

Look ahead to 2017: A potential Cyprus settlement?

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To mark the end of the year, we've asked our contributors to preview some of the possible stories of 2017. In this contribution, **James Ker-Lindsay** writes on the potential for a settlement to be agreed in Cyprus by the summer.



After a turbulent 2016, Cyprus may prove to be an early bright spot in 2017. For the past two years, the leaders of the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities, Nicos Anastasiades and Mustafa Akinci, have been working towards a settlement of the dispute that has divided the two communities for over five decades and seen the island physically divided since 1974.

So far, it appears the two sides have managed to reach agreement on a range of issues concerning governance. However, the key sticking points of territory and security remain to be tackled. These will be the focus of meetings that will take place in mid-January 2017. If successful, a reunification referendum could take place sometime in late-spring or early summer.

On the other hand, the failure of talks could take Cyprus into uncharted waters. Although the UN would almost certainly be required to continue its efforts to reach an agreement, observers increasingly believe that this is the last realistic chance to reunite the island.

Given that it is unlikely that any UN members will recognise the 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus', speculation is growing that Turkey may decide to annexe the north. This would inevitably kill off the country's EU accession hopes and lead to a period of heightened tensions. However, Ankara, having observed international reactions to Russia's annexation of Crimea, could well reach the conclusion that the EU will eventually move on and adopt a more pragmatic line.

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Note: This article gives the views of the author, and not the position of EUROPP – European Politics and Policy, nor of the London School of Economics. Featured image credit: [Douglas H. Wheelock](#) / NASA (Public domain)

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About the author

James Ker-Lindsay – *London School of Economics*

James Ker-Lindsay is a Senior Visiting Fellow at LSEE-Research on South Eastern Europe, European Institute, London School of Economics and Political Science.



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