

The Cyprus Conflict and the Ambiguous Effects of Europeanization

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Abstract

The traditional literature on Europeanization conceptualised the phenomenon as a one-sided socialisation process in which EU rules, norms and policies trickled down to member states. This was especially true for new member states. In the case of Cyprus, this interpretation has been particularly obvious, and not only among academics. Among politicians as well there was a view, even after the Annan Plan had failed, that Cyprus could be socialised into a particular mode of 'European thinking', much like Greece had experienced over the decades of its membership, which would allow for a solution to the conflict in the medium- to long-term. While it is empirically too early to say whether this view was right or wrong, the present signs are far from encouraging, and may even point in the direction of a reverse socialisation effect, whereby several member states appear to have internalised the logic of the Republic of Cyprus in its approach towards Turkey's accession negotiations. Indeed the fact that almost half of the substantive chapters in Turkey's accession negotiations have been blocked due to the Cyprus impasse cannot be viewed as being the responsibility of the Republic of Cyprus alone, but rather of other – often Turkey-sceptic – member states that have been willingly socialised into accepting the Republic's discourse over the link between the conflict and Turkey's accession. At the same time, the one-sided, top-down version of Europeanization has come under intense theoretical debate, and authors increasingly stress the ambiguous nature of Europeanization. In this article we will review this debate in order to demonstrate that the integration process did have an impact on Cyprus, but that this impact changed the political terms of the debate without imposing a particular way forward towards conflict transformation. It has enabled political actors to alter and strengthen their arguments both in favour and against a solution and allowed the Republic of Cyprus to influence the EU's stance towards the conflict. This makes the Cyprus conflict a prime example to warn against unidirectional conceptualisations of Europeanization, whether in academia or politics.

Keywords: Europeanization, EU-ization, Cyprus conflict, Cypriotization, Turkey, accession negotiations, conflict transformation, socialisation

Introduction: The European Union and Change in Cyprus

A decade ago, Kevin Featherstone argued 'that the stimulus from the EU represents the most important transformation of Cypriot society in four decades of independence' (Featherstone, 2000, p. 160). The challenges Featherstone referred to affected a broad range of actors within the

Republic of Cyprus, but of course the main debate at the time concerned the Cyprus conflict: Would the Europeanization of this conflict help to bring about a solution? A particularly prominent argument was that accession negotiations would act as a 'catalyst' towards a solution (Diez, 2002). Featherstone himself, incidentally, seems to have been sceptical and considered 'Europeanizing' the problem' to be 'hazardous' (Featherstone, 2000, p. 161). Yet the vast majority of commentators were a lot more optimistic. Indeed, until today Europeanization is often seen as the panacea to heal the wounds of Cyprus. In a recent book on the conflict, Harry Anastasiou (2006), for instance, pitches the ills of nationalism against the promise of Europeanization.

In our view, this is a too unidirectional view of the EU's impact, which is in line with simplistic notions of Europeanization as they dominated the literature until recently. In these conceptualisations of Europeanization, placing a country within the EU context would transform domestic policies, politics and societies, albeit to different degrees. We will shortly summarise this literature and derive from it expectations about the Europeanization of the Cyprus conflict. We will then develop a more complex notion of Europeanization, before discussing two central aspects in relation to Cyprus: we will ask who is Europeanizing whom, and discuss the way in which the concept of Europe has enabled different parties to the conflict to reconstruct, but not fundamentally transform, their positions. In the conclusion, we ask whether our sceptical assessment is due to the early stage at which we are writing this article – only six years after EU membership – again, we take a more sceptical view. Before we start, we should note one caveat: Our discussion focuses on the Europeanization of the Cyprus conflict and not on broader political or socio-economic changes within Cypriot society. The latter would no doubt also be highly interesting, but would require a more in-depth analysis that we cannot perform in the space provided for this special issue.

