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MSc Political Science

Nationalism, Ethnic Conflict, and Development

Thesis Submission: 10th January 2026

Beyond the Diplomat's Graveyard: The Work of the bicommunal Technical Committees in Cyprus

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Word Count: 9974

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Abstract

Why do some bicomunal Technical Committees in Cyprus deliver tangible results and foster trust while others remain symbolic? Combining institutionalist perspectives with intergroup contact theory, I conceptualise committee performance as outputs and cooperation processes. A mixed qualitative comparison of all thirteen Committees (2019-2025) uses document analysis and semi-structured interviews to show how institutional support can influence performance. This full cross-committee and temporal comparison enables identification of consistent patterns beyond single-case explanations. Results identify institutional support as the strongest independent predictor, shaping committee bureaucratic efficiency and legitimacy, but is also allocated reactively, with high performers attracting future support. These insights refine theories of cooperation in contexts of stalled diplomacy, by highlighting institutional support as a threshold condition for performance and part of a self-reinforcing feedback loop. As a result, policy-relevant insights can be drawn on to sustain meaningful cooperation in Cyprus, and beyond.

Introduction

The last divided capital in the world belongs to the island of Cyprus, where Nicosia is split by a buffer zone between the internationally recognised Republic of Cyprus (RoC), and the self-declared Turkish Republic of North Cyprus (TRNC). Several rounds of diplomatic negotiations have failed to deliver conflict resolution, most recently with the collapse of the Conference on Cyprus in Crans-Montana in 2017, after which appetite for renewed talks has steadily declined (ICG, 2023). As a result, the status-quo persists and the conflict has been dubbed “the diplomat’s graveyard” (Ker-Lindsay, 2005, p. 2).

There is, however, space for cautious optimism regarding grassroots cooperation between the two sides. Despite the lack of progress in a comprehensive settlement, in 2006 the two sides agreed to form eight bicommunal Technical Committees to run parallel to negotiations, which aimed to address issues that affect the daily lives of Greek and Turkish Cypriots. These committees ranged from topics on the environment, cultural heritage, to health, and represent a form of Confidence Building Measures (CBMs). CBMs aim to deepen cooperation and exchanges in contexts of division, with the primary aim to facilitate peace and avoid the escalation of conflict (Jong-jin, 2008). The Technical Committees continue to operate as examples of peaceful co-existence between the two communities, and have since expanded operations across thirteen committees. These committees operate in the middle of Track 1 government-led diplomacy, and Track 2 diplomacy involving informal non-state actors. Here, the committees are able to operate as non-political entities which sustain cooperation when formal diplomacy breaks down, defined as Track 1.5 diplomacy (Staats et al., 2019).

However, not all committees perform equally well. Some committees have been praised for their ability to sustain collaboration across a divided island, such as the Committee on Cultural Heritage in monument preservation, or the Committee on Crime & Criminal Matters in sustained information exchange. Others, like the Committee on Education, have been hindered by leadership changes, evidenced through the suspension of the acclaimed Imagine program for reconciliation through bicommunal exchange in education. Committees such as Crisis Management, and Humanitarian Affairs struggle through limited progress in their activities and little to no public visibility. This highlights the variation in the effectiveness of the bicommunal committees, with some fulfilling their function as CBMs, while others simply serve a symbolic role. As a result, the central puzzle emerges: why do some

committees manage to sustain cooperation and deliver results, while others remain inactive or invisible?

The literature on the topic can be split into two broad camps competing for explanatory value. While institutionalist perspectives consider the role of formal rules such as mandate design or resource frameworks as the key variables, intergroup contact theory highlights the role of conditions which influence the psycho-social effects on bicomunal interaction. In the case of Cyprus, scholars have yet to evaluate these conditions comparatively. While institutional support of cooperation is cited as an important variable enabling committee success (Hadjigeorgiou, 2024; BCTC SF, 2022), its precise effect on performance remains theoretically unclear. On one hand, institutional support could facilitate existing institutional and contact conditions to moderate their effects on performance. On the other hand, it could constitute a fundamental prerequisite for bicomunal cooperation outweighing any other predictor. Therefore, this thesis aims to clarify how institutional support enables or constrains both project execution and cooperation processes by asking the question: *“How does institutional support influence the performance of the bicomunal Technical Committees in Cyprus?”*

The answer to this question informs the academic debate on the role of Allport’s (1954) authority support condition on areas of protracted conflict, while also engaging with the institutional debate on shaping cooperation. Beyond theory testing, this paper will address a gap in the Cyprus literature, which tends to privilege in-depth analysis on specific committees over a comparative approach. Empirically, the study adopts a comparative qualitative design, using documentary evidence and semi-structured interviews across all thirteen Technical Committees over two periods (2019-22; 2023-25). In doing so, it refines political science debates on cooperation under protracted conflicts by isolating which key variables can create momentum for peace and cooperation when political resolution fails. At the same time, the findings of this paper can hold clear policy relevance to policymakers in Cyprus, illustrating how Track 1.5 diplomacy can stabilise periods of diplomatic uncertainty.

Following a Literature Review on relevant studies of bicomunal cooperation, this thesis creates a theoretical model to analyse the Cypriot case of technical cooperation. The Research Design section motivates methodological choices for this paper, before presenting the results in the Findings and Analysis sections. Results indicate that institutional support operates less

as a moderator, and more as a threshold condition, where it enables performance when present, and constrains cooperation when absent.

Literature Review

To situate the puzzle within existing scholarship, one has to examine findings from other divided societies. Key arguments will be highlighted and compared to findings in the Cyprus literature. Remaining gaps will motivate the theoretical and methodological choices to answer the question: *“How does institutional support influence the performance of the bicomunal Technical Committees in Cyprus?”*

Studies evaluating comparable bicomunal technical initiatives show multiple factors shaping cooperation. In Northern Ireland, the 1998 North/South Ministerial Councils show how practical, apolitical cooperation can diffuse the political sensitivities of cooperation. Coakley (2002) notes that the pragmatic nature of cooperation reduced the political controversy, while O’Connor (2005) argued, the Councils were praised for “delivering effective public services to the people of both parts of the island” (p. 11). Framing cooperation as mutually beneficial limited perceptions of political loss, consisted with literature on confidence building measures as using non-governmental actors to facilitate dialogue on issues of mutual concern (Staats et al., 2019). However, as the work of the Council continued, Pollack (2024) identified reduced leadership interest and a withdrawal of funding opportunities as a constraint of the work of the Councils. This tackles the assumption that technically framed cooperation can be more easily sustained, highlighting the role of elite support as an enabling variable of success.

A similar lesson arises from the Israeli-Palestinian Joint Water Committee (JWC) established in 1995 to manage shared water resources. Despite its temporary five-year mandate, the JWC operated for 20 years, suggesting both parties valued its work. Yet, as Shelby (2013) notes, Palestinian participation reflected dependency and encirclement, with the JWC institutionalising Israel’s structural dominance. This highlights an important caveat for cooperation in divided societies. If bicomunal initiatives occur under conditions of unequal status, outcomes are likely to favour the stronger party, unless external guarantors can level the playing field. The absence of accountability mechanisms from JWC design, contributes to the explanatory power of external institutional support as a condition for success in ensuring fairness and balance in conditions of a local power imbalance. In Cyprus, in a context of political asymmetry due to the unrecognised status of the Turkish Cypriot administration,

accountability and external balancing comes through international organisations such as the United Nations (UN) and European Union (EU).

As a result, the role of institutional support in Cyprus is likely different from the cases of the North/South Ministerial Councils and JWC. It extends beyond practical facilitation, and includes questions of political endorsement and the management of historical sensitivities surrounding cooperation. While this shares similarities with the JWC case, Cypriot bicomunal cooperation is exercised both by local members, but also includes international actors which seek to safeguard the process. Therefore, institutional support should not be assumed to reflect expectations taken from other contexts, but examined for its distinct mechanisms in effect in Cyprus.

