WGA

An EU Survey on Whole-of-Goverment Approaches to External Conflict and Crisis

Cyprus Report

James Ker-Lindsay

1 | Introduction

For many years, Cyprus' attention was exclusively focused on the so called 'Cyprus Problem' that arose from the inter-ethnic tensions on the island in the 1960s and the division of the island in 1974. Even to this day, the main scope of cross-government planning has concentrated on the possibility of a crisis with Turkey. However, following Cyprus' accession to the EU in 2004, the Cypriot government started to change its focus as senior figures realised that Cyprus needed to become more outward-looking so as to avoid being seen as a 'single-issue' member state. The big transformation occurred in 2006, when an outbreak of fighting in Lebanon led to a massive influx of refugees into Cyprus (see, e.g., Zeno 2007). It was at that moment that both Cyprus and the European Union understood the significance of Cyprus' location on the doorstep of the Middle East and North Africa. Since then, considerable efforts have been made in Cyprus to plan for future crises of this kind using a whole-of-government approach (WGA). Indeed, crisis management has now emerged as a central plank of the island's foreign and security policy. At the same time, in 2014, the European Union explicitly acknowledged Cyprus' important role in assisting EU crisis-management efforts in the Eastern Mediterranean, when then-President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker appointed Christos Stylianides, a Cypriot, to be European Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management.

2 | What policies have been developed to further policy coherence?

It is clear that Cyprus takes conflict management incredibly seriously. Indeed, crisis management had emerged as one of the prime goals of the country's foreign policy. To this extent, a whole range of initiatives have been undertaken to strengthen its crisis management using a WGA. Although led by certain key ministries – the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defence, and the Ministry of the Interior – it is certainly the case that the ambition extends across the whole government. Given the importance of energy as another pillar of Cypriot foreign policy (following the recent discovery of significant energy resources in the Eastern Mediterranean), it is likely that the Minister for Energy, Commerce and Industry will be involved in related issues.

In 2013, a basic national plan named 'Zenon' was unveiled that set out the scope of Cyprus' crisis-management strategy and the way that the government would coordinate its activities. Under the plan, 22 types of major crises were identified. Since then, the institutions and procedures have improved considerably. The emergence of a number of other crises has also helped to refine and enhance the mechanisms for cooperation across the government. Another important development was the establishment of a Joint Rescue Coordination Center (JRCC) in Larnaca. This was explicitly set up to organise the search and-rescue system of the Republic of Cyprus "in order to be able to find and rescue in the least possible time people whose [lives] are threatened as a result of an air or naval accident" (JRCC 2019) in its maritime area of responsibility and jurisdiction in the Eastern Mediterranean. As such, it serves as a coordination centre for humanitarian operations in response to natural or other disasters.

Since then, the development of crisis-management policies and procedures has continued at a fast pace. Indeed, it is often noted that it is difficult to keep up with the pace of change, and that the situation changes enormously from one response to the next as the Cypriot government further develops and enhances its capabilities.

3 | Who are the main actors involved in cooperating in a WGA?

The main actors in the development of WGA policies have been the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defence, and the Ministry of the Interior. At the core of these activities is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which houses the Crisis Management Department (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2017). This organisation acts as the hub for cross-governmental activities related to managing external crises. Formally speaking, the Republic of Cyprus is a presidential executive somewhat like the United States. Ultimate authority therefore rests with the president of the republic in his capacity as head of the Council of Ministers. In practice, however, the actual authority for managing a crisis tends to depend on the specific nature of the crisis. For example, in many cases, it is the foreign minister who takes responsibility for managing such crises. Nevertheless, it seems as though the other relevant ministers or the president would be able to step in and take the lead depending on the circumstances.

In addition to the three key ministries that are most closely involved in crisis management at present, other state actors are obviously key to the implementation of Cyprus' WGA. Officially, Cyprus has 11 ministries. Other key ministries are likely to include: the Ministry of Health; the Ministry of Energy, Commerce and Industry; the Ministry of Transport, Communications and

Works, which has oversight over airports and ports on the island; the Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and the Environment; and the Ministry of Justice and Public Order. For example, the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Works is given direct responsibility for coordinating the following three plans: 'Aristeas', which deals with an interruption to communications and information networks; 'Nikias', which deals with a terrorist attack on civil aircraft in flight; and 'Pindaros', which deals with a shutdown of the main air- and seaports (cf. Liassides 2016 for a brief overview of Cyprus' emergency plans). In addition, other key branches of the state are likely to be involved, including the country's Central Intelligence Service (KYP). Although the parliament is not understood to have a direct role in immediate crisis management, it does play a part in the longer-term development of crisis-management capabilities.

In addition to the internal dimensions, it has been interesting to see how these crisis-management efforts have also shaped the country's external relations. As noted, crisis management has become a central theme in Cypriot foreign policy. Cyprus works closely with its EU partners on developing its crisis-management capabilities, and has actively sought expertise- and knowledge-sharing opportunities. However, such capabilities have also become a key part of its wider regional relations with its neighbours, most notably Egypt, Israel, Jordan and Lebanon. As part of a wider strategy of defence diplomacy, Cyprus has used crisis management as a way to strengthen its ties to these countries by engaging with them in crisis-management activities and exercises. This has been particularly beneficial, as it allows for foreign and defence cooperation to be enhanced in a way that is not deemed to be threatening or confrontational by other actors in the region, including by countries that Cyprus is working with but that do not necessarily have good relations with one another. This underlines once again just how central crisis management has become to Cyprus.

4 | How does your country operationalise a WGA?