The Traditional Conceptualisation of Europeanization

An initial and still widespread use of the concept of Europeanization, especially in relation to enlargement, regards it as the adaptation of national policies to EU standards, or what Frank Schimmelfennig and Uli Sedelmaier (2005, p. 7) call 'rule adoption'. Some authors have therefore suggested that in fact, it should rather be called 'EU-ization' (e.g. Diez, Agnantopoulos and Kaliber, 2005, p. 2; Quaglia *et al.*, 2007, p. 407; Mörth, 2003, p. 159). This has resulted in a debate about the conditions of Europeanization. While on the one hand, the 'goodness of fit' argument (Risse, Cowles and Caporaso, 2001) suggests that Europeanization is successful if national policy norms are compatible with EU norms, on the other hand, it is also recognised that a certain degree of misfit is needed to provide the initial incentive for change (Börzel and Risse, 2000). This shows that Europeanization is no automatic response to developments at the EU level, and that both local actors and circumstances play an important role in determining the specific path of change. By and large however, the initial conceptualisation saw Europeanization as a process induced by European governance and therefore as a 'top-down' process.

A number of authors have suggested that this narrow conception of Europeanization needs to be widened to take account of the variety of changes taking place in the context of Europeanization. The first conceptualisations of Europeanization developed out of policy studies and consequently focused on policy change (Featherstone, 2003; Haverland, 2003, p. 203). We can thus refer to the associated processes as 'policy-Europeanization'. Yet EU member states and arguably non-member states to the extent that they are affected by the various forms of EU 'external governance' (Lavenex, 2004) undergo more profound transformations in the context of European integration.

A second change considers not only adaptations of policies, but predominantly transformations in the broader political system (e.g. Goetz and Hix, 2001), which we therefore call 'political Europeanization'. These range from changes in ministerial structures to account for the EU decision-making process to changes in the structure and strength of civil society through the addition of another layer of political decision-making in a 'multi-level' system (Marks *et. al.*, 1998; Hooghe and Marks, 2001). For instance, EU law requires the involvement of private actors insofar as direct financial assistance is channelled to non-governmental bodies in the context of structural funds, research framework programmes or contractual arrangements. Hence, it is not only the product of the legislative process that changes, but also the process as such.

The transformation of civil society through Europeanization is then also linked to a broader societal change, or 'societal Europeanization', which goes beyond the political process to include the 'construction of systems of meanings and collective understandings' (Cowles and Risse, 2001, p. 219). Such changes can involve the self-conceptualisation of individuals engaged in EU institutions, including their personal political views, what they consider standard behaviour for example in bureaucracies, and their notion of identity (Olsen, 2002). They can also involve the re-articulation of broader societal identities, for instance through situating national identities in a broader EU context (Risse, 2001, p. 202; Wæver, 1998, 2008), or through moving away from a purely national identity to a multi-layered or 'marble cake' identity (Risse, 2008, p. 153).

A fourth type of Europeanization, 'discursive' Europeanization, can be distinguished from those surveyed so far because it focuses less on substantive changes towards a European standard but rather on changes to the way in which the broader public debate operates. Such research investigates the degree to which media discourses in EU member states reports about developments in other member states, refers to actors from other member states, uses similar argumentative tropes, and therefore establishes a European public sphere (e.g. Koopmans and Pfetsch, 2006; Trenz, 2004). This type of Europeanization is more clearly 'bottom-up' than most versions of policy-Europeanization at the other end of the spectrum. Its main mechanism is not independent of, but does not require activities on the EU level.

Cypriot Expectations

How does Cyprus, and particularly the Cyprus conflict, fit into this picture? What is the relationship between Europeanization and the evolution of the Cyprus conflict? The answer to

these questions depends of course on whose articulation we look at. The expectations of what the EU can 'do' to Cyprus differed from those seeing it first and foremost as a change in the strategic environment to those who were hoping for a fundamental change in the construction of what it means to be 'Cypriot'. Bearing this in mind, all four notions of Europeanization played a role in these expectations.

