

## The Normalisation of Cyprus' Partition Among Greek Cypriots

**GREGORIS IOANNOU**

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This well-argued book by a self-avowed social scientist comes across as a heartfelt plea to reunify Cyprus, and bewails the rejection of the Annan Plan. It provides a deep and thoughtful analysis of the mentality and feelings, even, of the two main communities of Cyprus, and of their institutions (deep state and all) vis-à-vis partition and reunification. Although not a historian, Ioannou gives history its due, which lends credibility to his argumentation, namely on p. 7, where he writes: '[h]istory does not end and everything can change [...]. The future of the country will happen in conditions given by the past'.

He deals with a difficult topic, in that the continuing *status quo*, partition –with all its ramifications– and unification with its various ramifications, are difficult to reconcile, even within themselves, since there are so many interpretations. As for the mantra of 'bicomunal, bizonal federation', it means different things to different people and ideologies.

Let us start with the positive aspects:

First, he manages to combine an instructive account with deep and clear analysis.

Second, his analysis of political parties and their internecine problems, particularly AKEL, is incisive, realistic, informative and sensible.

Third, he is negatively critical of extremism, especially of the right-wing variety, bewailing its negative role in cementing divisions. In this connexion, although Ioannou has been accused of presenting a left-wing viewpoint, he is sufficiently detached (p. 144) to criticise left wing analyses from Greece, with their 'downright skewed references to "imperialism" and "bourgeoisie"'.

Fourth, he bewails and describes how the educational system on both sides of the divide has hardened and even falsified to a certain extent how Greek and Turkish Cypriots perceive each other. He would probably agree with this view by a British High Commissioner to Cyprus in 1969: '[...] the younger generation of Greeks and Turks are educated separately and brought up to regard one another as enemies waiting to commit genocide'.

Fifth, he provides a good argument against partition with the very thoughtful words (p. 184) that if the prospect of reunification completely disappears, '[i]t will no longer be a case of Turkish people in northern Cyprus becoming Turkish Cypriots, as it will be a case of Turkish Cypriots in northern Cyprus becoming Turks'.

But now, we must turn to what I consider to be the negative aspects of his book, namely omissions and downplaying.

First, to mention 'Greek expansionism' is somewhat misplaced, since the '*Megali Idea*' died a long time ago, and is barely entertained today, apart from by a minute band of fanatics. He is of course correct about Turkish expansionism, which now seems to be an official part of 'neo-Ottoman' policy. It could be that the author has been constrained in his writing and emphases by the fact that the book is available in Greek and Turkish, and that he therefore has to play to somewhat incompatible audiences.

Second, and more specifically, although he is right in stating that the 1958 violence laid the foundations of the 1963-67 violence, he does not say that this was instigated mainly by the Turkish side. The bomb explosion at the Turkish Press Counsellor's house that triggered the anti-Greek rioting was planted, as the Colonial Governor Foot wrote at the time, by the Turks, as Denktash admitted to him. Needless to say, Foot kept this fact secret, only telling the Foreign and Colonial Offices.

Third, although he tacks on in a postscript Britain's 'instrumentalisation' of the 'growing political division between the two communities and its 'fomenting the unfolding conflict', its role should have been dealt with much earlier on in the book. There is very little about how Britain divided Greek and Turkish Cypriots, and concomitantly, Greece and Turkey. Given his emphasis on the importance of Greek and Turkish Cypriots sorting out their own problems, that might explain why he does not point to Britain's role in dividing the communities, mentioning only that the British hired Turkish Cypriot auxiliary policemen. He omits the fateful 1955 conference, cynically planned to 'embarrass the Greek Government', and to divide Greece and Turkey, and Greek and Turkish Cypriots, leading to the expulsion and forced exile of nearly all of Greek stock from Turkey, and bringing Turkey illegitimately into Cypriot affairs, in breach of Article 16 of the Lausanne Treaty.

Fourth, he omits the fact that it was the British who encouraged Makarios to introduce the Thirteen Points that led to the strife. He appears unaware that the British even helped with drafting the Thirteen Points. Thus, he again downplays Britain's re-

sponsibility, thereby leaving the uninitiated reader to assume that it was all the fault of the Cypriots, at least until he reaches the postscript.

Fifth, he might have pointed out that the whole 1960 settlement was predicated on the British retaining the Sovereign Base areas, and that the NATO-friendly arrangement was at least as much to blame as the Cypriots themselves for the strife that was to follow.

Sixth, on the Annan Plan, although he analyses very well the steppenwolfish dilemmas in the minds of Cypriots about partition and unification, he omits to mention some factors that surely influenced the resounding Greek Cypriot 'no' to the plan: the plan was to some extent contrived to oblige Greece and Cyprus to accept Turkey's putative membership of the EU; to re-impose the very 1960 treaties that had led to strife; and to ensure that the 'single international personality' that the new state was intended to have, would be invested in three non-Cypriot judges and the guarantor powers, making Cyprus *de facto* a protectorate. He ought also to have mentioned Russia's strong opposition to the last-minute attempt to 'guarantee' the plan at the UN Security Council.

But for the rest, his analysis is incisive and informative. In this connexion, he writes (p. 180) '[s]ometimes, it takes societies a long time to process the facts that they themselves created in the first place'. Again, this detracts from the fact that Britain, from 1878, shaped –and even institutionalised– the social divisions.

Reverting to a more positive observation, Ioannou is realistic –and indeed pessimistic– in writing (p. 170) that it will take a regression to violence for partition to be completed (also adding, however, the oxymoronic phrase 'a grey but clear legal status in northern Cyprus').

I can but strongly agree with him, when he writes: 'the Cyprus problem is only really a problem of and for those who live in Cyprus and only they can resolve it and build peace on the island. [...] I strongly believe that reunification can only be a Cypriot matter and a matter for those who live in Cyprus'.

Such an ideal has of course been sullied by external powers biting their fingernails of geopolitical ambition. Were Russian suggestions for an international conference not opposed by NATO, then it is possible that a wholly sovereign and probably neutral Cyprus would somehow emerge, with every individual and group protected by EU law. However, power politics within a NATO context seems to have put paid to such common sense.

This welcome, frankly written, and informative book is yet another useful addition to the literature on Cyprus, and if this review comes across as slightly promiscuous, this reflects the divisions which history, the selfishness of outside powers, and the Cypriots themselves have imposed on the beautiful island. Hopefully, a new edition will take into account my comments, which will provide an even more complete historical picture.

**William Mallinson**