. The communities lack a common civic, media or linguistic space where they can discuss issues.

2024

Glimmer of hope

The UN explores the prospect of restarting negotiations with the leadership of both sides. Changing conditions in the external environment seem conducive: the EU needs energy security and Türkiye is interested in increasing cooperation with the West and monitoring interactions between Greek Cypriots and the US after the end to the US' arms embargo on the

south. Based on its consultations, the UN determines there are sufficient grounds for the peace process to restart, although significant substantive differences persist between the parties.

2026

Wait and see

The wider Cypriot society is not involved in this new instalment of the peace process. Many express cynicism and doubt. Without information about the talks, anxieties surface and rumours spread.

Déjà vu

The talks collapse after high level events between the leadership are marred by tension and disagreements. At the elite and grassroots level, people are disappointed and blame 'the other side'.

2026–2027

A hardening climate

The two sides try to pick up the pieces and move on with their separate political agendas while positions harden and relationships sour. Bicomunal interaction and trade decreases as nationalist discourse rises in the south and the north.

2027

Increasing adversity

Living conditions across the island deteriorate, as people struggle to cope with rising costs and with increasing water shortages (in the south) and power cuts (in the north).

2027–2029

Slipping standards

Discrepancy grows between the north and the south in terms of health and environmental standards. A decline in collaboration across the Green Line hinders effective action against threats facing the entire island.

Seeking support

Turkish Cypriots increasingly look to Türkiye for support as they do not see any other option. The country's growing influence is observed through the north's growing economic dependence, and felt throughout the administration in the north.

2030

Growing integration

Turkish Cypriots rely almost exclusively on funds coming in from Türkiye, and the Turkish Cypriot leadership explores further economic integration with Türkiye's government. Türkiye's more substantial presence on the island leads to rising security concerns amongst Greek Cypriots. Tensions mount across Cyprus.

2035

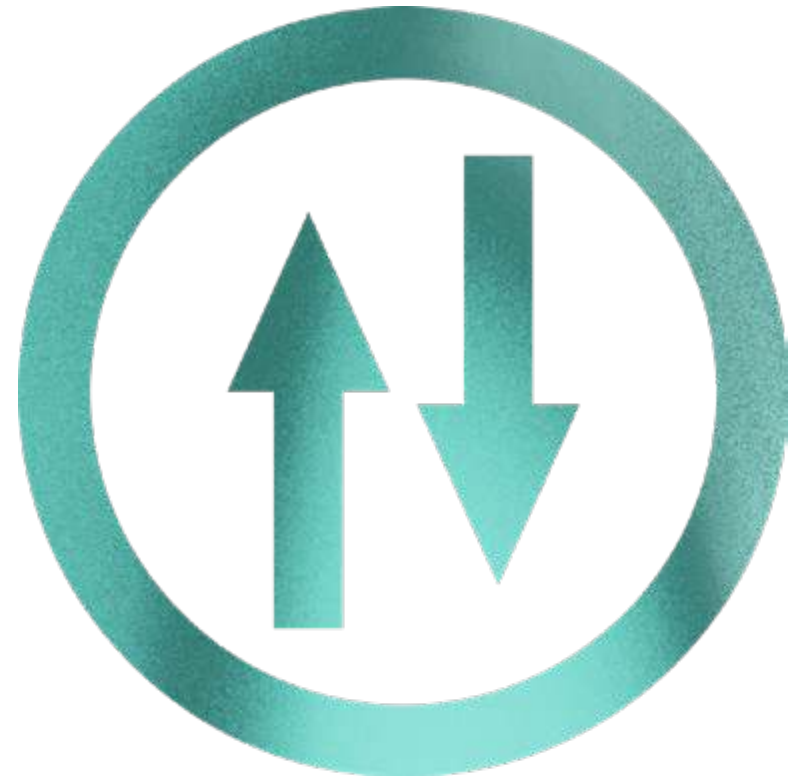
Solidifying division

Interaction between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots is minimal, with barely any trade across the Green Line. Northern Cyprus has become integrated into Türkiye's economy. While fears that Türkiye would fully 'annex' the north have not materialised, the separation between north and south has solidified.

