



**James Ker-Lindsay, Hubert Faustmann, and Fiona Mullen (eds)**

***An Island in Europe: The EU and the Transformation of Cyprus***

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When the Republic of Cyprus (RoC) applied for EU membership on behalf of the entire island, the prospect increased the hopes that it would act as a catalyst for Turkey and Turkish Cypriots to consent a mutual settlement. Many also thought that the EU conditionality would oblige Greek Cypriot leadership to work closely with Turkish Cypriots in order to find a solution to one of the most persistent inter-ethnic disputes the world society ever witnessed. Both sides agreed to vote in separate referendums for a comprehensive settlement plan negotiated under UN auspices - known as Annan Plan- in 2004. The Plan set a future united federal state based on bi-communal (power-sharing between the two communities) and bi-zonal (two constituent federal states with some restrictions on movement and settlement between them) elements. After the rejection of the Plan in the Greek side, the divided island has become a member-state and the implementation of *acquis* is suspended in the Turkish north until another unanimous decision.

The membership of divided Cyprus has rather come as a shock for Brussels and taught many lessons inside the EU. First, the EU claiming to be a model for peace and reconciliation just let an ethnic conflict inside its borders. Enlargement if proceeds hastily might have catastrophic rather than catalytic effects on the peace process. Second, it might have further implications regarding the credibility of the EU as a conflict resolver. One of the most obvious examples would be the secessionist claims in the Balkans and future enlargement. Third, while a future settlement would be based on the good will of the parties, the EU has to act to figure out ways to accommodate a divided member-state into its institutional structures without hindering basic values and principles that underlie the Union.

The edited volume by Ker-Lindsay, Faustmann and Mullen in its entirety aims at analysing the third issue, namely how the process of accession and membership has transformed RoC and to what extent the EU has absorbed and tolerated the abnormalities of Cyprus's unique situation into its legal and institutional structures. In this sense, the emphasis is on the challenges and transformative impact of the accession process and post-accession period in RoC. In doing this, the book is divided into seven chapters and an introduction written by different experts in order to analyse the effects of the EU accession over the political, legal, economic, social and foreign policy areas.

The book does not aim at dealing mainly with the Cyprus conflict as one might expect. As the name suggests, it provides analysis for the entire island. However, due to the almost 40 years of division between Turkish and Greek sides, the chapters actually deal with the change in the only recognised state on the island –RoC- where the *acquis* is implemented. Nevertheless, the nature of the complex interaction between internationally unrecognised Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), RoC, and the EU after the accession required each chapter to deal with the implications of the membership for this long-standing conflict.

In my view, the book addresses an important gap in the literature. There is a plethora of books covering the history of the ongoing peace negotiations and the role of the UN. Partially due to the very recent nature of accession, mostly because the conflict occupies the agenda of researchers on Cyprus, there is a lack of assessment in the literature regarding the effects of

EU membership, especially compared to Eastern European members. In this sense, each chapter in the edited volume provides an insightful analysis to understand the ongoing transformations that accession requires in Cyprus. Albeit the some differences in terms of the authors' methodological approach and the focus on domestic developments, ongoing conflict and Europeanisation; the book offers a valuable contribution for a variety of audience interested in Cypriot politics, enlargement, Europeanisation or conflict resolution.

The assessments by Karatas, Ker-Lindsay and Faustmann can be read together to get a thorough analysis of the recent developments in conflict resolution, politics of accession and post-accession period. Their arguments prove that for the Greek Cypriot leadership the accession was a strategic choice ending the Cold War neutrality. In order to get additional security guarantees against Turkey, RoC intended to make Brussels a major player on the side of the Greek Cypriot demands. Karatas argues the radical change in the EU's initial position that required a mutual settlement as *condicio sine qua non* was not only against its own procedures but also resulted in importing the conflict into the EU (p.14). The EU adopted a moral recourse enabling Greek Cypriot accession and limited the 'catalytic effect' of membership only to Turkish side. Karatas is critical of the EU for effectively hindering peace process by miscalculating the logic of RoC membership application: '[t]he EU believed in the Greek Cypriot assurances that they would always opt in favour of a solution plan ... the idea of the 'catalytic effect' was a calculated risk that was based on multi-layered assumptions and a biased understanding of the complex conflict by the EU' (p.34).