The existing Cyprus scholarship reflects some of the opportunities and challenges identified in comparable bicomunal initiatives. For instance, Jarraud and Lordos (2012) argue that “leveraging of common environmental issues [can be] an entry point for cooperation” due to the apolitical scope of the topic (p. 262) which can be used to circumvent political deadlock. However, the article addresses the theoretical potential of environmental cooperation rather than real-life actual impact. In practice, Hadjigeorgiou (2024) finds that despite EU funding, the Technical Committee on the Environment stalls due to the inconsistency in authority support. Likewise, the Technical Committee on Education secured funding from Germany for the Imagine program of bicomunal contact in education, only to see it suspended upon a “leadership” change in the Turkish Cypriot administration. The variation in committee performance despite donor funding and technical mandates points to the shortcomings of the arguments to explain the Cypriot case, hinting at institutional support as a critical explanatory variable. Despite these assumptions, the mechanism by which institutional support shapes the performance of the bicomunal Technical Committees is not clarified.

At the same time, certain limitations exist in the literature on bicomunal contact in Cyprus. Present studies have evaluated the relevance of intergroup contact in its psychological impact of out-group interaction in children and civilians (Donno et al., 2021; Husnu et al., 2016). Far less attention has been paid to the intergroup conditions within the Technical Committees, despite the fact that members are also embedded in divisive historical narratives and political realities. Their participation within the committees could trigger stereotype-disconfirming and prejudice reduction mechanisms, which remains an unexamined, but important

psychological dimension of the work of the Technical Committees. Scholarship assessed performance through project delivery, neglecting the cooperation process itself as a meaningful outcome. Therefore, intergroup contact mechanisms among committee members should also be evaluated.

Finally, no systematic comparative analysis of all committees has been attempted. With the partial exception of Hadjigeorgiou (2024) who situates committee work on the debate of “Engagement without Recognition”, most studies tend to isolate individual committees for analysis. UN Secretary-General reports illustrate variation in Committee performance, where the work of the Cultural Heritage Committee is described as “outstanding” (2024) and “productive” (2022), while Education and Humanitarian Affairs are marked by long periods of inactivity (2024). This highlights the central puzzle, why do committees with similar mandate design and objectives produce such variation in performance? Existing literature has descriptively shown obstacles to cooperation in single committees, however cross-committee analysis that links key variables to performance is yet to be undertaken.

From the literature review three key gaps are identified:

1. Institutional support in Cyprus is under-theorised. While often acknowledged as important, the mechanism by which it shapes committee performance is under explored.
2. Intergroup contact dynamics are overlooked. Committee performance is assessed in terms of output and project execution, without evaluating the cooperation process within the committee.
3. There is a lack of systematic cross-committee comparison. Variation in committee performance is described, but not explained, with similar institutional design and objectives yielding different outcomes.

To address this gap, the following theoretical framework integrates institutionalist perspectives and intergroup contact theory to explain why some committees sustain cooperation and deliver results, while others falter.

Theoretical Framework

In this study, the performance of the bicommunal Technical Committee is defined as a two-dimensional concept encompassing both output, and cooperation processes. Committee output is reflected in mandate delivery, completed projects, and policy initiatives adopted into practice. Cooperation processes refer to the quality of interaction among members, such as the presence of meaningful and sustained dialogue even in the absence of deliverables. A dual understanding of “performance” is both a methodological and theoretical necessity. From the onset, the goal of the Technical Committees was not only to improve daily life in Cyprus but also to foster trust between communities. Hence, performance should be evaluated against their intended objectives, tangible results *and* the psychological impact of cooperation. This approach is consistent with Allport’s (1954) intergroup contact theory which stresses that sustained engagement can improve perceptions, even when concrete results are limited.

To explain variation in performance, two complementary perspectives are used: institutionalist perspectives primarily influencing committee output, and intergroup contact theory influencing the cooperation process.

Institutionalist Perspectives

Drawing on public administration and political economy theories, this paper groups a series of determinants of committee output into the term “institutionalist perspectives”. Namely, these include the influence of mandate clarity and resource frameworks in their ability to shape performance. Grouping these arguments together simplifies the causal mechanism by which they affect our dependent variable. Specifically, these two arguments refer to the institutional boundaries imposed on the Technical Committees, framing the “rules of the game” (North, 1990, p. 4) by which their work is constrained. Institutional support, by contrast, is treated as analytically distinct, referring to political endorsement and administrative facilitation by authorities, shaping how rules and resources are interpreted, mobilised, or obstructed in practice, even when mandates and budgets remain unchanged.

A well-defined mandate reduces ambiguity and provides committees with clearly-defined tasks. Public management scholars argue that goal clarity is imperative for setting the strategic direction of an organisation in an efficient manner, reducing cross-communication

along departments (Fowler, 2022, p.1396). While some argue that mandate ambiguity can be beneficial by creating consensus collaboration through meaning interpretation (p. 1399), this argument is ill-suited in contexts of high political sensitivity, where disputes over terminology can derail collaboration. Moreover, explicit goal clarity is expected to stimulate performance, as van der Hoek et al. (2018) find that well-defined goals create well-defined approaches for goal achievement. In the case of the Technical Committees, a clearly defined mandate can set the scope of their work but also provide an in-built direction on how to achieve said goals. For example, the Committee on Cultural Heritage benefits from a narrow mandate calling for the preservation of cultural monuments, allowing the Committee to measure, track and easily share their progress. Similarly, low-politicisation, high-expertise mandates could insulate their work from political interference, due to the information asymmetry between Committee experts and politicians. As a result, technical mandates can separate themselves from political goals, lending the Committees legitimacy and independence (Majone, 1997).

Resource frameworks, defined as the availability, distribution, and management of financial resources, also shape bicomunal cooperation. In Cyprus, funding comes from international actors like the EU and UN Development Program (UNDP), while specific projects sometimes receive additional funding from external donors. From an institutionalist perspective, resource frameworks structure who control access to funding and can impact the incentives for cooperation (Gisselquist, 2014). In principle, external funding should reduce budget disputes and allow Committees to pursue their objectives. Furthermore, predictable funding availability allows for more ambitious project implementation, where Bilczak (2024) finds that larger budgets can enable cooperation which increases in scale (number of projects) and scope (number of network organisations). Similarly, predictable funding is particularly relevant to the Technical Committees, as project continuity is necessary in contexts of member rotations and shifting political environments.

Yet, the institutional design of the Committees also introduces veto points. All Committee proposals are subject to approval from the Committee Coordinators, who work closely with the diplomatic negotiators and leaders of each side. This creates opportunities for elite vetos which can be motivated by any logistical, budgetary, or political explanations. A common impediment to the work of the Technical Committees is the lack of recognition of the Turkish Cypriot administration, where the RoC is able to stall or block projects due to their fear of

obscuring engagement with formal recognition of the de-facto state. Furthermore, as the Turkish Cypriot administration lacks international recognition, external funding typically flows through the RoC instead. Not only does this create asymmetries in terms of administrative independence, but this also creates financial bureaucracy. Thus, benefits of mandate clarity and resource frameworks may depend less on formal design conditions, and more on institutional support that enables facilitation.

Intergroup Contact Theory

Allport's (1954) intergroup contact theory identifies four conditions for positive intergroup engagement and cooperation processes: 1) equal group status, 2) pursuit of common-goals through 3) intergroup cooperation, and 4) authority support of contact. If present, these conditions enable psycho-social effects such as stereotype disconfirming and prejudice reduction in contact participants. The mechanisms underlying the first three conditions can be understood as a shift in perception, where equal group status reduces social hierarchies (Cook, 1984), common goals foster interdependence, and intergroup cooperation cultivates mutual trust and empathy (Gaertner et al., 1993). However, as Pettigrew and Topp (2006) find, the strongest facilitating factor is the fourth condition, authority support.