THE WORLD OF 'MY WAY'

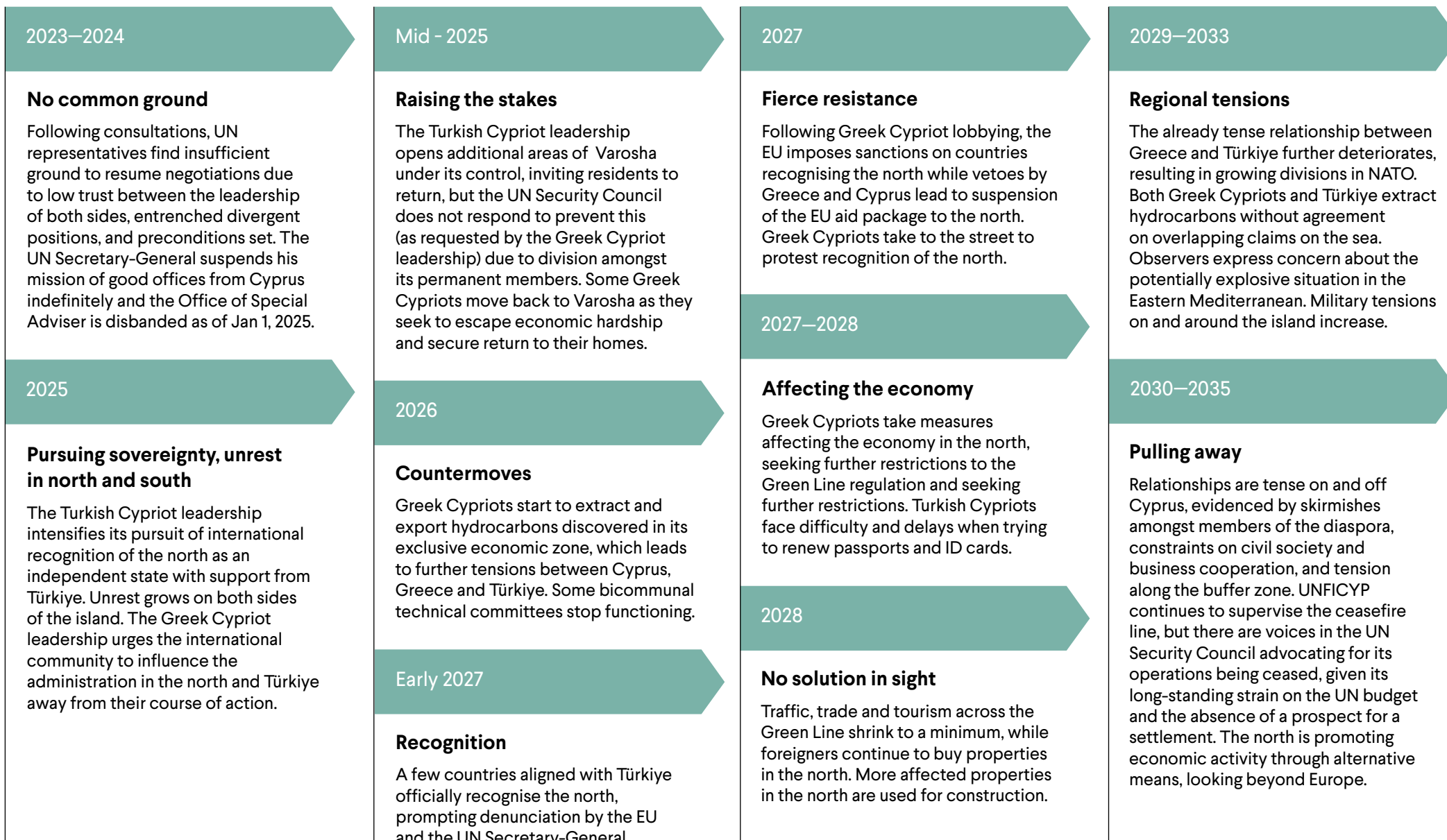
A scenario of divergence and opposition

In the world of **'My way'**, tensions on the island between Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots intensify rapidly as any prospect of a peace process evaporates. The UN SG suspends his mission of good offices from Cyprus indefinitely due to a lack of common ground and willingness to move on the part of both parties. In a context of growing multi-polarity and increasing challenge to Western dominance in global governance, the Turkish Cypriot leadership pursues an active policy of international engagement and recognition of the north as an independent state. This alarms Greek Cypriots greatly and also generates considerable tension within the Turkish Cypriot community. Recognition of the north by a few countries elicits strong reactions, as Greek Cypriots and Greece put up fierce resistance both on the island and outside of it through various measures and their membership of the EU and the UN. This affects the economy in the north and Turkish Cypriots' mobility and highlights their continued isolation from international fora. The impact of these measures is only partially mitigated by foreign investment in the low-regulated north, the benefits of which are unevenly distributed. Regional tensions escalate as Greek Cypriots and Türkiye pursue hydrocarbon extraction without any agreement about overlapping claims in the sea.