Ker-Lindsay gives striking examples to demonstrate foreign relations of RoC with the outer world as well as with the other member states continue to be shaped by the same logic. While new external relations have brought an impetus to the policy of non-alignment of Cold War years, Cyprus still does not hesitate to diverge from the common EU position in foreign policy if it contradicts with its primary interests in the conflict. Furthermore, Cyprus's relations with EU member states such as Britain and even Greece are sometimes strained by its threat to veto the EU-TRNC relations.

Faustmann supports Karatas and Ker-Lindsay by stating RoC has been 'a single-issue member state' and concerned mainly 'how to use any moves to bring Turkey closer to the European Union in such a way as to strengthen the Greek Cypriots' hand in any future negotiations' (p155). The author argues the widespread miscalculations of RoC leadership in terms of the role of the EU in post-accession period continue to prevent the new member-state from embodying the rules of internal decision-making of the EU.

Other contributions also agree that the EU had an impact in transforming the legal, social and economic structures but it was limited but limited due to the division of the island. Nikos Skoutaris argues the partial suspension of the *acquis* in the north is strictly territorial therefore neither deprives Turkish Cypriots of their rights as EU citizens nor allows a tacit recognition of TRNC. Skoutaris notes the EU has taken a depoliticised 'step in bridging the cleavages of Cypriot society and a possibility for differentiated integration of the Turkish Cypriot ethno-religious segment within the Union' (p.58).

While Skoutaris gives an analysis of new legal arrangements to accommodate Turkish Cypriots as citizens of a divided country in the EU, Beyatli assesses Turkish Cypriot perceptions. The author notes public and civil society played a crucial role in changing negative perceptions of



the EU and transformed the relations from misunderstanding and extreme suspicion to pro-membership sentiments in the Turkish side. Nevertheless, following the referendum, the prevailing perception in the north Cyprus remains that the EU is not able or willing to keep its promises in order to end the isolation. Despite the resentment, majority continues to see a settlement within the EU as the only way of ending their years of isolation.

Ioannou and Kentas argue while technical and legal harmonisation was achieved during accession negotiations, various examples such as smoking ban, gender equality, discrimination on racial basis and environmental values prove that there is a lack of socio-cultural adjustment in RoC. For the authors the cognitive gap is mostly a result of Greek Cypriot mentality which treated membership as a strategic gain. This prevailing logic limited civil society and public discussion on the societal changes that membership would require.

Mullen offers a detailed and probably the most technical analysis in the book. The transformations of Cypriot economy since 1973 Association Agreement were intensified with the accession negotiations. Membership has brought profound transformations especially in relation to the interest rate cuts. While there are many benefits of the opening the market to competition and FDI, the negative effects of inflation and accounts deficit would be usually felt in the long term on the small and still relatively competition-free economy of Cyprus (p.84).

In my view when the chapters are assessed together, there is an overall lack of critical assessment of the EU's ongoing role in Cyprus conflict. Faustmann notes 'The EU has consistently avoided becoming overtly involved in the resolution of ethnic or religious conflicts within or between its own member-states. It encourages, supports and accommodates solutions, but does not shape them' (p.169). I agree with the contributors that in reality, the EU is not willing to intervene either as a voice of RoC which falsely hopes it could easily lobby member states to punish and blackmail Turkey and Turkish Cypriots; nor wants to create a Taiwan inside the EU by tacitly recognising TRNC. This might seem a fair position; however, both the UN and the EU recognised the *status quo* is no longer acceptable. Given the fact that even after the accession politicians and public in the Greek side continue to perceive the membership as a strategic opportunity to gain an advantageous position in negotiations, one cannot help but wonder how long the EU can defend the passive stance when a decisive settlement is first beneficial to the EU. The situation in Cyprus actually demands a more active EU involvement; especially since the EU's basic principles and freedoms are hindered by current division and internal decision-making is under continuous blockage. Without the EU bringing a mutually win-win solution and overcoming the excessive degree of mistrust between the Greeks and Turks, a solution seems unpalatable in Cyprus.

The contributions suggest Europeanisation in RoC has provoked adaptation, resistance and challenge simultaneously. In sum, the main strength of the book is its wide coverage of the social, political, legal and economic effects of the membership process in Cyprus. In this sense, the book offers a comprehensive analysis of RoC's journey towards membership and post-accession years.

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