Institutional support overlaps conceptually with institutionalist perspectives. It considers how elites cooperate with the procedures for bicommunal projects, acting as critical enablers of obstacles to the cooperation process through political and administrative support. As Tsebelis (2002) argues, many veto players with large ideological distance between them create narrower 'win-sets' of successful cooperation, meaning that the possibility of political deadlock increases due to the in-built vetos granted to the political leadership in Cyprus. The possibility of vetos also creates commitment problems, where Committee members are less incentivised to take initiative and experiment, as proposals can be nullified in times of political sensitivities.

Institutional support also legitimises the cooperation progress. International institutions such as the United Nations are able to act as a neutral, third-party observer to the work of the Committees, which not only reduces hierarchical tensions between participants, but also allows sensitive subjects to be discussed without fear of political reprisal (Gaertner et al., 1993). Conversely, lack of institutional support undermines contact, culminating in fewer

meetings and reduced ambition (Farmaki & Stergiou, 2024). In line with Allport's authority support condition, institutional backing shapes participant's willingness to engage, perceived reward of cooperation, and ultimately openness to trust-building across the divide. Therefore, even if immediate output is absent, higher quality contact still can foster the positive relationship necessary for future sustained activity.

Figure 1:

Theoretical Framework illustrated

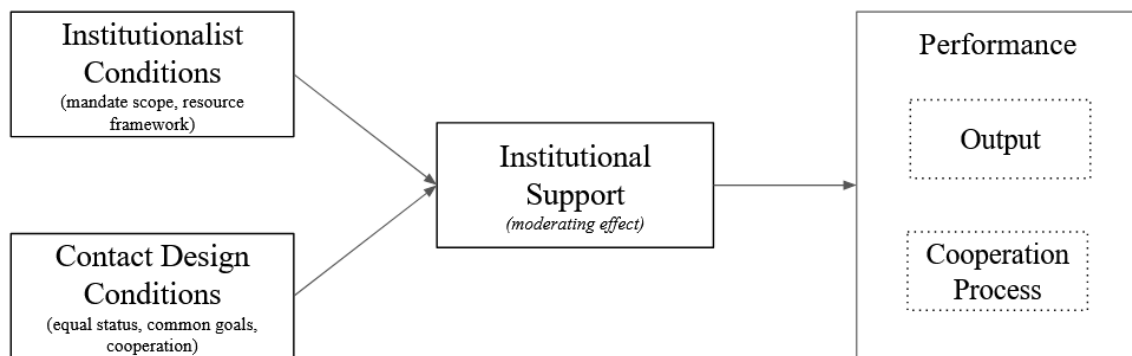


Figure 1 summarises the theoretical expectations of this study. Mandate clarity and resource frameworks set structural potential of output, while contact conditions shape the cooperation process. Yet, neither dimension is able to fully guarantee Committee success. Institutional support is expected to moderate the relationships by translating potential into sustained results. Specifically, institutional support affects output through elite facilitation, vetoes, and logistical backing, while simultaneously shaping cooperation processes by legitimising intergroup engagement through endorsement and reducing political risk for participants. Therefore, institutional support operates as a dual process which has the potential to shape both indicators of performance.

Further, this paper will explore two alternative expectations. Institutional support could also function as an independent predictor, directly enabling committee activity and processes irrespective of levels of mandate clarity, resource availability, and contact conditions. Moreover, institutional support could also respond to performance and be allocated retroactively, where perceived committee effectiveness changes the willingness of authorities to participate and legitimise committee work.

Accordingly, this thesis will explore the following hypotheses and theoretical expectations:

1. Committees with strong institutionalist conditions will produce higher committee output.
2. Committees with strong contact conditions will generate better cooperation processes, but also be able to compensate for activity over time, even when immediate output is limited or absent.
3. High institutional support will strengthen the link in P1 and P2 (moderator).
4. Committees with strong institutional support will produce higher committee output and strong cooperation processes, irrespective of institutional and contact conditions (independent predictor).
5. Committees with high levels of institutional support are more likely to experience cumulative performance gains, as early successes attract further backing and facilitate further project implementation (feedback effect).

Research Design

This study adopts a comparative qualitative design to answer the research question: “*How does institutional support influence the performance of the bicommunal Technical Committees in Cyprus?*”. A systematic comparison of all thirteen bicommunal Technical Committees allows assessment of institutionalist and contact conditions as predictors of performance, with institutional support as the key moderating variable. The unit of analysis is the Committee, and each Committee is treated as a case to be systematically coded using a structured codebook. This analysis spans a time frame of January 2019 to December 2025, beginning with the creation of the UNDP Support Facility in 2019. Prior to 2019, the Technical Committees lacked institutional support, leading to reduced scope, visibility, and operational capacity, but also rendering our analysis of the moderating variable methodologically limited before this time. The analysis is divided into two phases: 2019–2022 and 2023–2025. This coincides with the phases of UNDP Support Facility budget allocation and project appraisal, but also the election of the newest president of the RoC, President Christodoulides, which together represent potential shifts in institutional support and committee activity.

Case selection

Cyprus was chosen as a critical case for examining bicommunal cooperation in areas of protracted conflict. Unlike other divided societies marked by recurring violence or power-sharing agreements, Cyprus remains peaceful. The absence of violence creates space for voluntary bicommunal cooperation, where cooperation emerges without enforcement and by the initiative of the two sides.

Cyprus is also analytically interesting. Institutional support is shaped by multiple, and often competing dynamics, such as an external pressure for cooperation from international actors like the UN, a domestic push for political settlement, but also an increasingly asserting Turkish state demanding concessions. Despite this, the Technical Committee cooperation process is owned by the two sides, allowing institutional support to fluctuate and embody the political will for cooperation at the time.

Theoretically, the absence of formal recognition of the Turkish Cypriot administration also means that Cyprus is not undergoing formal state-building or a constitutional reform process.

This means that confidence-building measures are the primary source of contact between the two sides, and intergroup contact literature is more relevant to the participants. Therefore, the micro-level analysis of the psychological effect of intergroup contact and trust-building can be observed, without the backdrop of ongoing political bargaining.

The bicommunal Technical Committees were also selected as the most active institutionalised form of cooperation in Cyprus, particularly since the breakdown of formal negotiations in 2017. Operating in a Track 1.5 space, between government and civil society, means that the Committees combine formal political backing, but also operational independence from the peace process. Their expansion to thirteen Committees, thus, enables a structured comparison of variation in independent variables and performance within a shared institutional environment. This provides leverage to examine why some Committees sustain cooperation, while others stagnate. It also provides the opportunity to highlight the conditions under which bicommunal cooperation is most effective, creating tangible recommendations for restructuring.

Data collection

Data collection combines document analysis and semi-structured interviews (see Appendix A for interview script). Documentary evidence includes biannual UN Secretary General (UNSG) reports, UN Development Program (UNDP) Project Reports, media articles, and independent evaluations by the Support Facility and Interdisciplinary Centre for Law, Alternative and Innovative Methods (ICLAIM). Document analysis provides measurable indicators across independent and dependent variables, allowing for cross-committee pattern identification. A stratified sampling strategy limits the analysis of media coverage to a maximum of three articles per committee, per year, using Greek and Turkish Cypriot sources when available. As a preliminary finding, no significant variation was observed regarding problem framing or committee assessment between the two communities. The final breakdown of the number of documentary sources (N=81) included in the study are biannual UNSG Reports (N=14), UNDP project reports (N=22), media articles (N=39), and independent reports (N=6). One limitation of the data collection is the absence of internal committee documents which restrict direct observations on decision-making or day-to-day deliberations.

For data triangulation purposes, semi-structured interviews with Committee members were conducted to capture hard-to-measure perceptions, but also highlight the moderating mechanism of institutional support on Committee performance. This strengthened internal validity by capturing participant perceptions of institutional support, as well as alternative explanations. Furthermore, the interviews were able to reduce measurement error in our variables, ensuring our indicators capture the characteristics and mechanisms described by participants.