Timeline My Way

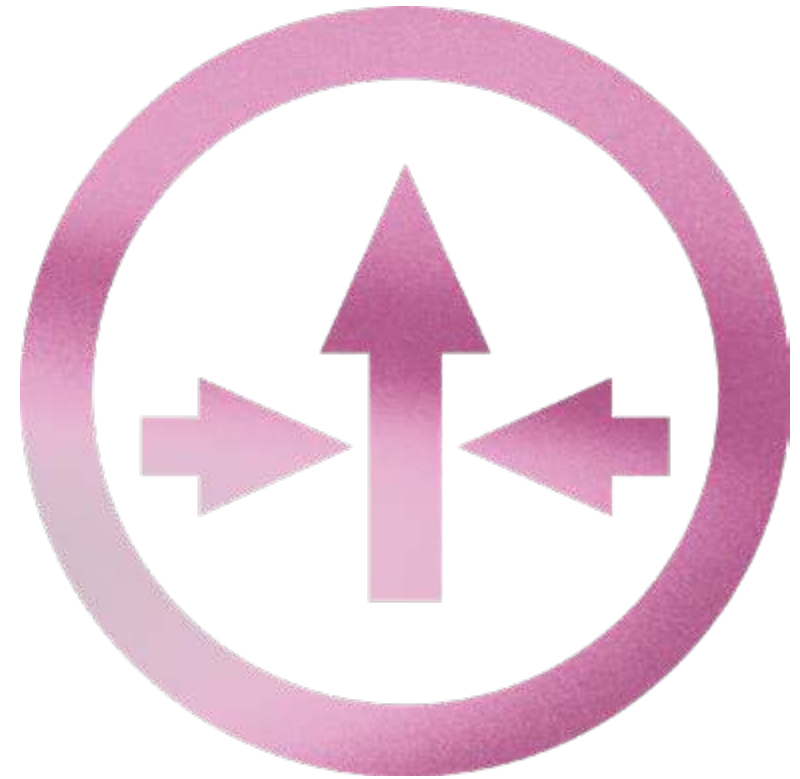
A scenario of divergence and opposition



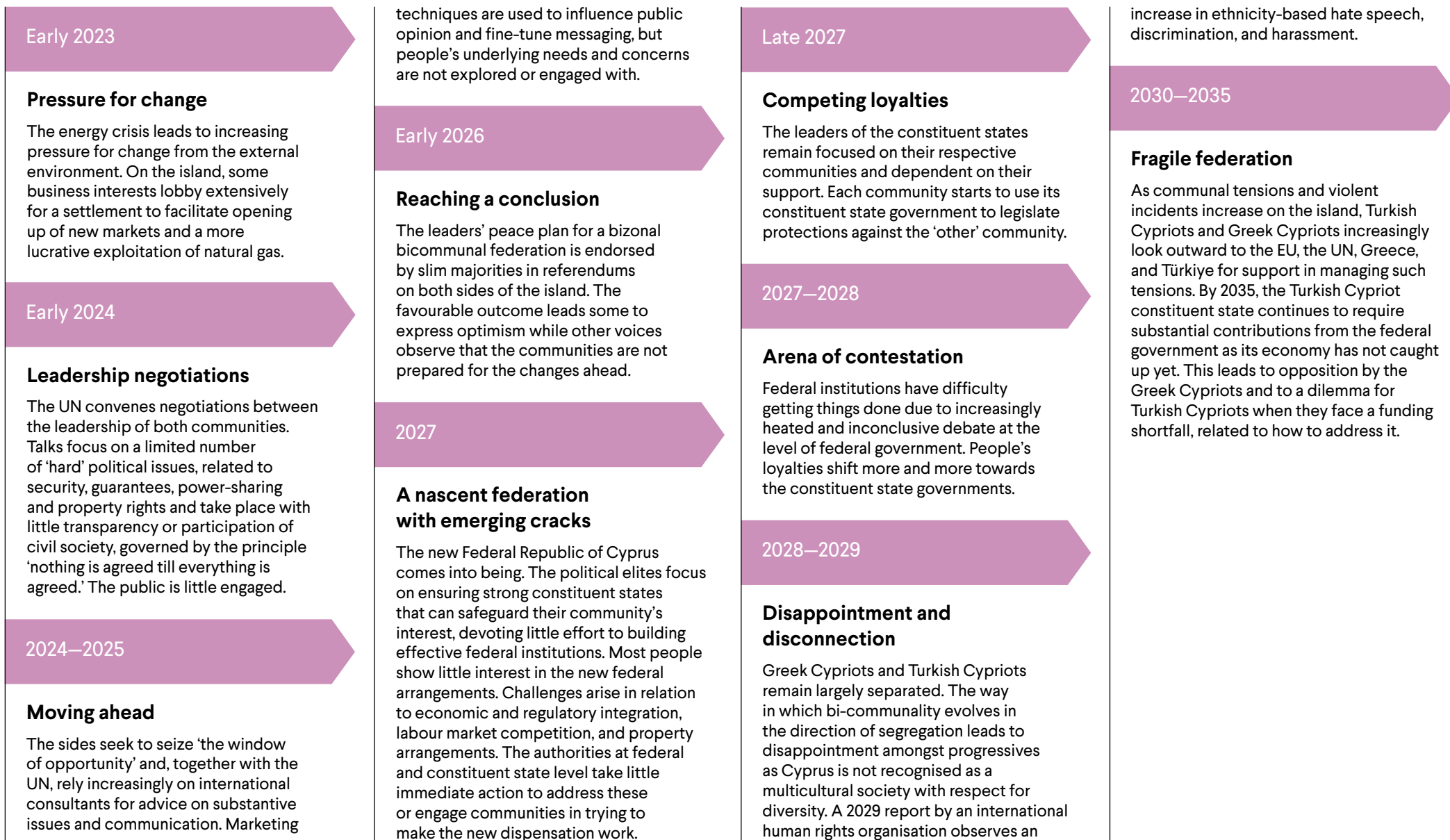
THE WORLD OF 'THEIR WAY'

A scenario of peace under pressure

In the world of '**Their way**', the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders experience considerable pressure from the external environment and from business lobbies to settle the Cyprus problem. They engage in high-level negotiations supported by the United Nations, which resemble previous rounds in the peace process in being leader-focused with little transparency or participation from civil society and in applying the principle 'nothing is agreed until everything is agreed.' Centering 'hard' political issues related to power-sharing, security, territory, and property, and increasingly relying on international experts for substantive advice, the talks charge ahead despite civil society actors raising concerns about the lack of public participation and the risks of not preparing communities for change. The public itself is little engaged but subjected to a smart communication campaign employing marketing techniques to influence public opinion. After ratification of the resulting peace plan, the federation is established with a high degree of decentralisation and little attention for creating effective federal institutions. Cracks soon start to emerge as economic integration proves challenging and the leaders have competing loyalties: to the federation they created and to their community whose support remains essential for remaining in office. Gradually, a dichotomy emerges between effective protective action at the constituent state level (directed against the other community) and inconclusive debates at federal level. This reduces the legitimacy of and public faith in the federation and means people's loyalties are primarily directed to constituent states. It results in a dispensation that reinforces mistrust and ethnic divisions and has little capability to handle stress.