When it comes to Cyprus' WGA-related efforts, the most transformation has occurred in the area of administrative structures and processes related to realising the country's ambitions to become a centre of regional crisis management in the Eastern Mediterranean. Indeed, the Cypriot government has established the necessary policies, bodies and processes to operationalise its WGA to crisis management. For example, much work has been done to upgrade the performance of the Crisis Management Department discussed above and to ensure that it operates effectively. And 'Zenon', the basic national crisis-management plan, has been developed and complemented by a range of ministry-level 'specific national plans' outlining how the country should respond to a range of difference crisis scenarios, including attacks on energy infrastructure, health crises, terrorist attacks and a regional crisis triggering a large influx of refugees. The key one in terms of an external crises is 'Estia', the programme that aims to help authorities cope with an influx of third-country nationals fleeing from political crisis, military conflict or natural disaster.

However, it is less clear just how effective these policies have been in real terms across the entire government. While there is ample evidence to suggest that crises primarily involving the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and/or the Ministry of Defence (e.g. a hijacking incident) can be managed very well, it is perhaps less clear how effectively other ministries could respond to threats that fall directly within their purview. While there may be a theoretical need to ensure

that they are properly involved in managing such crises, it seems that it is only when the full details of the situation are known that the actual need for such cooperation becomes entirely clear. For example, the emergence of Ebola in West Africa as well as the realisation that students from that region were studying at universities in the North seemed to spur the Ministry of Health to consider how it would respond if a major outbreak of the disease occurred on the island. In addition, the Cypriot government now stages crisis-management exercises, often in conjunction with other regional countries and EU partners. In this sense, the country's overall preparedness to manage crises has improved dramatically over recent years. Furthermore, having started with little expertise in the subject, there is clearly a desire to learn from other countries.

5 | Conclusions

The past decade has seen a huge transformation in Cypriot foreign policy. At one time, the entire emphasis of the country's foreign-policy and security establishment was on the so-called Cyprus Problem and ways to manage tensions with Turkey. However, since joining the European Union in 2004, Cyprus has sought to broaden in foreign policy. The emergence of a crisis in the Middle East in 2006 that triggered a large influx of refugees from Lebanon into Cyprus showed just how important Cyprus could be as a base for international humanitarian operations in the Eastern Mediterranean. Driven by its wish to play a more useful role in the European Union and its desire to form better relations with its regional partners, and given its strategic location at the far end of the Eastern Mediterranean, external crisis management has emerged as a central plank of the government's foreign policy strategy. This important role has also been explicitly recognised by the European Union. The 2014 appointment of Christos Stylianides as the EU Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management was a clear acknowledgment of the valuable role that Cyprus plays regarding these issues. As a result, crisis management has become a key element of the foreign and security policy of the Republic of Cyprus.

In terms of the broader elements of the policy, it is clear that Cyprus sees its activities as being intimately connected to its membership in the European Union. It has worked closely with the EU and individual EU member states to establish and enhance its crisis-management capabilities. Likewise, crisis management has emerged as a key dimension of the country's relationship with other regional states. As Cyprus looks to extend its ties to Egypt, Israel, Jordan and Lebanon – largely as a result of its desire to build a stronger presence in the region in terms of energy-related issues – it has viewed crisis management as a key element of its efforts to establish non-contentious military and security cooperation with these neighbours.

More broadly, however, it is less clear how Cyprus' efforts tie in with those of other organisations. While it would seem that it enjoys good cooperation with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), cooperation with NATO is constrained, if not entirely off-limits, due to the still-unresolved Cyprus Problem and Turkey's objections to having any formal or informal engagement with Cyprus. Another interesting constraint is the degree to which Cypriot activities tend to have been narrowly focused on its region. Although Cyprus does participate in EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions, it is clear that it sees its advantage as lying in the fact that it is an EU outpost on the doorstep on the

Middle East and North Africa. In fact, Cyprus has shown little willingness to engage more widely, although this may simply be a recognition of its limited capabilities as a small country.

In any case, it is clear that crisis management is now a central feature of Cyprus' foreign and security policy. As a result, in addition to creating the necessary basic documents defining its crisis-management strategy, including a range of detailed scenarios, the Cypriot government has also taken considerable steps to realise this in an integrated, whole-of-government manner. Starting with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defence, and the Ministry of the Interior, which have been central to developing crisis-management capabilities on the island, there is evidence to suggest that the process now closely involves other relevant ministries. However, it is unclear just how integrated they are in real terms. While some observers have praised the way in which Cyprus seems to be prepared to manage major crises, other have expressed scepticism about whether various ministries would really be able to deliver in the event of a major incident.

6 | Reference list

JRCC (Cyprus Joint Rescue Coordination Center) (2019). Mission. www.mod.gov.cy/mod/cjrcc.nsf/cjrcc01_en/cjrcc01_en?OpenDocument.

Liassides, Panayiotis (2016). "Cyprus Emergency Plans and Practices." Paper presented at the PACES Scenario Workshop, Heraklion, 19 April 2016. www.paces-project.eu/images/content/ScenarioWorkshop/Presentations/8_Cyprus_Contigency_Plans_and_Practices_P_Liassides.pdf.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2014). "Implementation of the 'Estia' Plan exercise in the framework of the 'Argonaftis 2014' multinational exercise." 16 May 2014. www.mfa.gov.cy/mfa/mfa2016.nsf/All/2BEF4325B1F1A05CC2257FA000459830?OpenDocument.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2017). Crisis Management Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. www.oikade.gov.cy/mfa/OIKADE/register.nsf/page02_en/page02_en?opendocument.

Zeno, Ambassador Alexandros N. (2007). "The Cyprus Experience in the Crisis of Lebanon." Speech delivered the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cyprus. Vienna, 26 September 2007. www.mfa.gov.cy/mfa/mfa2016.nsf/All/CD7F67AED44E5EBAC2257FA0004588E1?OpenDocument.