To start with, the Greek and Greek-Cypriot politicians who advocated Cyprus' EU membership as a means to strengthen the Greek Cypriot strategic position were primarily seeking a change of Turkish policies towards the conflict and thus a form of 'indirect' policy-Europeanization. To the extent that Turkey also has the ambition to become an EU member, Turkey would have to meet EU demands that Greek Cypriots would be able to shape. The reversal of Turkey's Cyprus policy at the turn of the century in support of a federal solution in Cyprus suggests that policy Europeanization in part took place. In the literature, this is also known as change induced by conditionality (Tocci, 2007, pp. 13-15) or as the 'compulsory' impact (Diez, Stetter and Albert, 2006, pp. 572-573). There was, however, also the expectation that in the course of accession negotiations, Greek Cypriots too would have to change policies to less hostile ones through the adoption of the *acquis communautaire* (Diez, 2002, p. 145). By and large, this strategy was less successful, mainly because of the decision to ignore northern Cyprus in the negotiations which had the effect of bracketing the conflict.

The expectation of political Europeanization also came in different variations. Aimed at Turkish Cypriots, the hope was that the potential benefits of EU membership would strengthen the hands of civil society actors and the opposition movement – an expectation that to some extent came true (Balkır and Yalman, 2009), but required first a banking crisis followed by the formation of a wider opposition movement, which then used the EU as a reference point in their demonstrations and political claims. It also required the launch of Turkey's accession process which provided the necessary security reassurances for the Turkish Cypriot opposition. Moreover, the effects of Turkish Cypriot political Europeanization have not consolidated (Kaymak and Vural, 2009) as signalled by the resurgence of Turkish Cypriot nationalism in the 2009 parliamentary elections and 2010 presidential elections. As far as Greek Cypriots were concerned, the hope was that the control of the political elite over the political process would slowly be weakened, and a stronger civil society independent of political parties and the church would form, which had been more or less absent in Cyprus. In this respect, it is too early to come to a final assessment, although our impression is that civil society has certainly been strengthened since accession (Heinrich and Khallaf, 2005, p. 12).

Societal Europeanization involves a change in identities and interests, and thus is most directly related to conflicts in that such a change also alters the basis of a conflict, which consists of an incompatibility of these very identities and interests. We have elsewhere referred to this process as a form of social learning (Tocci, 2007, pp. 15-16) or the 'constructive impact' of integration (Diez, Stetter and Albert, 2006, p. 574). Thus, there was an expectation that the catalyst of EU

membership would lead to a change in the preference structure of Turkish Cypriots who would subordinate concerns about their identity and security to the pursuit of material benefits or realise that their security, especially in terms of individual rights, can be better guaranteed within an EU framework. Our assessment in this respect is mixed: with the regime change in northern Cyprus, there was also a shift in state interests, which have made a solution much more likely (as evidenced by the acceptance of the Annan Plan). Furthermore, individual rights are now taken more seriously in northern Cyprus (Özersay and Gürel, 2009) as evidenced for example by the establishment of the Immovable Property Commission, which in March 2010 was deemed as an appropriate domestic remedy to handle property cases by the European Court of Human Rights. At the same time, however, we would argue that identity and security concerns still play an important role and have not been wholly subordinated to the target of EU membership (on the role of security in the Annan Plan referendum, see e.g. Lordos, 2009). Likewise, change among Greek Cypriots is still in its infancy, to say the least. The picture still prevailing is that on the societal front the degree of Europeanization in Cyprus is relatively low (Axt, Schwarz and Wiegand, 2008, pp. 121-164). Given the experience in other member states so far, the time that has lapsed since the Republic of Cyprus became an EU member is probably too short to come to a concluding assessment on societal change. However, and more worryingly, the empirical evidence on identity change in the course of European integration is also rather mixed.

In contrast to the first three forms of Europeanization, expectations regarding discursive Europeanization were limited. One could argue however that there is a considerable degree of self-centredness in Cyprus as the world is mostly seen through the eyes of the conflict. When it comes to the coverage of the conflict in public discourse and the media on both sides, discursive Europeanization also appears to be circumscribed (Bailie and Azgin, 2009). In that sense, a discursive Europeanization would certainly also help to transform the conflict through a change in the discourse that sustains it. This is an area that certainly ought to be addressed much more often in future studies.