Timeline *Their Way* **A scenario of peace under pressure**



THE WORLD OF 'OUR WAY'

A scenario of resilient peace

In the world of '**Our way**,' an increasing number of people across Cyprus recognise that the persistence of the Cyprus problem detracts from effectively dealing with pressing current and future challenges as collaborative efforts remain limited in scope, size, and impact in the face of ongoing division and political impasse. Preliminary consultations by the UN with a broad range of stakeholders, result in the leaders agreeing on a new approach to the peace process. Focusing on achieving 'resilient peace,' this approach entails a multi-track, participatory process which combines high-level talks between leaders with working groups, technical committees, and broad civil society engagement, driven from within and with support from UN and other international stakeholders. This unleashes much activity undertaken by different actors at various levels in society, but many Cypriots still harbour misgivings about the negotiations and possible changes, and some try to undermine the peace process. After ratification through separate referendums and careful technical preparation, the new federation comes into being. Much attention is devoted to developing effective and legitimate public institutions at federal and constituent state level, incorporating mechanisms for constructive dispute resolution and coordination, and including participatory governance, human rights, and social cohesion. This results in a federation that is resilient and inclusive, and a Cypriot citizenry that is proud of its plurality of cultures and peoples and its European identity.



Timeline Our Way

A scenario of resilient peace

Early 2023

Result-oriented cooperation

Cypriots engaged in tangible cooperation to ease people's daily lives and lessen the isolation of Turkish Cypriots, observe that their efforts remain limited in scope and size and are seen as inconsequential or temporary while the Cyprus problem persists. Calls for wider and more sustained collaboration arise after problems with a power plant in the north and air pollution. Politicians face increasing pressure to break through the political impasse.

Mid - 2023—2024

New approach to peace, internal and external support

Following wide-ranging consultations by the UN, the leaders resolve that new talks will begin in 2024. All sides agree that a settlement should be resilient, as this is the only way to provide an island-wide social contract providing wellbeing and security to all Cypriots. They also agree that they can build on the existing body of work for a federal solution. Analysts observe that Cyprus is well-placed to play a stabilising role in the region. A growing number of citizens across the island believe that a united Cyprus will be in a stronger position to face the present and future.

2024

High-level agreement, the public engages

The two sides conclude a high-level framework agreement to pursue negotiations through a participatory and inclusive process with clear timelines, aided by a package of confidence-building measures. The public starts to engage through civil society activities, bicommunal networks, and new media coverage of the other side. New business collaborations emerge and the international community pledges support.

2025

Multi-track process and misgivings, civil society mobilisation and harmonisation

The peace process operates across multiple parallel 'tracks', with initiatives at various levels and diverse actors, balancing confidentiality and transparency. Secretariats are set up on both sides to support the process. Yet many Cypriots express indifference and cynicism and rumours on social media question the agendas of those involved in the peace process. The establishment of a Civil Society Consultative Forum on the Future of Cyprus helps to address such concerns, enabling citizens to engage with the negotiation teams. An accelerated programme for harmonising

the Turkish Cypriot community with the EU Acquis Communautaire begins. The sides implement confidence-building measures, showing the public that the peace process can bring benefits. Wide social mobilisation and public engagement occurs in the north and south.

Early 2026

A Plan for Resilient Peace and steps forward

A draft plan for 'Resilient Peace' in Cyprus is published, leading many to be pleasantly surprised and generating much international attention. Some concerns from both communities continue to be voiced. The peace process enters a wide public consultation process which helps to mitigate anxiety amongst the public and to work out issues needing further consideration or transparency.

