

Britain and Cyprus: Key Themes and Documents since World War II

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William Mallinson's new book is a collection of documents which offers an exploration of British policy-thinking with regards to the developments of the Cyprus Question during the years 1944-1979. As such, this publication constitutes a valuable addition to the existing historiography of international relations, Anglo-Greek relations with Cyprus as a focal point, British foreign policy or Britain and the Mediterranean. Primarily, however, it is an important contribution to the English-language bibliography about post war Anglo-Cypriot relations.

The book is organised into ten chapters plus a section with the author's final comments. Within the eleven pages of Chapter 1 a historical background to Cyprus is offered, covering the years from the colonisation by the Mycenaean Greek and the establishment of the Greek character of the island, continuing with the several foreign rulers and the eventual creation of the Cyprus Republic in 1960 and concluding with the post-independence period up to Cyprus' accession to the European Union in 2004. Chapter 2 depicts the disagreements of the British officials in policy formulation whether Cyprus should be included in the Greek constitutional fabric in order to combat communism or not, because such a prospect was too risky since Greece could yet become communist. The efforts of London to create tension between Greece and Turkey are also illuminated. Chapter 3 provides archival documentation about the British assistance and encouragement to Archbishop Makarios, the President of Cyprus, to propose the 'Thirteen Points' amendment of the Cypriot constitution; furthermore, the various interpretations that British officialdom gave to the obligations of Britain regarding Cyprus under the Treaty of Guarantee and Alliance and an inclination not to commit to Cyprus' defence in case of a Turkish invasion. Chapter 4 explores the British attitude towards the heating events of the coup and Turkish invasion to Cyprus, pointing out London's clear awareness of Turkish plans but also of its indecision and submissiveness to the US despite the Treaty of Guarantee. Chapter 5 continues throwing light upon the British government's incapability to undertake substantive initiatives without US consultation during the Cyprus crisis in July-August 1974; a significant segment of this chapter is also dedicated to the negative criticism of certain British diplomats, a German State Secretary and a French Foreign Minister about the handlings of Henry Kissinger, the US Secretary of State. Chapter 6 demonstrates that Britain's confidence in relation to the viability of the British Sovereign Bases in Cyprus was seriously damaged during the invasion of 1974. However, on reflection of the British looking for a way out of this problem, the US government's beliefs as to the usefulness of the bases as staging areas for the Middle East region formed the determining consideration for their retention. Therefore, concerning the process of decision-making about this matter specifically, Britain lost power to the US. Chapter 7 opens up with an historical review of the intercommunal talks in Cyprus since 1968, followed by two long analyses of the talks produced in 1976 and 1978 by the Head of Chancery at the British High

Commission, Michael Perceval. The remainder of this chapter continues with a selective presentation of documents as well as comments by the author, thereby providing the reader with an account of the ebb and flow of intercommunal talks from 1969 until the 'Ten points Agreement' of 1979 – although from a British point of view. In Chapter 8, emphasis is given to the link between Turkish policies about Cyprus and its claims over the Greek islands in the Aegean Sea. From the beginning Britain oriented itself towards a policy of non-involvement in the specific Greek-Turkish dispute in spite of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's recognition that the Turkish claims were weak. The exploitation made of the case of Cyprus by the Turkish government in order to gain tactical advantages in the Aegean was another realisation reached by the same department. Chapter 9 focuses precisely on the comments of some British diplomats on the conduct of Turkey against Greece and Cyprus. Indeed, despite the fact that the British diplomats believed that their national interests were served by supporting Turkey and not Greece in their disputes, they still shared views occasionally about the Turkish stance which could be described as criticism or even as mild exasperation. Chapter 10 reveals the expressed irritation of the British government from time to time following French activities which were sympathetic towards the Greek and not towards the British and Turkish sides. Nonetheless, it is not an implication of the specific chapter that Cyprus was a significant irritant in the Franco-British relations. Finally, instead of adding a Conclusion segment, the author prefers to dedicate the last pages of his work to explain his decision to follow an approach based on facts and not on theory or fashion. In this manner, as supported by him, he is able to avoid imprisonment in frameworks or models. Furthermore, he underlines some useful lessons learned from studying documents such as the continuity of method displayed in policy formulation as well as the process of how decisions are reached; moreover, this intellectual freedom is allowed to play no role in policy formulation but a dichotomy often exists between dispassionate diplomats and the human factor. The importance of human reality should, therefore, also be taken account of in international relations.

William Mallinson makes apt and extensive use of primary material. Archival research – which according to the author lasted for over seventeen years – was conducted at the National Archives of the United Kingdom at Kew. Nevertheless, a greater variety of secondary sources could have been used in the narrative. Although one more question remains as to whether a monograph would be a more suitable way of presentation than a 'theme-document' book, a fair amount of analysis, evaluation and comment of the primary sources is provided. Thus, a reasonably balanced picture of the topics explored is achieved. Additionally, the absence of a single segment at the end of the publication that would summarise all the conclusions is counter balanced by a conclusion at the end of each chapter.

Overall, this is an important book where an independent researcher delivers useful archival material for the reader whilst avoiding the raising of suspicions that usually surround similar official publications by governments. Over and above this, William Mallinson's research could prove to be of major assistance by introducing Cypriot undergraduate students to the study of British documents. It certainly adds to our knowledge of Anglo-Cypriot relations and the history of the Cyprus Problem whereby it opens up avenues for similar 'theme-document' collections about Turkish, French or Greek policy formulation with Cyprus as a focal point.

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