

The Cyprus Problem: What Everyone Needs to Know

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This is a simple yet daring book. It is simple in that it attempts to explain the basics of the Cyprus problem to those who have no background knowledge and endeavours to do so in an even-handed way. Yet, it is daring because the details and sophisticated nature of the Cyprus problem is a minefield for those attempting to write such a book, as there is the constant threat that any interpretation by the author will make some readers take offence, deeming the author biased. In addition, writing such a book is a challenging task, since those with knowledge of the issues of the Cyprus problem will want more intricate details whereas the author has attempted to make a book that is interesting and accessible to anyone. By and large, the author has succeeded and made a book that is interesting, informative, and of use to those with no background in issues linked with the Cyprus problem.

Following the introduction, the book is structured into five chapters. Chapter 1 deals with the elementary background information on Cyprus, explaining the basic historical, ethnic, and political history of the island of Cyprus. This chapter gives a good overview of Cyprus, allowing readers to have a rudimentary background in issues related to the Cyprus problem, including knowledge of such influential political figures in Cyprus as Archbishop Makarios and Rauf Denktaş. Chapter 2 explains the political history of Cyprus from the set-up of the Republic in 1960 to the events of 1974. Chapter 3 describes the political division of the island since 1974 and the many attempts to negotiate a solution to the Cyprus problem. Chapter 4 is dedicated to key issues under discussion regarding solutions on the island, such as the possibility of a federal solution, property issues, and the expulsion of settlers from Turkey. The final chapter 5 focuses on the issues that current and future settlement efforts will have to deal with.

Despite the strengths of the book, there are some elements that make it less successful than it could have been. My first reaction on reading the book's title is that it is arrogant sounding. I later learned that 'What Everyone Needs to Know' is a series, so although it seemed to me a rather arrogant and condescending title, the title is not really the author's fault, but I suspect there are others like myself who find the title of the work quite odd/awkward.

A major weakness of the book is the general lack of visual information. While the front cover is very attractive and the short length of the book is appreciated, it was rather astounding that there are only two maps and no tables or figures to be found in the book. As a quantitatively-minded

social scientist, I was hoping to see more visual representations of data on many of the topics that are discussed in the book or important topics that could be debated, such as the population of the island, comparisons of levels of development of the two major political entities on the island, and the various figures for estimating the population size of the settlers from Turkey. On occasion, the author does write about public opinion polls and such references would have been obvious things to illustrate by using tables or some other graphical expressions of data. However, such accompaniments are missing and make it a somewhat weaker book than it would have been if some tables, charts, or even cartoons had been added. As a result, the book is prose, uninterrupted by visual information.

There could have been additional records included in the book to make it a little more informative and allow readers to refer back to facts and figures from time to time. For example, a table with the dates of the presidencies of the two political entities on the island would have been good to allude to once in a while. A timeline would have also been appreciated, highlighting the major political events linked with the island. I would have liked to have seen mini-biographies for some of the major political actors on the island (apart from the short ones given in the text for Archbishop Makarios and Rauf Denktaş) since it would probably have strengthened the book and made it a more self-contained introductory reader for the Cyprus problem.

There are some difficulties with language that I encountered, some of which is unavoidable and this is why anyone writing on the topic of the Cyprus problem almost always faces issues of language, as the author acknowledges in the introduction. For example, the author writes of a political entity on the island without referring to it as the 'so-called' or by delimiting the acronym with quotation marks. These very subtle cues will make anyone who is familiar with the Cyprus problem suspect prejudice, either wrongly or rightly and it can be appreciated that any author who writes on this issue will come under fire for whatever language is adopted and readers will imagine bias, just based upon the peculiarities of the language used in referring to basic things on the island. While the author concedes some difficulties with language usage linked with the Cyprus problem, he does not explain the logic behind why someone in Cyprus may disagree with 'TRNC' being referred to with or without quotation marks. Unfortunately, the author did not attempt to educate more thoroughly readers about the language and complications in using language in reference to the Cyprus problem. It seems that this would have been a good opportunity to inform readers about the problems and challenges that even the language of the Cyprus problem occasions.

One oddity that I found was the reference to 'gypsies'. I was under the impression that this word was considered antiquated and/or derogatory, although the author used it several times without educating the reader as to what the proper language ought to be when referring to this group of people. The author gave up a chance to enlighten people in respect of the correct term to apply here, although choosing this word may indeed have been an editorial choice by Oxford or its proof-readers/editors, so it may not actually be something to be blamed on the author.

A shortcoming that I found in the book is that there is the tendency to boil down the

conflicts between the communities as purely a function of ethnicity. The author repeatedly refers to positions or attitudes that are either 'Turkish Cypriot' or 'Greek Cypriot'. The difficulty in this is that it frequently treats the ethnicities as monoliths with uniform attitudes on aspects of the Cyprus problem. This is one of the risks of the simplification of the explanation of the Cyprus problem; attitudes and positions are many times explained in reduced terms, overlooking the variations of opinion that exist within the communities. Cleavages in opinions within the different communities are largely passed over.

There are many people who will find the book useful. It would obviously be helpful to diplomats and undergraduate students, or indeed anyone interested in learning the fundamentals of the Cyprus problem. I could envisage that this book would be attractive to people vacationing in Cyprus, if they are interested in the Cyprus problem, although it may be a difficult read for those without a social science background. In general, this is a decent straightforward reference book that those working on issues related to the Cyprus problem would most likely want to have at their disposal. I can imagine also that this book would be beneficial to those who teach courses that would entail discussions of the Cyprus problem with undergraduate students, although it may be a bit too basic for use in post-graduate courses on conflict, unless it is merely used as a starting point with more in-depth texts to support it.

All-in-all, the main weakness remains the lack of supporting visual data, but this is a worthy and interesting book. The idea of making a short and readable book that provides a basic introduction to the Cyprus problem is a good one and the author has succeeded in making the book come to life.

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