Early 2028

Transition

Concurrent referendums in the north and south succeed with a solid margin and elections take place for the new federal and constituent state bodies. In late 2029, the new state of affairs comes into force. Its functioning benefits from attention for building effective and service-oriented institutions, fostering social cohesion, and human rights within and across communities.

2030

Stress tests

A violent altercation after a football match, and friction in the Federal Council of Ministers about an energy-related project put the new federation, its institutions, and the population to the test. These are resolved by effective federal institutions and dispute resolution mechanisms, which shows their value.





2031—2035

A hub for the Eastern Mediterranean

By 2031, federal Cyprus, Greece, and Türkiye have concluded agreements on gas, water and electricity. Cyprus has started building three solar thermal plants. The public transport system across the island has much improved. By 2035, much has changed in Cyprus. People feel proud of Cyprus' improved political stability, its rich heritage and plurality of cultures, and European identity.





Comparison of the scenarios

The future may well include a combination of all four of these scenarios and of others. Nevertheless, in order to see – and discuss – these complex dynamics more clearly, we differentiate them into distinctly different scenarios. The following table compares key elements of the scenarios and demonstrates how they differ from one another.

SCENARIO	NO WAY 	MY WAY 	THEIR WAY 	OUR WAY 
DESCRIPTION	A scenario of stagnation and inaction	A scenario of divergence and opposition	A scenario of peace under pressure	A scenario of resilient peace
ESSENCE OF THE STORY	In the face of continuous failures of the peace process, divisions between the two main communities in Cyprus steadily deepen and solidify resulting in the north's gradually increasing dependence on and integration with Türkiye along with increased security concerns in the south and overall militarisation of the island.	Intent on breaking out of long-standing isolation, Turkish Cypriots no longer hold out for an agreed settlement of the Cyprus problem and actively pursue international engagement and recognition as an independent state, prompting strong resistance from Greek Cypriots and condemnation by international organisations.	Pressured by external forces and relying on international experts, a federation is established in Cyprus through a top-down process that fails to prepare communities for changes ahead, resulting in a dispensation that reinforces mistrust and ethnic divisions and has little capability to handle stress.	Taking charge of their own future through a participatory process, the two main communities on the island acknowledge their interdependence in an evolving context as well as the economic and social benefits of peace and become partners in a federation that is resilient and inclusive.
THE CYPRUS PROBLEM	Gradually deteriorates	Escalates rapidly	Gets settled on the surface	Gets transformed

SCENARIO	NO WAY 	MY WAY 	THEIR WAY 	OUR WAY 
DESCRIPTION	A scenario of stagnation and inaction	A scenario of divergence and opposition	A scenario of peace under pressure	A scenario of resilient peace
MAIN LOCUS OF AGENCY	External	Internal with external support (notably from Türkiye for the north and EU for the south)	External and elite-driven	Internal and shared across many stakeholders, with external support for Cyprus as a whole
PEACE PROCESS	Elite-level negotiations resume with support from the UN but collapse within a few years, feeding further disappointment and recriminations between the two sides as well as deepening divides. The prospect of new talks lingers despite serious misgivings on both sides and little willingness to make it happen.	Negotiations do not get off the ground due to entrenched, divergent positions of and preconditions set by leadership of both sides, leading the UN to suspend its mission of good offices indefinitely with regret.	Elite-level negotiations focus on achieving a federal settlement, with little transparency and public participation, with strong pressure and guidance from international stakeholders and relying on a marketing-style communication campaign to ensure a 'yes' vote from Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots.	A multi-track, participatory peace process focuses on pursuing a 'resilient peace', which combines high-level talks between leaders with working groups, technical committees, and broad civil society engagement, driven from within and with support from UN and other international stakeholders.