The aim was to interview at least one member from each Committee, ideally balancing representation of Greek and Turkish Cypriot co-chairs. Access constraints resulted in N=13 interviews conducted representing 10 out of the 13 committees. Three committees were not included in the sample: Crime and Criminal Matters rejected participation due to the sensitive nature of their work, while Broadcasting and Crisis Management were unreachable. Turkish Cypriot members were slightly underrepresented (8 Greek Cypriot/ 5 Turkish Cypriot), likely due to the recent “elections” in the Turkish Cypriot administration in October 2025 creating political transitions. Nonetheless, sufficient documentary evidence exists to assess all thirteen committees.

Operationalisation and Data Analysis

All variables are operationalised into clear categories that allow for comparison across committees (Table 1). Each variable is coded into an ordinal scale (high/medium/low or strong/limited/inadequate). The coding captures the ranked variation in institutional conditions (mandates, resource frameworks), contact design conditions (equal status, intergroup cooperation, common goals), and committee performance (output, cooperation process). Each committee received one score per variable for the 2019-2022, and one for the 2023-2025 period, supplementing the analysis on change over time. Reliability is ensured through the codebook (see Appendix B) through which ordinal categories are defined, and anchoring vignettes are provided for consistent coding decisions.

The moderating variable of institutional support was coded along two dimensions, namely endorsement and facilitation. Endorsement relates to the public praise of the work of the committees, and is expected to motivate members to further commit and engage with their committees. Facilitation is more consistent with administrative support and timely approval

of projects, enabling committees to operate efficiently without institutional resistance. This captures the dual function of institutional support as both political shielding and operational assistance.

One must also consider reverse causation and the feedback effect between institutional support and committee output, where successful committees attract greater institutional support. To address this, Institutional Support (2023-25) is related to Performance (2019-22) to check if support enabled cooperation, or simply responded to it.

Table 1

Operationalisation of variables

Variable	Definition	Indicators
<i>Mandate Clarity</i>	Degree to which mandates are clearly defined and non-political.	Objectives which can be measured; achieved through practical collaboration; reliance on political context
<i>Resource Framework</i>	Degree to which financial resources are available, sufficient, and actively mobilised.	Multiple sources of funding; funding delays; no. of project proposals submitted
<i>Equal Status</i>	Member perceptions of equal standing, influence, and status.	Co-chair parity practices; visibility in events; issues of recognition with the Turkish Cypriot Administration
<i>Intergroup Cooperation</i>	Degree of member collaboration, responsibility-sharing, and problem-solving practices.	Joint tasks; distribution of responsibility; symbolic existence
<i>Common Goals</i>	Degree to which committee objectives are shared and require joint effort.	Language in problem statement and goals; visibility of representatives; priority consensus
<i>Institutional Support — Endorsement</i>	Degree in which authorities publicly affirm the work of the Committee, signalling either approval or disapproval.	Public praise of Committee work and goals; Visibility of officials in Committee events
<i>Institutional Support — Facilitation</i>	Degree to which operational work is supported through administrative, procedural and logistical support.	Timely approval of proposals; Access to coordination assistance; Shielding from political interference

<i>Performance – Output</i>	Successful completion and implementation of objectives	Number of completed projects; Timing; Visibility of objectives to public
<i>Performance – Cooperation Process</i>	Quality of interaction between members, generating trust and sustained engagement	Frequency of meetings; Perceptions on interdependence and dialogue quality

While the indicators and category definitions in the codebook were developed deductively on the basis of the theory, they were gradually refined through engagement with the interview data to address potential measurement error and ensure conceptual completeness. These adjustments were limited and did not cause substantial changes to the overall structure of the codebook.

Findings and Discussion

Once the data was coded, cross-committee comparison revealed patterns linking institutionalist and contact design conditions, with institutional support, and committee performance. This section summarises major trends across the two coding periods, the predictive relationship of institutional and contact variables, and any evidence of moderation by institutional support. Temporal sequencing analyses are also included, testing for reverse causality and the compensatory role of cooperation processes on future output. For the full data visualisation, please refer to Appendix C.

The study set out to examine how institutional support affects Committee performance, with research expectations anticipating a moderating effect of institutional support on institutionalist and contact design conditions. The findings aligned with theoretical logic but diverged from moderating expectations. Institutionalist conditions tend to align with output, while contact design variables shape cooperation processes. However, institutional support does not moderate those relationships and emerges as the strongest independent predictor across both dimensions. Moreover, the temporal analysis highlighted how early performance predicts later support, but also how it reinforces performance results with reactive allocation of institutional support through Endorsement and Facilitation. Regarding the compensatory role of cooperation processes on future output, the analysis reveals that cooperation quality alone cannot generate sustained output.

The upcoming discussion will interpret the findings to determine Committee best practices for delivery of results and trust-building between Greek and Turkish Cypriots and will be supplemented with direct quotations obtained from the interviewed participants of the Technical Committees.

1. Institutional Conditions and Output

a. Mandate Clarity

Drawing on institutionalist expectations, this section assesses whether mandate clarity and resource frameworks translate into committee output.

The relationship between mandate clarity and committee output is weak and inconsistent. Committees with 'Low' mandate clarity reported low output in either one of the reporting

periods (e.g. Education, Humanitarian Affairs). Committees with ‘High’ clarity were typically high achievers (e.g. Cultural Heritage, Broadcasting). However, ‘Medium’ clarity produced mixed results, where most committees achieved high output, but others (e.g. Crisis Management, Crossings) lagged behind. Thus, mandate clarity alone cannot fully explain output variation, however could explain the propensity of committees to perform well in its extreme cases of High and Low technicality.

Mandate clarity as a weak predictor of output can be attributed to the static and general nature of formal committee mandates. Most committees have had unchanged formal mandates since their inception. As Hadjigeorgiou and Osum (2025) also find, some committees operate with concept notes that were drafted back in 2008. Committee members are expected to internally negotiate their mandate scopes and operationalise their tasks. This negotiation, however, is harder for some committees than others. For example, an interviewee from Humanitarian Affairs attributed the lack of committee direction to the vague mandate, while an interviewee Economic & Commercial Matters explained that mandate overlap with the Chamber of Commerce made it difficult to take ownership of projects.

Across interviews, however, mandate clarity was rarely described as a decisive barrier. Only one interviewee identified mandate ambiguity as an inhibitor, while most pointed to funding availability, trust-building, and institutional support as more important. Moreover, even technically precise mandates cannot shield committees from the political contexts. As an interviewee from Crossings mentioned “...every aspect has a political perspective, and here is where we have problems.” In this sense, while mandates provide technical avenues of cooperation, there are other variables which affect the capability of the committee to translate it into action. As Matland (1995) suggested, in contexts of high politicisation and high policy ambiguity, the focus shifts from formal design conditions to centrally located actors determining the provision of incentives to an issue area (p. 170).

b. Resource Frameworks

Resource frameworks show a positive association with output, but not deterministic. In cases of ‘Strong’ resource frameworks (e.g. Cultural Heritage, Environment, Health, Culture) output is sustained at ‘High’. Moreover, improvements in resource management align with committee performance gains (e.g. Crime & Criminal Matters, Crossings, Economic & Commercial Affairs). Conversely, ‘Inadequate’ and declining resource frameworks

accompany low and declining output (e.g. Education, Humanitarian Affairs). The only exception, Broadcasting, maintained ‘Medium’ output despite the decline in resource utilisation. Overall, resource frameworks in their availability and active mobilisation tend to enable committee output, but are not determining committee performance.

The moderate effect of resource frameworks on output can be partially interpreted through patterns of inconsistent resource utilisation. Since its establishment in 2019, the EU Support Facility provides 1 million euro to all (now) thirteen committees over its three year phases in 2019-22 and 2023-26. At the end of Phase 1, 64% of funding was utilised by the committees, with projects being proposed by seven out of eleven committees (BCTC SF, 2022).

