

## *Resolving the Cyprus Conflict: Negotiating History*

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In *Resolving the Cyprus Conflict: Negotiating History*, Michális Michael pursues a methodical and structured investigation of the protracted UN led Cyprus intercommunal negotiations, starting with the collapse of the 'common' state during the intercommunal clashes of 1963-1964 and culminating in the failed referendum of 2004 on the Annan Plan. However, although the narrative is the main corpus of the book, it is no more than the background against which the author sets forth his strenuous investigation of the reasons why the conflict has resisted so much peace effort and why successive UN Secretaries-General have failed to achieve a settlement. At the same time as keeping the principal actors on the stage, i.e. the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities and their respective 'motherlands', he focuses mainly on the conflict resolution strategies employed by the UN and other third parties, namely the United States and Britain, and, since the Helsinki Summit of 1999 with an ever increasing presence, the European Union. After this exposition, the book comes full circle by exploring, as indicated in the title, ways of 'resolving the Cyprus conflict'.

In tracing the emergence and development of Greek Cypriot nationalism, Michael rightly discerns its two conflicting trends, the pragmatist and the idealist, which, through various transformations, have plagued Greek Cypriot politics ever since their earliest incarnation in Archbishop Sofronios and Bishop Kyprianos at the onset of British rule. Nevertheless, in tracing the origins of Turkish Cypriot nationalism, he shares Greek Cypriot historiography according to which it appeared in the 1940s as a result of British instigation and encouragement, whereas recent research by Turkish Cypriot scholars has established the emergence of Turkish Cypriot nationalism, as a direct reaction to Greek Cypriot irredentism and as an offshoot of Young Turk nationalism, four decades earlier. Owing to this misconception, he considers ethnic division and segregation to be a result of British colonial policies and practices. However, given the incompatible envisioning of the future of Cyprus by the two communities (union with Greece versus re-incorporation into the Ottoman state/partition), it is nearer to historical fact, at least until the collapse of the Consultative Assembly in 1948, that British policies influenced developments in the above direction only as a side effect, by keeping, in many respects, the millet ruling and social system that had been inherited from the Ottomans.

The main strength of Michael's book lies in the insights it gives into the role of the UN Secretariat in the effort to resolve the Cyprus conflict, particularly as this role developed from the

facilitative 'good offices mission' in the aftermath of the Turkish invasion of 1974 to the full scale mediation of the Annan initiative and the run up to the referendum of 2004. With the scholarly approach of a conflict resolutionist, Michael focuses primarily on how this mediation evolved through the input of successive UN Secretaries-General and the conflict resolution strategies they deployed vis-à-vis the positions of the conflicting parties, always within the framework of the conditions involved in their mandate and, needless to say, their limitations.

He first explores the positions, motivations and expectations, of the key protagonists, who are correctly identified as the Greek Cypriots on the one side and the Turkish Cypriots and Turkey on the other. Placing the Greek Cypriots face to face with the devastating consequences of the Turkish invasion, he amply demonstrates their confused attitudes towards geographical federation which, by that time, was the only realistic option for a settlement. Even after Makarios had formally endorsed bizonal bicomunal federation in his Four Guideline Agreement with Denktaş (February 1977), Greek Cypriots found it hard to process the idea that not all refugees would return back to their homelands and that there could not be any form of majority rule. This confusion, both at people and leadership level, is shown by Michael to have persisted up until the referendum of 2004 and, in fact, to have played a major role in their resounding NO to the Annan Plan. As for the Turkish positions, Michael shows how the strategic advantage that Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots won after 1974 allowed them to think that they could get along without returning any of the occupied lands; that they could play with time, using it to consolidate the *fait accompli* of the invasion and, in relation to the constitutional aspect, to put forth such conditions that actually meant confederation of two sovereign states. It was this unbridgeable gap that successive UN Secretaries from Kurt Waldheim, through Perez de Cuellar and Boutros Ghali, to Kofi Annan, had to grapple with, equipped as they were with no muscle for enforcement apart from persuasion.