SCENARIO	NO WAY 	MY WAY 	THEIR WAY 	OUR WAY 
DESCRIPTION	<p>A scenario of stagnation and inaction</p>	<p>A scenario of divergence and opposition</p>	<p>A scenario of peace under pressure</p>	<p>A scenario of resilient peace</p>
GOVERNANCE	<p>Separate governance systems with administration in the south formally representing Cyprus as a whole, but without control over the north where EU body of laws and regulations is suspended. Political affairs, governance and decision-making in the north is increasingly influenced by Türkiye, with Turkish Cypriots more and more reliant on Turkish funds for administration and public service delivery. The north ends up with a presidential system where the president governs by extensive executive power. Increasing discrepancy between north and south in terms of human rights, health, and environmental standards.</p>	<p>Separate governance systems, with Turkish Cypriot leadership actively seeking international engagement and recognition as an independent state, which results in its eventual recognition by a few other countries. In the south, democracy persists but concerns about corruption and accountability are easily dismissed with reference to the ongoing political crisis and upheaval related to the north.</p>	<p>A federation within the EU, with little effort devoted to building effective federal institutions as political elites focus on ensuring strong constituent states to protect their community's interests, leading to reduced legitimacy of and limited public faith in federal institutions and to people's loyalties being primarily directed to constituent states.</p>	<p>A federation within the EU, with effective and legitimate public institutions at federal and constituent state level, incorporating mechanisms for constructive dispute resolution and coordination, and including participatory governance, human rights, and social cohesion, facilitated by and resulting in increased trust and collaboration at different levels. Women and youth play an active role in governance and decision-making.</p>
APPROACH TO SECURITY CHALLENGES	<p>Security challenges are not resolved, leading to increased militarisation of the island. Greek Cypriots expand their professional army and replace Russia-branded weapons with US-made versions.</p>	<p>Both sides address security challenges by themselves. Greek Cypriots do so through integration in EU systems and Turkish Cypriots through connecting with Turkish-Eurasian actors. Increased tension in region and along buffer zone.</p>	<p>High-level compromise between the leadership, relating to number of troops, rate of troop withdrawal, and status and responsibilities of the three guarantor powers.</p>	<p>Sides prioritise community security and violence prevention through community police service and early warning/early response system, create a United Cyprus Army and work towards gradual demilitarisation of the island in terms of foreign troops.</p>

SCENARIO	NO WAY 	MY WAY 	THEIR WAY 	OUR WAY 
DESCRIPTION	<p>A scenario of stagnation and inaction</p>	<p>A scenario of divergence and opposition</p>	<p>A scenario of peace under pressure</p>	<p>A scenario of resilient peace</p>
ECONOMY AND BUSINESS, INCLUDING HYDRO-CARBONS	<p>Separate economies: economy in south embedded into EU single market (though its growth is limited by its small size), while economy in north is increasingly integrated in Türkiye's economy. Decreasing trade across Green Line. Military budget in the south increases. Cooperation on hydrocarbons does not materialise.</p>	<p>Separate economies: economy in south embedded into EU single market, while economy in north is affected by Greek Cypriot measures and by end to EU aid package. The northern economy becomes a low-regulated space that is oriented towards Türkiye and Eurasia. Benefits from foreign investment in the north are unevenly distributed. Competition over hydrocarbons as Greek Cypriots start extracting and exporting fossil fuels without involving the Turkish Cypriots.</p>	<p>Considerable economic gains are had, but there is an uneasy coexistence of uneven economies, partially mitigated through transitional measures which however drag on beyond set time frames. Constituent states adopt reforms and regulations to gain comparative advantage over one another, driven by competitive rather than cooperative motives. Cooperation on hydrocarbons is difficult.</p>	<p>Peace dividend resulting from new markets opening up, with attention for harmonisation and levelling up of the north. Steadily increasing bicomunal trade, helped by improved public transport system. Cyprus becomes a hub in Eastern Mediterranean for international companies. Cooperation on hydrocarbons, together with Türkiye, Greece and other regional partners, and emphasis on green transition.</p>
ENVIRONMENT INCL. CLIMATE CHANGE	<p>Some bicomunal action in case of crisis (e.g., wildfires) but little preparation for problems in the long term. EU environmental standards are only upheld in the south, resulting in limited protection of the environment in the north.</p>	<p>No bicomunal action on joint challenges (e.g., forest fires, water shortages); in the north, tourism, property development and other commercial activity can be pursued with few environmental regulations. EU environmental standards are only upheld in the south.</p>	<p>Bicomunal action in case of crisis (e.g., wildfires); preparation for other environmental challenges takes place but is affected by mistrust and uneasy relationships. EU environmental standards apply throughout Cyprus.</p>	<p>Bicomunal action through federal government, constituent states, and civil society with emphasis on island- wide solutions to environmental challenges and development of joint fire management strategy. EU environmental standards apply throughout Cyprus.</p>