Revisiting the Concept of Europeanisation

All in all, the catalyst of EU membership, at least so far, has only partially met expectations. Above all, the Annan Plan failed and the conflict persists. The negotiation process launched in 2008 while applauded at home and abroad has failed, to date, to gather momentum let alone yield a breakthrough. In part, this is due to a lack of consistency on behalf of the EU, in particular regarding the lifting of the condition of a settlement before membership, which meant that the EU gave away the main instrument to enforce policy Europeanization in relation to the conflict (Tocci, 2007, pp. 46-47). However, the failures of the EU in Cyprus also alert us to severe problems related to the one-sided conceptualisation of Europeanization that prevails in the literature.

There are two major problems with the image of Europeanization as a top-down process that are of direct relevance to Cyprus. The first problem lies with the unidirectional conceptualisation

that it implies. What 'Europe' stands for, what its norms and values actually are is also determined by its member states, and not only the other way round. Member states, and especially new member states, can change the outlook of other member states and EU actors, and often 'Europeanize' their problems by bringing them onto the EU level. In fact, a considerable number of EU laws originate in proposals floated initially by specific member states.

The second problem lies with a highly simplified understanding of the role of local actors and how they respond to developments in the EU. The identity of Europe and its norms and values are often construed by local actors in ways unforeseen in Brussels and other EU capitals. In addition, these constructions of Europe and its norms and values can be used to legitimise and reinforce national and local identities and interests, rather than changing them, as the notion of societal Europeanization would expect.

Below, we want to outline how these problems have played a major role in Cyprus. The Cyprus conflict has indeed been 'Europeanized', alas not in the way originally expected by those hoping for a swift resolution in the context of the EU.

Who is 'Europeanizing'?

In Cyprus, rather than a unidirectional Europeanization of the conflict, there appears to be a parallel opposing trend at work too: the 'Cypriotization' of EU policies towards the conflict and Turkey. Since its entry in the EU, member state Cyprus has acted as a formidable break on EU policies towards northern Cyprus and Turkey.

Following the failure of the Annan Plan, then UN Secretary General Kofi Annan called upon the international community to eliminate economic restrictions on north Cyprus (UN Secretary General, 2004). This position was endorsed both by the European Commission and the EU Council of Ministers on the eve of the May 2004 enlargement (Council of Ministers, 2004). The logic underpinning these calls was that the referendums created an obligation to compensate the Turkish Cypriots and invalidated the logic that normalising economic relations with the north would assist secession. It was also felt that lifting the isolation would support reunification insofar as it would help to bridge the economic gap between the two sides (Watson, 2009). In the spirit of these arguments, two measures were proposed by the European Commission on aid and trade respectively.

The more significant Commission initiative was on direct trade between northern Cyprus and the EU. To overcome the problem of origin certificates, the Commission proposed that certificates issued by the Turkish Cypriot Chamber of Commerce could be accepted on the grounds that the Chamber had been lawfully set up under the 1960 arrangements. The Republic of Cyprus adamantly resisted this regulation, insisting on its sole right to certify and verify origin of Cypriot exports. Moreover, it objected to the use of Turkish Cypriot ports, arguing that this would be illegal because the government of Cyprus is unable to control them. Politically, it claimed

that direct trade would induce a creeping recognition of northern Cyprus as the 'TRNC', and thus significantly change its present legal standing.

The wrangling over this regulation has been symptomatic of reverse Europeanization of EU policies towards the conflict and Turkey. The Greek Cypriots, supported by the Council's legal service, successfully argued that the direct trade regulation required unanimity. Having established its right to veto, the Greek Cypriot government has blocked all initiatives to approve and implement the regulation. Despite successive efforts by the Luxembourg Presidency in the first half of 2005, the British Presidency in the second half of 2005, and the Finnish Presidency in the second half of 2006, the direct trade regulation remains pending, although it has acquired some new life with the Lisbon Treaty (see below). When in 2006 the Finnish Presidency turned its attention to the problem, it sought to secure the direct trade regulation alongside Turkey's implementation of the Additional Protocol to its customs union agreement with the EU allowing Greek Cypriot-flagged flights and vessels into Turkish air and seaports. With the failure of the initiative, Turkey's EU accession process has also become victim of the conflict. In 2006 eight chapters in its accession negotiations have been frozen, following a further six chapters in 2009.