Excluding Cultural Heritage which has secured independent sources of funding, this leaves four committees not using the financial and administrative resources provided by the EU. Phase 2, is likely to show a worsening trend, with only six committees submitting proposals. Several interviewees also highlighted the expediency of the ‘Fast Track’ application process for projects under €5,000, which is even more surprising considering the lack of budget utilisation.

Interviews shed light on the underuse. Some committee members described interference in the approval process, not only for funding, but during the project proposal stage as well. Interviewees from Environment and Education mentioned a ‘delay’ tactic employed by leaders, where agreement on cross-community projects could take months, sometimes years. This pattern also emerged in UN Secretary General reports, where committees stalled due to lack of responsiveness from one side (UNSG, 2025). Rather than contradicting institutionalist theory, these findings indicate its limits to the Cyprus context where institutionalised veto players constrain cooperation design. As Tsebelis (2002, p. 14) notes, when the win set of acceptable proposals is low, political actors, such as the committee members, have little incentive to propose change, and refrain from submitting projects due to anticipated delays and backlash. This discrepancy in project submission also hints at the performance institutional support feedback loop, where committees that demonstrate initiative in project submissions are able to attract greater institutional support over time, while weaker committees become further marginalised by their inability to even apply for project support. This expectation will be explored in detail later on, however offers insight into why performance differences across committees are hard to overcome and generate widening motivational gaps amongst interviewees, even when formal resources are available.

Taken together, the first set of research expectations are partially satisfied. Consistent with institutionalist theory, both mandate clarity and resource frameworks are associated with committee output, particularly at their extremes. However, neither variable is sufficient to explain performance variation across committees, as political blockages from elites can prevent the mobilisation of committee work. These results suggest that additional factors, notably institutional support, might be more instrumental in shaping whether formal capacity can translate into sustained results.

2. Contact Conditions and Cooperation Process

a. Equal Status, Intergroup Cooperation, Common Goals

Drawing on intergroup contact theory, this section examines whether contact design conditions, namely equal status, intergroup cooperation, and common goals, translate into sustained cooperation processes within the Technical Committees. When examined separately, the three conditions offer limited explanatory power in relation to Cooperation Process. However, when combined, the three correlated variables merged in contact quality have a clearer association with cooperation. This pattern is consistent with intergroup contact theory's expectation that contact conditions operate synergistically rather than independently (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998). Additionally, this section will explore the hypothesis that strong cooperation processes can compensate for weaker output by fostering conditions conducive to future performance, a possibility suggested by intergroup contact theory but tested explicitly through temporal sequencing.

Committees scoring 'Medium' or 'High' on all three contact conditions consistently display strong cooperation processes (e.g. Crime & Criminal Matters, Cultural Heritage, Environment, Health). When at least one variable improves, so does the Cooperation Process (e.g. Crossings, Culture). However, when at least one condition is coded as 'Low', no Committee is able to score higher than 'Limited' (e.g. Crisis Management, Education, Humanitarian Affairs). Yet, contact conditions are not fully deterministic, as Crisis Management and Humanitarian Affairs score 'High' on one or two contact conditions, but still have 'Inadequate' cooperation. Hence, this points to the limits of intergroup contact theory in a politically constrained setting, as positive contact conditions alone cannot sustain committee performance.

A partial explanation for this inconsistent effect can be the political manipulation of committee membership. Interviewees from the Committee on Gender Equality, and Economic & Commercial Affairs noted difficulty in building positive momentum due to frequent rotation of Turkish Cypriot members. This problem was not isolated, as in 2020 all Turkish Cypriot members of Culture resigned (philenews, 2020), and all Greek Cypriot members of Crossings resigned in 2022 (UNSG, 2022). Committees that reported no membership interference, such as Cultural Heritage, Environment and Health, consistently identified trust and relationship building as the most important factor in their success. Hence, these committees are able to form long-term relationships based on years of problem-solving and cooperation, in line with the intergroup contact theory arguments that extended group contact over time creates greater “friendship potential” (Pettigrew, 1998, p. 76).

The interviews also revealed an unexpected dynamic concerning the composition of committee membership. Interviewees from the Committee of Culture, Cultural Heritage, and Environment highlighted that the involvement of members based on their professional experience contributes to the feeling of equality and harmony within an expert-driven committee. However, as interviews progressed, other interviewees noted that Turkish Cypriot members were also affiliated or employed by the ‘Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ of the Turkish Cypriot administration. This could explain the hesitancy of Turkish Cypriot members to participate in the interviews, and some members’ required formal approval for interview participation. Interviewees described the impact of such political representation on committee dynamics, with one participant feeling like they were being “reported on” by their committee members, and another stating that their final wish was for their committee to remain free from diplomatic interference. These accounts suggest that involvement of politically positioned actors can undermine credibility and erode trust and equality, something which contact theory identifies as foundational for effective cooperation.

At a broader level, these dynamics were observed in both the coded data and interviews, where political sensitivities surrounding recognition permeate the operations of the Technical Committees. Some interviewees perceived that the Turkish Cypriot administration is seeking to leverage committee work for symbolic or political recognition, evidenced through constant debates on terminology. Still, the Greek Cypriot side is not exempt from political constraints, where Kades (2023) notes that proposals with clear practical benefits of natural disaster response are being rejected due to fears of conferring legitimacy on the Turkish Cypriot

administration. These dynamics underline the core finding of this research: the Technical Committees are embedded within a highly sensitive political environment, and their work is inseparable from broader conflict-related considerations.

b. Compensatory Role of Cooperation Processes

To test our hypothesis if ‘Strong’ cooperation processes can compensate for lower immediate output, committees with ‘Cooperation Process>Output’ in 2019-22 are assessed on their performance gains in 2023-25. The hypothesis predicts that committees with strong cooperation processes should demonstrate improved output in the subsequent period. Table 2 summarises the findings.

Table 2

Compensatory role of cooperation processes (2019-22) on future output (2023-25).

Committee	Cooperation Process (2019-22)	Output (2019-22)	Output (2023-25)	Change in output
<i>Broadcasting</i>	Strong	Medium	Medium	No change
<i>Economic & Commercial Affairs</i>	Strong	Medium	High	Increase
<i>Education</i>	Limited	Low	Low	No change

In 2019–22 three committees displayed meaningfully higher cooperation processes than output. In the subsequent period of 2023–25, only one improved in terms of output, while the other two remained at the same output level. This provides only limited support for the theoretical expectation of intergroup contact theory, as the absence of performance gains in the remaining committees suggests that cooperation quality alone cannot generate sustained performance. Instead, positive contact conditions require a conducive institutional environment to allow them to translate their trust-building and “friendship potential” into tangible results. As interviewees from multiple committees indicated, interpersonal relations were vulnerable to political interference, membership rotation, and bureaucratic blockages, which disrupted continuity and limited the translation of trust into action. As a result, cooperation processes can facilitate future performance only when embedded within a stable institutional framework.

Together, these findings partially support the expectations of intergroup contact theory, as when Allport's core contact conditions are present, stronger cooperation processes tend to exist. However, the effect is not uniform or able to sustain future cooperation in the face of political interference. Therefore, while contact conditions remain necessary for the quality of interaction, they still operate within the boundaries of the broader institutional environment, and are ill-equipped to explain variation in committee performance.

3. Institutional Support

a. Institutional Support as a Moderator

Building on the mixed explanatory power of institutionalist and contact design conditions, this section examines the role of institutional support in shaping committee performance. Although moderation was theoretically expected, the findings instead point to a more central role for institutional support.

Moderation was examined by identifying whether institutional support changed the effect of institutionalist conditions on output, and contact conditions on cooperation processes.

