

The Geopolitical Realities in the Cyprus Solution Plans (1948-1978)

[Οι Γεωπολιτικές Πραγματικότητες στα Σχέδια Λύσης του Κυπριακού (1948-1978)]

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Introduction

Nicos Christodoulides' book, *The Geopolitical Realities in the Cyprus Solution Plans*, published in 2021 by I. Sideris Publications in Athens, offers a profound exploration of the complex geopolitical dynamics surrounding the Cyprus issue.¹ With an insightful introduction by Angelos Syrigos, Associate Professor at Panteion University, the work delves into the historical and contemporary factors that have shaped proposals for resolving this long-standing conflict. Having originally been released in 2009,² the updated edition reflects Christodoulides' extensive experiences as a diplomat and Minister of Foreign Affairs,³ particularly during the negotiation attempts from 2015 to 2017. This review will examine the book's thematic structure, key insights, and its overall significance in understanding the Cyprus problem.

Historical Context and Geopolitical Dynamics

The book is organised into eight chapters, each providing a detailed analysis of various proposals for resolving the Cyprus issue from 1948 to 1978. In the opening chapter, Christodoulides discusses the consultancy conference initiated by the British colonial authorities in 1948, with an aim to establish a new constitutional order in Cyprus. This historical context is crucial for understanding the roots of the conflict, as it sets the stage for the subsequent political developments. Christodoulides emphasises the prob-

¹ An extensive analysis of Christodoulides' approach to Cyprus solution plans also appears in Christodoulides, N. (2012), 'In Search of a Settlement: Cyprus Solution Plans and International Diplomacy, 1974-1999'. In Christodoulou, P, Varmazi, V. et al. *Introduction to the History of Cyprus*. Open University of Cyprus (available at, <https://kypseli.ouc.ac.cy/handle/11128/1134>, last accessed January 2025).

² The 2009 edition was introduced by Evanthis Chatzivasileiou.

³ Currently, Nicos Christodoulides is the President of the Republic of Cyprus.

lematic nature of these early initiatives, revealing the challenges they posed to meaningful governance.

The second chapter focuses on John Harding's proposal in 1956, highlighting his correspondence with Archbishop Makarios. This exchange illustrates the political dynamics of the time, shedding light on the aspirations and fears of both the colonial authorities and the Cypriot leadership. The third chapter offers an in-depth analysis of the Radcliffe proposal, which aimed for a 'constitution of limited self-government'. Christodoulides critiques its feasibility and contextualises its shortcomings, providing insight into the complexities of governance that continue to resonate in contemporary discussions about Cyprus.

Transitioning to the fourth chapter, the author examines Hugh Mackintosh Foot's 1958 proposal for a transitional period of self-governance. Here, Christodoulides emphasises the reasons for its rejection by all parties involved, highlighting the inadequacies of the proposal in addressing the fundamental issues at stake. The fifth chapter delves into the Macmillan Plan of 1958, presented by British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan. Christodoulides critiques this proposal as fundamentally inconsistent, arguing that it failed to reconcile the conflicting interests of Greek and Turkish Cypriots, a theme that remains significant in contemporary negotiations.

The sixth chapter addresses the Acheson Plan of 1964, discussing the political landscape following the establishment of the Republic of Cyprus. Christodoulides compares this plan with prior British proposals, elucidating the reasons for its rejection and its implications for the broader conflict. In the seventh chapter, he outlines the intercommunal dialogue that took place in Cyprus between 1968 and 1974. This analysis reveals the failures of various initiatives to address the crises that emerged from intercommunal violence, underscoring the persistent challenges in fostering dialogue between the communities.

Finally, the eighth chapter presents an original analysis of the American-British-Canadian Plan, known as the ABC Plan, proposed in 1978. Christodoulides examines its domestic and foreign dimensions, providing a nuanced discussion of Varosha, a city central to the Cyprus conflict. Through these chapters, the author constructs a narrative that intricately weaves historical events with the geopolitical realities that have shaped the Cyprus issue.

Key Insights

Throughout the book, Christodoulides arrives at critical conclusions regarding the geopolitical context of the Cyprus problem. He argues that the repeated failures of

proposed solutions stem from a fundamental misunderstanding of the interests and aspirations of the Cypriots themselves. Instead of fostering a common vision for the island, many proposals have been heavily influenced by the ambitions of foreign powers, which have consistently sidelined the voices of those directly affected by the conflict.

One of the most compelling arguments presented in the book is the assertion that resolving the Cyprus problem solely within the framework of the Greco-Turkish conflict is fundamentally flawed. Christodoulides emphasises that the United Kingdom's primary interest has often been to maintain its geopolitical foothold in the region rather than to facilitate a viable solution to the political disputes within Cyprus. This perspective invites readers to critically reassess the motivations driving international involvement in the Cyprus issue and consider the implications for peace and stability in the region.

The author's insights are particularly relevant in light of the deadlock that emerged during the 2017 negotiations, highlighting the recurring theme that foreign interests often outweigh the genuine aspirations of the Cypriots. Christodoulides' work serves as a critical resource for understanding the historical and geopolitical underpinnings of the Cyprus problem, challenging readers to reconsider past and present narratives surrounding resolution efforts.

Conclusion

In summary, Nicos Christodoulides' *The Geopolitical Realities in the Cyprus Solution Plans* is an essential read for scholars, policymakers, and anyone interested in the intricate dynamics of the Cyprus problem. The book not only provides a historical overview of various proposals, but also offers valuable lessons about the importance of including the perspectives and interests of local populations in any resolution efforts. By systematically analysing the geopolitical factors that have shaped the discourse around the Cyprus issue, Christodoulides equips readers with a deeper understanding of the complexities involved in achieving a lasting settlement.

The work stands out as a significant contribution to the ongoing dialogue about the future of Cyprus, emphasising the necessity for a comprehensive, inclusive approach to peace-building in the region. By engaging with this text, readers gain not only a historical perspective but also a framework through which to view current and future efforts to resolve one of the most enduring conflicts in the Eastern Mediterranean. As the Cyprus issue continues to evolve, Christodoulides' insights will remain pertinent, guiding both academic inquiry and practical diplomacy in the pursuit of a just and lasting resolution.

Giorgos Kentas