These developments beg the question: who is Europeanizing whom? Cyprus' EU membership, to date, has not fundamentally altered Greek Cypriot attitudes towards northern Cyprus and Turkey. Unlike the Commission and most member states, the Republic of Cyprus claims that the international isolation of northern Cyprus should persist. Greek Cypriot attitudes towards Turkey's EU accession process have also remained unaltered. While favourable in principle to Turkey's membership, the Republic of Cyprus acts in the belief that Turkey's accession negotiations must be conditional to Ankara's concessions on the conflict. When outside the EU, the Greek Cypriots argued that Cyprus membership would catalyse a solution on the island insofar as it would strengthen the Republic's bargaining hand and induce policy Europeanization in Turkey. Inside the EU, the Greek Cypriots have used their acquired leverage to shape EU policies towards northern Cyprus and Turkey. In other words, rather than a unidirectional Europeanization of the Cyprus conflict, the conflictual dynamics of the Eastern Mediterranean have made their way to Brussels.

What explains this 'bottom-up' trend? The ability of Cyprus, with its less than a million citizens, to dictate EU policy towards Turkey and northern Cyprus is perplexing at first sight. Yet the overbearing presence of the conflict in Cypriot politics has rendered Cyprus a 'single issue' member state, which uses the limited leverage exclusively in relation to EU decisions on northern Cyprus and Turkey. This, alongside the principle of solidarity amongst member states and the low political salience of the Cyprus conflict in European (and international) politics, goes far in explaining Cyprus' ability to exercise veto power when it comes to EU policies towards the conflict. Indeed on the few occasions in which another member state has attempted to reinsert the direct trade regulation on the Council's agenda for example, the Republic has gone up in arms, summoning and lecturing that member state ambassador on the inadmissibility of the

proposition, inducing the latter to back down.¹ Much like Greece during the first two decades of its EC membership (Tocci, 2004, pp. 119-143), the Republic of Cyprus has acted as a single issue member since its entry in the Union in 2004.

Notwithstanding Cyprus' 'single-issue' character and the solidarity of fellow member states, it would be unimaginable that the Republic of Cyprus, alone, would be able to impose its will against all member states regarding EU policies towards Turkey and the conflict. The Cypriotization of EU policies cannot be understood without bearing in mind the explicit or implicit resistance of a number of other member states against Turkey's EU accession process. Indeed, the Cyprus conflict has acted as the official shield behind which other member states have hid their broader concerns regarding Turkey's EU membership. The 'Cypriotization' of EU policies has acted as a welcome break to Turkey's accession process. Particularly since the opening of Turkey's accession negotiations, several member states have voiced their concerns regarding Turkey's EU entry (Tocci, 2008). Key personalities in France have aired their fears that Turkey's entry would imperil the EU's deepening integration and push the EU's borders into the volatile Middle East and Eurasia. Actors in Germany, France, the Netherlands and Austria have argued that Turkey's economic development would entail excessively high levels of redistribution of EU funds to Anatolia, bankrupt the Common Agricultural Policy, and lead to an invasion of 'Turkish plumbers' into the Union. Across the EU, many have questioned Turkey's membership on the grounds of identity, culture and religion. Speaking about 'Cypriotization' does therefore not mean that Cyprus alone is to blame for the course of events, but that the agenda has changed in such a way that it is not the transformation of Cyprus politics that is at the centre, but the infiltration of EU politics by the Cyprus conflict. To the extent that this involved a re-articulation of conflict positions and a re-aligning of conflict parties, there has of course been a degree of Europeanization; yet this has taken a very different and much more complex form than the standard account of Europeanization would have it.

Cyprus and the Struggle over 'Europe'

The limits of top-down Europeanization are also due to a second problem: the appropriation of the language of 'Europe' in order to rearticulate and legitimise unchanged local positions. The pleas of the Greek Cypriot leadership for a 'European solution' in accordance with EU values and the *acquis*, for instance, use a new and more appealing language to persuade the international community and fellow member states of the desirability of its (unchanged) preferred solution to the conflict regarding provisions on governance, property and freedoms (Richmond, 2006, p. 157). 'Europeanization' in this view is taken to mean above all the unrestricted implementation of the four freedoms (of goods, services, capital and labour) and the notion that a divided island would not be in the spirit of the integration project (Demetriou, 2008; Gürel and Özersay, 2006, p. 366).

