

Unification of Cyprus

Why in news?

\n\n

Talks to end the **43-year-old political deadlock** on Cyprus broke down, as Turkish and Greek cyriot negotiators failed to reach compromises over the security of the island.

\n\n

What is the history of the dispute?

\n\n

\n

- The British formally annexed Cyprus in 1914.

\n

- In the 1950s, Greek Cypriots engaged in a guerrilla war against the British, calling for unification with Greece.

\n

- In 1960, British granted independence to the island, instituting a power-sharing arrangement between Greek and Turkish Cypriots.

\n

- In 1974, Greece's military junta government backed a coup against Cyprus's president, with Athens demanding a greater say in Cypriot affairs and pushing for union with the island.

\n

- In response to the coup, Turkey launched a military invasion, occupying the northern third.

\n

- Greek Cypriots were forced to flee from the north to the south, while Turkish Cypriots fled in the opposite direction.

\n

- In 1983 the northern part of the island was declared as the breakaway state of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus but the only country to recognise it was Turkey.

\n

\n\n



\n\n

What's happening now?

\n\n

\n

- The objective is a federation of two states, one largely Greek-speaking and the other mostly Turkish-speaking.

\n

- The two regions would be largely autonomous, but there would be one head of state.

\n

- The talks are being facilitated by the United Nations. It said reaching an argument would be hard but not impossible.

\n

- The potential for reconciliation also have been boosted by **Turkey's bid to join the EU**, which was then high on the agenda in Brussels.

\n

- But, more than a decade later, a reunion seems to be as elusive as ever.

\n

\n\n

What are the main obstacles?

\n\n

\n

- **Land and property** are two of the main sticking points.
- Whether Turkish Cypriots displaced from the southern part of the island should be allowed to return to their old homes, and vice versa.
- That would mean turfing some families out of homes that they have lived in for decades.
- It's envisaged that the disputes could be addressed through a combination of land swaps and financial compensation.
- The establishment of an institutional framework to **secure the interests of both ethnic groups** is another.
- Assurances of a rotating presidency between Greek and Turkish-Cypriots in a future federal union have not soothed anxieties in the north.
- Another challenge is **Turkey's refusal to withdrawal of its troops** stationed in the north.

\n

\n\n

What are the benefits of a united Cyprus?

\n\n

\n

- A united Cyprus would allow both parts of the island to realise their **immense tourism potential**.
- The prospect of exploitation of **offshore gas reserves** in the Mediterranean is something the two sides could set their eyes on.
- A successful settlement would allow **Cyprus to be more in control of its affairs**, without both the sides relying on neighbouring powers.

\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: The Hindu

\n