Committees with 'High' mandate clarity and 'Strong' resource frameworks, always received medium or high support, while committees with 'Low' clarity and 'Inadequate' resources received none. Therefore, it was impossible to isolate interactions in high/low combinations. Counterexamples, such as committees with high support but only medium output (e.g. Economic & Commercial Matters, Gender Equality), or medium support but high performance (e.g. Health), further weaken the case of moderation.

For contact conditions, the evidence is somewhat more suggestive, but still insufficient. A few cases, specifically Economic & Commercial Matters show that medium contact conditions can translate into strong cooperation under high support, and Crisis Management illustrates that low support coincides with cooperation breakdowns despite positive contact conditions. However, these cases are isolated, and more committees perform in line with their contact conditions (Medium contact = Medium support = Medium cooperation), rather than demonstrate a generalisable moderation. Accordingly, based on the patterns identified institutional support does not operate as a moderating variable across institutional or contact conditions.

Certain methodological choices might have contributed to the absence of moderation effects in the dataset. The use of a three-point ordinal scale meant that most coded values clustered around the ‘Medium’ category. Even if ‘Medium’ was interpreted as being on the positive end of the scale, the coding could not capture incremental changes in this range. A ‘Medium’ to ‘Low’ change would imply a complete deterioration, while ‘Medium’ to ‘High’ would suggest no negative elements, both of which would exaggerate shifts that are actually subtle. Similarly, a ceiling effect for committees coded as ‘High’ could not capture any positive improvements, or even differences in performance for successful committees. Although raw counts were also recorded, they cannot be included in the moderation analysis.

Several examples illustrate this limitation. Humanitarian Affairs was coded as ‘Low’ in output in both periods, despite organising one low impact event in 2019-22, but none in 2023-25. Cultural Heritage received a ‘High’ in output in both periods, despite restoring 23 monuments in the first coding period, and 31 in 2023-25. These examples captured important within-category variation, which unfortunately were invisible in the ordinal scale. Should the measurement scale have been expanded, perhaps to a five-point system, moderation effects might’ve been observed.

In sum, this analysis provides little support for the moderation hypothesis, as institutional support does not consistently strengthen or weaken the effects of institutional or contact conditions on committee performance. While certain methodological choices might have reduced the visibility of moderation, the data still suggest a different relationship between institutional support and performance. The following section explores the possibility that institutional support is an independent predictor, potentially a more decisive force than our conditions alone.

b. Institutional Support as an Independent Predictor

Having found limited evidence of moderation, the analysis now turns to the independent predictor role of institutional support on committee performance, attributing committee variation to changes in Endorsement or Facilitation. In addition, the section also incorporates the temporal sequencing test, examining whether institutional support precedes performance, or simply responds to it over time. In doing so, the analysis also explores the possibility of a reinforcing feedback loop, whereby successful committees attract further support, while weaker ones become further marginalised. These findings are central to answering the

research question, “*How does institutional support influence the performance of the bicommunal Technical Committees in Cyprus?*” elaborating on the mechanisms at play, clarifying if institutional support enables, responds to, or reinforces committee performance over time.

The dataset presented clear and consistent evidence of institutional support as a predictor of performance. Across both reporting periods, committees with ‘High’ Endorsement and Facilitation (e.g. Crime & Criminal Matters, Cultural Heritage, Environment, Health, Economic & Commercial Matters) achieve sustained high output and strong cooperation. Conversely, low-support committees (e.g. Education, Crisis Management, Humanitarian Affairs) produce all round weak performance. Some exceptions exist where committees overperform in cases of ‘Medium’ support (e.g. Gender Equality, Crossings, and Broadcasting). It is possible that ‘Institutional Support’ resembles a threshold-type dynamic. Very low levels of institutional support are associated with severe administrative blockages and cooperation breakdowns, while the presence of at least moderate support appears necessary for committees to function at all. Beyond this minimum level, however, increases in support do not translate into proportionate performance gains, and outcomes become more variable.

The strength of the predictor relationship is a worth-while contribution to the Cyprus problem literature. Consistent institutional support reduces administrative blockages and can accelerate project approvals. Interviewee highlighted how close cooperation with political institutions allowed for bureaucratic facilitation, while the members were able to focus on technical project execution. On the contrary, lack of institutional support, in the form of political interference and blockages, was consistently mentioned as the greatest hurdle faced by committees. For example, interviews with Environment illustrated the difference of project execution in a positive and negative political climate, noting that under the ‘presidency’ of Mr. Tatar in the Turkish Cypriot administration, the committee faced more delays and negative attitudes. This pattern reinforces the argument that institutional support operates with a threshold effect. Its effects appear strongest at the extremes, either through institutional interference or facilitation. As a result, institutional support does not shape outcomes gradually, but rather sets the threshold that makes cooperation possible. Once that threshold is crossed, committees may build trust and deliver results, but when not, no amount of goodwill can compensate for the obstacles they face.

Another way in which the Technical Committees benefit from institutional support is through the provision of legitimacy. Bicomunal cooperation in Cyprus is highly sensitive, particularly when trying to navigate the dynamics of cooperation with an unrecognised administration. Political support shields committees from politicisation and acts as a signal of political permission. For example, an interview with the newly founded committee on Youth emphasised that endorsement from both leaders broadened project engagement beyond the “usual suspects”, those individuals already predisposed to support bicomunal cooperation. By contrast, lack of institutional support can expose committees to scrutiny. An interviewee from Education noted a recent verbal attack on the committee’s work in the Cypriot Parliament. In divided societies, relevant authorities define the boundaries of acceptable cooperation, and without their support technical initiatives can be framed as illegitimate. For this reason, endorsement is necessary for members to safely engage in bicomunal cooperation.

c. Reactive Allocation and Feedback Effect of Institutional Support

Beyond its cross-sectional predictive role, the analysis also examined the temporal relationship between institutional support and committee performance. Reverse causation was tested to see if Institutional Support (2023-25) responded to Committee Performance (2019-22). Findings show strong evidence that institutional support rewards strong performers with higher support, and deprioritises weak performers. Committees that performed ‘Medium’ in performance for the 2019-22 coding period received proportionate support levels in the following period 2023-25. This reactive allocation mechanism suggests a lock-in effect where committees are not able to break through coordination problems, due to a lack of institutional backing. Simultaneously, high performing committees are rewarded with motivation and independence, allowing them to further deliver positive results.

The identification of the reactive allocation mechanism has important implications for understanding the state of bicomunal cooperation in Cyprus. The pattern identified in this study indicates that current performance is likely influenced by past achievements, but also predicts future allocations of institutional support. This self-reinforcing cycle enhances the capacities and visibility of successful committees, but also progressively marginalises struggling committees. In this dynamic, the UN's external role as facilitator becomes particularly significant. As the only actor capable of providing continuity across leadership changes, the UN must help stabilise committees caught in negative cycles. Unfortunately,

several interviewees expressed disappointment in the role of the UN, arguing that they felt no encouragement to increase activity, and expressed regret for the absence of accountability mechanisms in place to discourage political interference. From a theoretical perspective, this reflects a non-fulfillment of the key conditions of contact theory, when the third-party observer fails to reduce tension between participants, and does not shield them from political reprisal (Gaertner et al., 1993). Therefore, proactive UN facilitation might be the only way where feedback loops can be interrupted, helping committees remain engaged and motivated in contexts of uneven domestic support.

4. Implications

In summary, institutional support has a determinant role on committee performance through administrative facilitation and political permission. The former reduces delays and enables project execution, while the latter signals legitimacy. Through reinforcement over time, successful performance also appears to attract further institutional support, creating self-reinforcing feedback loops.

