

# The European Union and Cyprus

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Looming on the horizon, for the EU, Greeks and Turks are some uncomfortable and difficult decisions over the accession of the island of Cyprus and the shape of any outcome to the longstanding negotiating process between the two communities. This book is a timely, well researched, and interesting discussion of the dynamics of the interrelationship of these two issues and any plausible outcomes in the context of a broad discussion about the needs and exigencies of any potential solution to the Cyprus problem. It provides an interesting and important interpretation of the situation, of the EU accession process, its motivations and import, and of the merits of the positions of the two Cypriot communities. Chapter I examines the events leading up to the 'turning point' in 1995 when a package deal 'transformed the prospects of Cypriot accession to the EU' (p.16). Chapter II examines Cypriot relations with the then EEC prior to this turning point. Chapter III looks at the relationship between the accession process, a settlement of the Cyprus problem and the wider context of Greco-Turkish relations. Chapter IV and V examines the relations between each community and its motherland vis-a-vis their relationship to the EU. Chapter VI discusses the role of the EU in Cyprus and the nature of its relationship with other international actors involved in various aspects of the settlement process. The final chapter discusses the implications that Cyprus has for the nature of the EU in terms of European identity, institutional responsibility and economic integration.

The 'colours' of this study are nailed firmly to the mast early on when the author criticises the duplicity of the EU External Relations Commissioner's statement in 1997 that there is no place for barbed wire and barricades in a united Europe. He argues that this was bound to lead to a Turkish Cypriot response aimed at increasing the division of Cyprus institutionally and increase their alienation. Later in the study it is also claimed that the collaboration between the EU, UN and the Clinton Administration since 1995 was more or less bound to fail as EU enlargement negotiations would drive the Turkish Cypriots into the arms of Turkey: "In short the EU was not bound to bring the negotiations to a successful conclusion." (p.30). Though the logic is clear here, this seems to assume that the Turkish Cypriots had no other choice (i.e. it was not possible that they might choose to join in with the acces-

sion process and allow its catalytic effects to emerge, rather than blocking them on the grounds that the two communities could never live together). The Turkish Cypriot leadership would say that this indeed was the case and that any application for accession of the Republic was illegal without their say so. In their call for the recognition of the 'realities' of the situation (i.e. the rather ugly reality of the presence of 35,000 Turkish troops as well as the heavy militarisation of the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities), they seem to have forgotten that every action has a reaction, and that if they are determined to be recognised as a separate state after having long accepted a federal solution, the Greek Cypriot side is going to do its best to prevent this. This is where the EU comes in. The Greek Cypriot application was motivated more or less completely by a desire to escape the regional hegemony of Turkey, something that is of course an anathema to the Turkish Cypriot and settler community. So while it would be useful if the issue of Turkish Cypriot status could be worked out, it would also be useful if the Turkish Cypriots and Turkey realised that their heavy handed and militaristic policy in Cyprus is more or less destined to reduce any Greek Cypriot cooperation, rather than increase it. Indeed, this is why the EU may turn out to be so important in the region if it can be instrumental in breaking this cycle of reaction and response.

This seems to me not to be the only inconsistency in the stance taken in this study. There is a great deal of tension between this studies' decidedly pro- Turkish Cypriot slant when it comes to recognition of the entity that they have created, and the notion that EU norms of pluralism need to be institutionalised in member states - and that this may have a catalytic impact upon the Cyprus problem. It overplays the Greek Cypriot desire for absolute control of the island and the Turkish Cypriot need for absolute control of their territory. It also underplays the element of entrepreneurship which underlies the thinking of the Turkish Cypriot leadership in association with Turkey, while emphasising the linkage the Greek Cypriots have created between EU accession and a solution, and more recently for Turkish accession.

However, the point is that the somewhat naive view that the EU would act as a panacea for Cyprus' problems and those of the region is flawed. The exploration of this developed in this study is critical. Notwithstanding, in the context of the EU, the extreme positions of all parties could be managed by the gradual institutionalisation of pluralism that EU membership should entail. So far, the Greek Cypriot side openly admits that they feel that a bizonal solution is unjust but that it is the only feasible way of settling the problem. The position of the Turkish Cypriot side however, is that based upon their experiences in the past, and those of other Muslim minorities, that they can only find security in a mono-ethnic homogenous territorial entity with the military guarantees of Turkey. Apart from transgressing most EU norms, this also implies that there can be no real settlement of the Cyprus problem which should therefore be characterised as primeval - and that the only way forward is through

division of the island in a two state solution, perhaps with EU accession in the future. But these do not necessarily follow on. A two state solution institutionalises norms which do not fit into those of the wider international community, nor into the EU. The Turkish Cypriot claim that any settlement be based upon the 'realities' of the situation is a claim that the international community and the EU cannot endorse – as such realities threaten its own norms. This tension is something which is not adequately addressed in this study. It is patently obvious that the Greek Cypriot acceptance of a bizonal federation, while not necessarily completely disingenuous, is more in tune with the 'realities' of today's world than those of the Turkish Cypriot community - where reality for them means separation rather than accommodation.

This said, this book constitutes an important contribution to the literature on Cyprus and is a timely analysis of the shifting dynamics introduced by the question of EU accession. It is also a more general reminder that ethnic groups such as the Turkish Cypriots need to be represented, need adequate security guarantees, and be able to assert their own identity in an environment that has often not provided these resources. This is also a reminder of how poor the international system often has been in providing the necessary conditions for ethnic groups to manage their post-colonial freedom in an inclusive and pluralistic manner, and how susceptible they are to the development of strategic (and often exploitative) alliances, based on common identities, which are aimed at their nearest neighbours. As Brewin points out, the nature of the EU would be *very* different if the relationship between Cyprus, Turkey, and the EU was to be defined by a continued frontier between Greeks, Turks and Cypriots in Cyprus (p.247).

**Oliver Richmond**