1 Interview with Commission official, Brussels, March 2010.

For Turkish Cypriots, in contrast, the Europeanization of the Cyprus conflict provided the possibility to find a solution that guaranteed a degree of recognition in a federal solution within the context of the EU, as foreseen in the Annan Plan. This would have required transition periods and derogations from the *acquis* but emphasised the broader norm of peace in the European integration process. Alas, following the entry of Cyprus in the EU and the slowing down of Turkey's accession process, disillusionment among Turkish Cypriots with the EU has run high. Europe has become associated with a complication of the Cyprus problem: the EU is seen as the prime cause for the persisting conflict. In other words, rather than rearticulating their positions in line with EU norms and values, 'Europe' has been written off as a constructive force for the resolution of the conflict by many in Turkey and northern Cyprus. Were a solution to be reached, they would claim, it is in spite rather than because of the EU. Whereas slim majorities in Turkey and northern Cyprus remain committed to a federal solution on the island, they rarely articulate this support in 'European' terms, largely in view of the sharp decline in the legitimacy and reputation of 'Europe' in their eyes.

These instances do not simply represent different instrumentalizations of 'Europe' but also a struggle over the meaning of Europe (Diez, 2001). The Europeanization literature often presumes that such a meaning exists. Yet Europe is an 'essentially contested concept' (Connolly, 1983). This enables local actors to construct 'Europe' in a variety of ways that may well reinforce rather than overcome their conflict positions. The importance of local actors has also been stressed in research on the EU and conflict resolution (see e.g. Stetter, Albert and Diez, 2008, p. 234). In that sense, Europeanization not only depends on the credibility of the EU, but also on ways in which local actors engage with the integration project. One of the problems in Cyprus is that from the start, EU membership was understood by some as an instrument to reinforce one side's strategic position, while for others it meant a path towards changing their own political (and economic) situation. These different constructions and instrumentalizations of the EU and European integration remain under-studied and thus call for further research.

Conclusion

In this article, we have explored in what ways the concept of Europeanization is relevant to the Cyprus conflict. The literature on Europeanization often viewed the process as unidirectional: European (or rather EU) standards, norms and values are expected to trickle down to national and sub-national levels. We have problematised this notion, arguing that Europeanization can work in both directions and the idea of Europe does not always induce a re-articulation of conflict positions in a manner conducive to resolution. The case of Cyprus is emblematic in this respect. While there have been instances of top-down Europeanization, to date the reverse trend seems predominant. Greek Cypriot attempts to use the EU arena to gain strategic leverage on Turkey and rearticulate old conflict positions in European terms has been largely successful. To date, this has led to a 'Cypriotization' of EU policies towards northern Cyprus and Turkey. Consequently, since the EU

entry of Cyprus and the slow-down in Turkey's accession process, Turks and Turkish Cypriots have been increasingly disillusioned with the EU. Hence, the lukewarm and uncommitted Turkish support for the peace processes since 2008. At the same time, 'Europe' seems to mean very different things to Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, and these meanings have reinforced rather than weakened conflict positions.

This said, it is too early to pass final judgement on the Europeanization of the Cyprus conflict. The fate of the Direct Trade regulation is a case in point. As a result of the Lisbon Treaty, this regulation can be seen as falling within the requirements of the co-decision procedure, which foresees that a proposal from the Commission is concomitantly sent both to the Parliament and the Council. However, the parliament's legal affairs committee decided that the Regulation was not for the EP to debate. On one hand, this is a case that further illustrates our argument of 'Cypriotization'. Yet on the other hand, the very fact that the dust had once again been swept off the regulation testifies to the fact that the dynamics underpinning the Europeanization of the Cyprus conflict has no foretold conclusion. Furthermore, in the long-term, Cyprus' position towards Turkey is not set in stone. The precedent of Greece suggests that when Europeanization does occur, it is as real and meaningful as it is painfully slow and reversible. The same is likely to hold true for Cyprus and Turkey, provided that Greek Cypriot Europeanization gains ground before Turkey's accession process is indefinitely shelved.

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