SCENARIO	NO WAY 	MY WAY 	THEIR WAY 	OUR WAY 
DESCRIPTION	A scenario of stagnation and inaction	A scenario of divergence and opposition	A scenario of peace under pressure	A scenario of resilient peace
YOUTH PROSPECTS	<p>Many young Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots continue to leave the island and do not return due to limited prospects. Turkish Cypriots who leave are driven by need for survival, while Greek Cypriots tend to leave driven by aspiration. Young men on both sides are conscripted into the army. Greek Cypriot youth face more labour market competition as Turkish Cypriots move south. There is a growing intergenerational divide as young people grow up without much attachment to their grandparents' home land.</p>	<p>Many young Turkish Cypriots who hold an EU passport move to other EU countries if they can afford it, and some move to the south, where they face discrimination. Young men on both sides are conscripted into the army. Some young people are politically active, but primarily in the form of protest.</p>	<p>Improved economic prospects for young people from all communities given economic growth and boost to various sectors. Young people are excluded from the peace process, and most are not politically active. They continue to face discrimination in relation to the 'other' community, and are at risk of violence.</p>	<p>Improved prospects for young people from all communities given economic growth and boost to various sectors. Students studying at universities in the north can take part in European exchange programs. Young people have opportunities to engage in the peace process, in politics, and in governance thereafter.</p>

Contributors

The 36 scenario team members that participated in the process of creating this set of scenarios are not a group of “usual suspects.” They include a wide diversity of perspectives across sectors, professions, generations and political views on the Cyprus problem. While they are broadly representative of Cypriot society, the participants join this process as individuals rather than as representatives of a specific institution or constituency, and bring their full knowledge, perspective, and experience to the process.

These scenarios represent a collectively constructed set of four different imagined futures. Each of them describes a trajectory, explores its consequences, and demonstrates that the future is the result of today’s actions and decisions, something that is constructed day by day. The Scenario team members agree that these four possible future stories could happen and need to be considered in a wide and inclusive conversation in and around Cyprus to address the challenges facing the island. At the same time, almost every scenario team member disagrees with elements in at least one of the scenarios.

As a consequence, the output of the Scenario Team’s collective reflection does not represent a consensus on any recommendation or a shared preference towards one scenario or the other. The scenarios simply represent the work of the people themselves – a group of diverse, committed, and caring actors who worked together in the hope that these scenarios might encourage more strategic and expansive dialogues that can help Cyprus to move forward.

POSSIBLE FUTURES OF CYPRUS

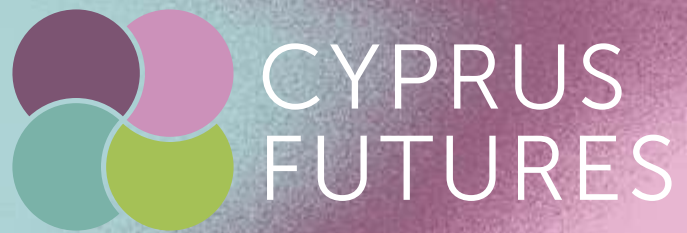
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The Cyprus Futures scenarios were developed by a diverse group of 36 Cypriots, who each invested over 15 days of their time on a volunteer basis. The group was facilitated by Reos Partners, using an internationally validated methodology. The project was supported by PRIO Cyprus Centre and Result Mediation Foundation. Funding was provided by the governments of the Netherlands, Norway (via PRIO), and Finland.

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CYPRUS
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