Within this political landscape, which is subsequently interweaved in the narrative of the negotiating process, Michael places the deployment of the UN Secretaries' 'good offices mission' and identifies Waldheim's 'evaluation' of 1981 as a significant landmark which 'assisted future mediating efforts by structuring the negotiating agenda and setting a precedent for future Secretaries-General to intervene and propose median solutions to intractable issues'. He then shows how Cuellar built on Waldheim's 'evaluation' with his 'indicators', his 'working points', and then his three 'draft frameworks' for an overall agreement of November 1984, April 1985, and March 1986, and the new methodology of the 'proximity talks' he introduced in the face of the polarisation caused by Denktaş' UDI.

In a critical analysis of the reasons of the failure of this Cuellar's three-year initiative, Michael correctly sees, apart from the unbridgeable gap separating the two sides on crucial issues despite substantial progress on rather technical matters, grave mishandling on the part of Cuellar as well as a confused attitude on the part of President Kyprianou. One significant insight he brings forth in this analysis is the 'linkage' theory, which he further pursues in his account of the Annan initiative, asserting that a necessary prerequisite of success was the 'synchronization' of all the actors

involved, which was not present at that time as the military takeover in Turkey and the ascent of Andreas Papandreu to power in Greece had led Greek-Turkish relations to unmitigated tension. By analysing internal social change within the two communities during the 1980s, in which he correctly perceives gravitation towards divergent directions partly as a result of the stagnant disposition of the talks, he explains the renewed failure of Cuellar's 'ideas' during the 'Davos interlude' in terms of his 'synchronization' theory. In fact, though President Vassiliou was forthcoming, Denktaş still insisted on refusing to talk territory and on 'self-determination' or separate sovereignty. This same missing 'tug,' Michael convincingly argues, was one of the main causes of the failure of Boutros Ghali's 'set of ideas' in 1992. At this juncture, the author brings in the idea of 'second track diplomacy' within the framework of which he places Ghali's last ditch effort with his Confidence Building Measures (1993-1994). By bringing in relevant bibliography, he points out the 'failure of national integration and nation building' of the two Cypriot communities and the lack of 'civic nationalism' that might 'web together both the Greek and Turkish communities'.

In his approach of the Annan initiative leading to the Annan Plan and the run up to the referendum (1999-2004), Michael applies his 'synchronization' model to show that the one 'tug' missing this time was the Greek Cypriot community's compliance, which, during the 1990s was experiencing a resurgence of ethno-nationalism (militarization, Joint Defence Doctrine, confrontational incidents in the buffer zone, S-300 missiles). And this against the background of an unprecedented warming of Greek-Turkish relations ('earthquake diplomacy'), the decisive presence of the European Union – both as a paradigm and as a stabilising security factor – and, more importantly, at a time a moderate solution-oriented government was taking the reigns in Turkey, and when Denktaş was sidelined under the pressure of the Turkish Cypriot uprising. In my view, however, he is a bit unjust with the UN, the EU, and the international community at large, when he places at their door the main responsibility for the Greek Cypriot rejection of the Annan Plan on the reasoning that they had failed to take on board the message of Greek Cypriot dispositions and employ 'second track diplomacy' to overcome this impeding factor. After all, the Cyprus conflict is not the mediators' problem but the Cypriots' and mainly the Greek Cypriots', who are still faced with foreign occupation and displacement. Lack of leadership in the Greek Cypriot community at that critical moment may prove, in a final analysis, to have been the main cause behind the failure of the Annan initiative.

Nevertheless, when in his final chapter Michael explores '3+1 settlement scenarios', he does not lose sight of the crux of the matter. He demonstrates that a realistic settlement might be the acceptance by the Greek Cypriots of a loose federation in exchange for territorial concessions from the Turkish side. And he concludes by showing a deep awareness that 'the challenge confronting Cyprus ultimately lies in its capacity to transform itself into a postmodern society with a political arrangement that transcends its historical insecurities'. I would add that this challenge lies at our (the Cypriots as a whole), not at the mediators', door.

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