Taken together these findings have important implications for understanding the conditions under which Track 1.5 diplomacy can sustain results. The Cyprus case shows that technical and expert-led cooperation can create interpersonal relationships and deliver tangible benefits to citizens, while formal negotiations are stalled. However, this is only possible when the initiatives are accompanied by consistent and meaningful institutional support, providing both administrative support and political permission to cooperate. While dynamics of non-recognition and international mediation are specific to Cyprus, the implications can transcend to other CBMs. Ensuring good institutional design and interpersonal trust are necessary elements of bicomunal collaboration, but they are insufficient in the absence of political permission through facilitation and protection from elite interference. Track 1.5 diplomacy is therefore not an alternative to formal diplomacy, but a political embedded process whose effectiveness depends on the extent of institutional support, external guarantees and accountability mechanisms. As such, the Cyprus cases highlights insights for other CBMs as well, highlighting the central role of external guarantors in stabilising cooperation in a context of vested interests, but also mitigating negative feedback loops and preventing initiatives from devolving into purely symbolic gestures.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the thesis set out to investigate why the bicommunal Technical Committees in Cyprus obtained uneven success. Specifically, this paper asked the question “*How does institutional support influence the performance of the bicommunal Technical Committees in Cyprus?*” In a context where technical cooperation might be the “only game in town”, understanding the mechanisms which enable and inhibit cooperation in Cyprus is essential. Integrating coded comparative analysis with semi-structured interviews, this paper examined how technical cooperation functions under conditions of unresolved conflict.

The findings paint a more complex picture than initially hypothesised. Contrary to expectations in institutionalist and intergroup contact theory, institutional support did not operate as a moderating variable. Instead, institutional support emerged as the strongest independent predictor of committee performance through its impact on bureaucratic efficiency and cooperation legitimacy. It also sets the threshold for cooperation by determining whether committees can function effectively at all. When institutional support is present, through endorsement and facilitation, committees are able to engage in meaningful cooperation. But when it is absent, even institutional design and strong interpersonal dynamics are insufficient to prevent stagnation.

Such a synthesis of theoretical mechanisms has not been tested previously in the Cypriot context, particularly not through a systematic analysis between all committees. Refining insights from contact theory, this paper found that strong interpersonal dynamics cannot compensate for insufficient institutional support, suggesting that Allport’s “authority support” condition acts as a gatekeeper shaping both committee cooperation processes and output. These findings also contribute to literature on divided societies, by introducing the reactive allocation mechanism to Cyprus, by which performance and institutional support respond to each other over time, and generate feedback loops that either reinforce success or perpetuate stagnation.

Beyond academic implications, the findings hold practical relevance for policymakers in Cyprus. Strengthening bicommunal cooperation requires well-designed mandates, sufficient resources, constructive cooperation design, but most critically institutional support from leadership. Local authorities can multiply their efforts to endorse committee activities and

enable project implementation. International actors, such as the UN, must provide proactive facilitation to shield committees from political volatility and reactive allocation of support that create lock-in trajectories.

This study's limitations affect the internal validity of the findings. The three-point ordinal scale used in coding limited the detection of gradual variation. Moreover, analysis could have benefited from the inclusion of the committees on Broadcasting, Crime & Criminal Matters, and Crisis Management in the interviews to contextualise patterns observed in coded data. Future research would benefit from greater access to primary resources, including meeting notes, project proposals, and overall visibility of committee activities. Future research is also warranted to explore how institutional support is negotiated within each community, perhaps through the interviews of high-level coordinators and negotiators.

The conclusions of this study are also subject to scope conditions. The findings are most relevant to divided societies with unresolved sovereignty disputes, high political sensitivity, and externally facilitated Track 1.5 mechanisms. While the specific dynamics of non-recognition and UN mediation are particular to Cyprus, the underlying mechanisms identified, such as threshold effects of institutional support and self-reinforcing feedback loops, may be relevant to confidence-building initiatives in other contexts.

As an interviewee from the highly successful committee on Cultural Heritage observed, the work of the Technical Committees cannot continue indefinitely in the absence of peace settlement. Unused cultural monuments will weather once more, endangered species will suffer from uncoordinated policies, and children will continue to grow up in biased educational systems. The Technical Committees are expert-led bodies which try to address the needs of both communities. Without institutional support that actively shields and facilitates bicommunal work, even expert-led initiatives are unlikely to translate technical cooperation into durable peace infrastructure, leaving Cyprus trapped within the dynamics that have earned it the label of a “diplomat’s graveyard.”

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Appendix A

A. Interview Script

1. Opening & Consent

- a. Purpose of research.
- b. Informed consent.

2. Background & Role

- a. Could you describe your role within the Committee and how long you have been involved?
- b. How often does your Committee meet, and how do you usually organise your work?

3. Mandate & Scope

- a. What is the aim of your Committee's mandate?
 - In your view, how clear and achievable are these goals?
- b. Are these tasks mostly practical, or do they sometimes overlap with political issues?

4. Resources & Support Framework

- a. How would you describe the availability of resources (financial, technical, logistical) for your Committee's work?
- b. Have there been any delays or obstacles in accessing resources?
 - Could you share an example of how this affected a project?

5. Contact Conditions (Equal Status, Intergroup Cooperation & Common Goals)

- a. Do you feel that members from both sides participate on an equal footing in discussions and decision-making?
 - If not, what kinds of imbalances arise?
- b. How do you address differences in recognition or status between the two sides?
- c. Could you walk me through how members from both communities usually work together on a project?
- d. Do you think these goals are shared equally by members from both communities, or do people sometimes see them differently?

7. Institutional Support

- a. How have international institutions supported your Committee, beyond the Support Facility funding?
- b. How have local institutions (government leaders, ministries, officials) supported your Committee?
- c. On the other hand, has lack of institutional support ever limited your work?

8. Committee Performance

- a. What do you consider the main achievements of your Committee so far?
- b. Beyond tangible results, do you think your Committee has contributed to trust-building between members?

9. Change Over Time

- a. Since 2019, have you noticed any significant changes in how your Committee operates?

10. Reflection & Closing

- a. From your perspective, what factors are most important for the success of a Technical Committee?
- b. If you could change one thing to improve the functioning of your Committee, what would it be?
- c. Is there anything else you would like to add that we have not discussed?

Appendix B

A. Codebook

Variable	Definition	Indicators	Coding Scale	Notes
<i>Mandate Clarity</i>	Degree to which mandates are clearly defined and non-political.	Objectives which can be measured; achieved through practical collaboration; reliance on political context	High (clear, technical); Medium (general, mixed); Low (vague, political)	If mandates combine technical and political features, code as medium clarity.
Anchoring Vignette (Committee Examples)				
High: Cultural Heritage, explicit restoration mandate, measurable through sites preserved.				
Medium: Crime & Criminal Matters, able to exchange information, but sometimes overlaps with political objectives.				
Low: Education, historical narratives interfere with vague objectives.				
<i>Resource Framework</i>	Degree to which financial resources are available, sufficient, and actively mobilised.	Multiple sources of funding; funding delays; no. of project proposals submitted	Strong (sufficient, timely, well-utilised); Limited (partially sufficient, delays, or restrictions); Inadequate (insufficient, under-utilised)	If no formal budget exists, infer from committee projects, visibility, and interview accounts.
Anchoring Vignette (Committee Examples)				
Strong: Cultural Heritage, steady funding secured from UN, EU, and Republic of Cyprus secured until 2027.				

Limited: Health, donor-funded pandemic cooperation but subject to delays in approval via the RoC.

Inadequate: Humanitarian Affairs, in 2022 was awarded 150 euros from the EU Support Facility, whereas other Committees requested budgets of over 100,000 euros.

<i>Equal Status</i>	Member perceptions of equal standing, influence, and status.	Co-chair parity practices; visibility in events; issues of recognition with the Turkish Cypriot Administration	High (equality in decision-making and recognition); Medium (some inequality, with one group having more influence); Low (dominance by one group)	If issues of sovereignty and recognition of the Turkish Cypriot Administration interfere with the cooperation process, consider the medium equal status despite the mandated equal membership of the two communities.
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Anchoring Vignette (Committee Examples)

High: Environment, 2023 UNSG report reveals “positive” dynamics in collaboration and joint presentations by co-chairs.

