

## **The Greek Foreign Policy on the Cyprus Problem (1960-1974) – The Myth of Missed Opportunities and the Circle of Trappings**

**[Η Εξωτερική Πολιτική του Ελληνικού Κράτους στο  
Κυπριακό (1960-1974) – Ο Μύθος των Χαμένων  
Ευκαιριών και ο Κύκλος των Παγιδεύσεων]**

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**Aigaion Publications**

**Nicosia, 2021 (pp. 348)**

**ISBN: 978-9925-565-24-5**

The book by Maria-Erifili Antonopoulou is a study which aims to identify the policies adopted by the Greek Government towards the Cyprus problem and the political errors and miscalculations made by successive Athenian governments, mainly during the period of 1960-1974. By identifying the deep-rooted problems and the complexities of the Greek and Greek-Cypriot policy planning procedures, the author concludes that these underlying problems were the main obstacles preventing Athens and Nicosia from establishing a united national front over the handling of the Cyprus problem and the future status of the island.

Throughout the book, it is pointed out that all of the Greek Governments failed to comprehend the concerns of the Cyprus Government which mainly derived from the fact that Cyprus had been an independent state since 1960. At the same time, the book sheds light on the United States policy towards the Greco-Turkish rivalries over Cyprus. Maria-Erifili Antonopoulou has a doctorate degree of contemporary history from the University of Ioannina, Greece, and her main research interest is the contemporary history of Cyprus. Her book summarises the Greek foreign policy on the Cyprus problem, and it is based on existing secondary sources, mainly Greek bibliography, and the published archives of the US Department of State pertaining to that period.

The author performs a chronological analysis, and the book has three parts. The introductory part sets the historical background of the Cyprus problem from 1878 up to 1960 and independence. Through an extensive narrative, based mainly on existing secondary sources, the historical background of the period under examination is

presented. Particular focus is given on negotiations held during the EOKA struggle of 1955-1959 and Antonopoulou analyses the solutions drafted during that period.

The second part of the book focuses on Konstantinos Karamanlis' and George Papandreou's Governments (1960-1965). Antonopoulou provides insights over Karamanlis' government' reluctance to disrupt the stability and balance of power in the Greco-Turkish relations, which was established after the Zurich-London Agreements and the independence of the island. Nonetheless, the governments which succeeded Karamanlis adopted a different approach. The author highlights the inherent weaknesses of the Greek Governments that followed, emphasising their heavy reliance on NATO and the United States. This dependence provided them with only limited room for manoeuvre while drafting their strategic planning for Cyprus' future. A crucial aspect of this study is the presentation of the various talks that took place after the outbreak of the first intercommunal clashes, in December 1963, up until the failure of Acheson's mediation effort and his proposals for resolving the Cyprus question, in the summer of 1964. By using, mainly, the archives of the US Department of State, the author analyses the positions taken by the various parties, Greece, Turkey, USA and Britain. Discussions over the Acheson plans are extensively presented. According to Antonopoulou, Athens believed in its limited bargaining power, leaving decision-makers in a predicament: choosing between a solution that could secure regional peace and the possibility of war with Turkey (p.218). Therefore, in order to prevent an armed confrontation with Ankara over Cyprus and avoid disrupting NATO's strategic interests in the eastern Mediterranean, the Greek Government reluctantly agreed to the concession of double *enosis*. Conversely, President Makarios was focused on confronting Ankara's threats by using Soviet support (or perceived Soviet 'threat' for the motherlands and NATO) and a solution which could be endorsed by the UN. Consequently, Makarios rejected all of Acheson's proposals, as they were incompatible with his declared values and principles, the international law, and UN principles. Following the failure of Acheson's mediation, Antonopoulou provides a brief account of the Galo Plaza mediation effort and the subsequent bilateral talks between Athens and Ankara. The author closes this part by admitting that even after Plaza's mediation, both the Greek and Cyprus Governments failed once again to agree upon a strategy of achieving the only realistic and viable solution of the Cyprus problem, which was a moderate constitutional amendment without a disruption of the existing Treaties.

In the third section of the book, there is a presentation of the events that occurred

from 1966 until the Turkish invasion of July 1974. More specifically, the author studies the critical junctures of this period, such as the Evros talks of September 1967, the intercommunal crisis of November 1967, the junta regime in Greece, the changes in Makarios' declared policy (feasible solution versus desirable solution) of January 1968, and the intercommunal talks. It is worth noting that this chapter would have benefitted from a more in-depth analysis of the historical background of Athens and Nicosia's relations and how the deterioration of these relations affected the development of the Cyprus problem leading up to 1974. Antonopoulou summarises, in her conclusion, that the biggest mistake of the Greek Government after 1966 was that it still negotiated with Ankara, without Makarios' approval, on the basis of the already rejected Acheson plans. She also asserts that the *coup d'état* and the Turkish invasion of July 1974 seemed as if they were already 'predetermined by the foreign decision-making centres in order to protect NATO's geostrategic interests in the area' (p. 314). However, the author accepts that, despite the above reality, successive Greek Governments made grave mistakes. Antonopoulou also stresses that the military regime in Greece failed to grasp the importance of the new realities created after 1968 and the intercommunal talks on the island. Therefore, its position, especially that of Brigadier Ioannidis, drove the Cyprus problem towards a dead end, leading up to the *coup d'état* of July 1974.

Antonopoulou's study offers a comprehensive overview of the policies implemented by the Greek Governments between 1960 and 1974, with a particular focus on the period from December 1963 to August 1964. Although the author heavily relies on primary archival material from the US archives in the second section of the book, the remaining parts largely reconstruct existing narratives. Moreover, it is unclear which theories Antonopoulou aims to challenge with her subtitle, *The Myth of Missed Opportunities*, as her analysis and conclusions do not explicitly address them. In any case, Antonopoulou's book provides a valuable summary of the policies adopted by the Greek Governments during this period, as well as highlights the involvement of American foreign policy in the evolution of the Cyprus problem.

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