Medium: Broadcasting & Telecommunications, in 2023 Turkish Cypriot chair proposes projects, yet consults experts from both sides.

Low: Interviewees inform that some Turkish Cypriot members are from the Turkish Cypriot “Foreign Ministry”.

<i>Intergroup Cooperation</i>	Degree of member collaboration, responsibility-sharing, and problem-solving practices.	Joint tasks; distribution of responsibility; symbolic existence	High (active, joint planning, and mutual accountability); Medium (partial collaboration, with one group dependency for implementation); Low (minimal cooperation;
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independent tasks)

Anchoring Vignette (Committee Examples)

High: Environment, 2024 UNSG report reveals collaboration in both sides, and collaboration with other Technical Committees.

Medium: Health, COVID 19 vaccine distribution was effective, but reliant on good-will of the RoC.

Low: Crisis Management, during natural disasters like earthquakes or wildfires, the Committee does not cooperate.

<i>Common Goals</i>	Degree to which committee objectives are shared and require joint effort.	Language in problem statement and goals; visibility of representatives; priority consensus	Strong (shared, mutually beneficial objectives leading to collaboration); Limited (partially shared objectives, benefits contested, some disagreement); Inadequate (contested objectives, frequent disagreement, minimal engagement)	Focus on perceived cooperation potential, not just formal assignments. Clear, technical mandates may exist, but cooperation might still not be seen as necessary and pursued individually by members.
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Anchoring Vignette (Committee Examples)

High: Health, life sharing goals during COVID.

Medium: Economic & Commercial Matters, shared trade facilitation discussed, but issues with Turkish Cypriot recognition.

Low: Crossings, opening of new crossing points only when beneficial to each side.

<i>Institutional Support – Endorsement</i>	Degree in which authorities publicly affirm the work of the Committee, signalling either approval or disapproval.	Public praise of Committee work and goals; Visibility of officials in Committee events	High (consistent, positive recognition); Medium (mixed endorsement; Low (Little recognition, or negative rhetoric)	Lack of evidence of any endorsement can be coded as ‘Low’.
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Anchoring Vignette (Committee Examples)

High: Culture, visibility of authorities in all events organised by the Committee.

Medium: Education, leaders emphasise the importance of the Committee, yet try to manipulate educational material.

Low: Humanitarian Affairs, throughout both reporting periods, no positive mentions of the Committee were found.

<i>Institutional Support – Facilitation</i>	Degree to which operational work is supported through administrative, procedural and logistical support.	Timely approval of proposals; Access to coordination assistance; Shielding from political interference	High (projects receive operational support from authorities); Medium (some delays and bureaucratic hurdles, but work continues); Low (frequent delays and obstruction of committee work)
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Anchoring Vignette (Committee Examples)

High: Crime & Criminal Matters, timely exchange of information on criminal activity.

Medium: Economic & Commercial Matters, respective Chambers of Commerce support the committee, but create bureaucratic delays.

Low: Education, since the 2022 Imagine program suspension, no new projects have been approved.

<i>Performance – Output</i>	Successful completion and implementation of objectives	Number of completed projects; Timing; Visibility of objectives to public	High (multiple projects, timeliness, visible); Medium (small number of projects, slow progress); Low (projects not completed or visible, project delays, blockages)
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Anchoring Vignette (Committee Examples)

High: Cultural Heritage, dozens of monuments restored per year, consistent project delivery.

Medium: Broadcasting & Telecommunications, project of 5G implementation dominating agenda, with little progress in other fields.

Low: Crisis Management, no visible completed projects during 2023-25 reporting period.

<i>Performance – Cooperation Process</i>	Quality of interaction between members, generating trust and sustained engagement	Frequency of meetings; Perceptions on interdependence and dialogue quality	Strong (meaningful, trust-based) Limited (partial, uneven) Inadequate (minimal cooperation, disengaged)
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Anchoring Vignette (Committee Examples)

Strong: Environment, interviews highlight sustained cooperation, despite political climate, attributed to trust.

Limited: Gender Equality, reports highlight irregular meetings, and interviews mention some tension in the committee.

Inadequate: Crisis Management, 2022 UNSG report reveals membership disagreements leading to inactivity.

B. Confidence Tags

Confidence Tag	Criteria	Example
<i>High</i>	Two or more independent sources agree; no major contradictions	UNSG + UNDP both confirm sustained funding
<i>Medium</i>	Evidence from two sources but minor contradictions	UNSG positive, interview notes some negative points
<i>Low</i>	Only one source OR conflicting evidence	Only UNSG report, or interview contradicts entirely

Appendix C

You may access the following [link](#) for the raw data, interview notes, calculations, and source overview of the paper.

Due to insufficient data, the Committee on Broadcasting is excluded from temporal analysis due to missing variables, and the Committee on Youth is treated separately due to its creation in April 2025.

A. Summary codes of Technical Committees (2019-22)

Committee	Mandate Clarity (H/M/L)	Resource Framework (S/L/I)	Equal Status (H/M/L)	Intergroup Cooperation (H/M/L)	Common Goals (H/M/L)	Institutional Support – Endorsement (H/M/L)	Institutional Support – Facilitation (H/M/L)	Performance – Output (H/M/L)	Performance – Cooperation Process (S/L/I)
Broadcasting & Telecommunications	High	Limited	n/a	High	n/a	Low	n/a	Medium	Strong
Crime & Criminal Matters	Medium	Limited	High	High	High	High	Medium	High	Strong
Crisis Management	Medium	Inadequate	n/a	High	High	Low	Low	Medium	Inadequate
Crossings	Medium	Inadequate	Low	Low	Medium	Low	Low	Low	Inadequate
Cultural Heritage	High	Strong	High	High	High	High	High	High	Strong
Culture	Medium	Strong	High	Medium	High	High	Medium	High	Limited
Economic & Commercial Matters	Medium	Limited	Medium	Medium	High	High	Medium	Medium	Strong
Education	Low	Limited	High	High	High	High	Low	Low	Limited
Environment	Medium	Strong	High	High	High	High	High	High	Strong
Gender Equality	Medium	Inadequate	Medium	Medium	Low	High	Medium	Medium	Limited

Health	Medium	Strong	Low	High	High	Medium	Medium	High	Strong
Humanitarian Affairs	Low	Inadequate	High	Medium	Low	Low	Low	Medium	Limited

B. Summary codes of Technical Committees (2023-25)

Committee	Mandate Clarity (H/M/L)	Resource Framework (S/L/I)	Equal Status (H/M/L)	Intergroup Cooperation (H/M/L)	Common Goals (H/M/L)	Institutional Support – Endorsement (H/M/L)	Institutional Support – Facilitation (H/M/L)	Performance – Output (H/M/L)	Performance – Cooperation Process (S/L/I)
Broadcasting & Telecommunications	High	Inadequate	Medium	Low	n/a	Medium	Low	Medium	n/a
Crime & Criminal Matters	Medium	Strong	High	High	High	High	High	High	Strong
Crisis Management	Medium	Inadequate	Low	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Inadequate
Crossings	Medium	Limited	High	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium	Strong
Cultural Heritage	High	Strong	High	High	High	High	High	High	Strong
Culture	Medium	Strong	High	High	High	High	Medium	High	Strong
Economic & Commercial Matters	Medium	Strong	Medium	Medium	High	High	Medium	High	Strong
Education	Low	Inadequate	High	High	Low	Medium	Low	Low	Inadequate
Environment	Medium	Strong	High	High	High	High	Medium	High	Strong
Gender Equality	Medium	Limited	Medium	High	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Limited
Health	Medium	Strong	High	High	High	High	High	High	Strong
Humanitarian Affairs	Low	Inadequate	Medium	Low	Medium	Low	Low	Low	Limited