

Recensions/Book Reviews

JOSEPH S. JOSEPH, *Cyprus: Ethnic Conflict and International Politics, from Independence to the Threshold of the European Union* (London/New York: Macmillan/St. Martin's Press, 1997, third printing 1999), 228 pages.

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In the wake of the Cold War, perhaps the greatest threat to peace in Europe is ethnic conflict. As the breakup of Yugoslavia and subsequent conflicts in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and most recently Kosovo illustrate, ethnic hatreds and the potential for violence are close to the surface. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the divided island of Cyprus. In a state of no peace no war since 1974, the Mediterranean island is burdened with a troubled history.

Geographically situated at the crossroads between Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa, the island has long been valued for its strategic location. More recently, however, the role and importance of Cyprus, and the implications of the divisions that exist, have become more prominent with the European Union's decision to carry out accession negotiations with Cyprus as a final step toward full membership.

Despite its ties to both Greece and Turkey, two NATO allies, Cyprus has traditionally been overlooked in most studies dealing with the security of Europe and Eastern Mediterranean. Similarly, because the island has been outside the realm of the EU until recently, it has not been part of discussions of European integration. Yet, as recent events have clearly demonstrated, the island has the potential to destabilize the path toward European integration and European peace and stability.

In *Cyprus: Ethnic Conflict and International Politics: from Independence to the Threshold of the European Union*, Joseph S. Joseph places the island firmly into International Relations theory and specifically, in a context he calls the "politicization of ethnicity." One of his

main lines of thinking is that “the rise of ethnonationalism into a major political force in the twentieth century is perhaps the greatest challenge the nation-state has ever faced” (p. 134). Joseph, who teaches International Relations at the University of Cyprus, knows his subject well, and has himself been involved in some of the activities aimed at fostering understanding and communication between the two sides of the Green Line. Although Joseph uses Cyprus to illustrate his specific points, many of his ideas can be generalized to explain how the end of the Cold War has altered the role and place of ethnic conflict in world politics. For a number of reasons, this book makes an important theoretical contribution to our understanding of ethnopolitics as many political scientists are struggling to place these conflicts into existing conceptual and analytical frameworks.

We have much to learn about this Cyprus and Joseph proves to be an informed and objective guide. He places the divisions that exist on the island neatly into historical perspective, reminding the reader that the current ethnic divisions have withstood, and even been built upon, four centuries of history. He clearly guides the reader through the history of the island, the origins of the ethnic and political segregation to the present situation which is unmitigated by any crosscutting linguistic, social or religious ties. He notes that no attempts were ever made to integrate the two major groups, but rather the notion of “communal dualism” was part of the very existence of the society.

Furthermore, this notion was embodied in the 1960 constitution, which provided for the establishment of an independent state that identified and recognized the two primary communities that made up 96 per cent of the population of the island. The two communities, the Greek Cypriots and the Turkish Cypriots, were recognized by the constitution with reference to their ethnic background, language, cultural traditions, and religion. The constitution gave each ethnic group the right to celebrate their own national holidays as well as the right to establish separate relationships with Greece and Turkey on many issues. The constitution also institutionalized communal dualism in all aspects of the government. For example, it provided for a president who should be a Greek Cypriot, and a vice-president who should be a

Turkish Cypriot. The house of representatives, composed of Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot representatives elected separately by the two communities, exercised legislative power. Separate "ethnic" municipalities were created in the five major towns, although there was some intermingling of the two groups within the municipalities at the time.

That dualism has been embedded in the divisions that now exist on the island in a more formal way. The Green Line that separates the Turkish North from the Greek South separate two groups of people, each of which considers itself to be "Cypriot." However, those in the North who are part of the "Turkish Republic of Northern" Cyprus live in a state that is not recognized by any other government except that of Turkey, while those in the South, the Republic of Cyprus, live in a thriving economically secure society that is internationally recognized by all countries and organizations of the international system.

While it must be remembered that Cyprus was socially divided throughout its history, a point that Joseph makes is that no attempt was ever made to integrate politically the two groups, which is one of the reasons why the ongoing conflict is so intractable. Occasionally, violence flares up across the Green Line, and tensions remain a part of life. Despite repeated attempts to facilitate bicomunal communication between the two ethnic groups, Cyprus remains an area of conflict in Europe. The two communities' ties to Greece and Turkey respectively continue to threaten NATO because of deep animosity between the two alliance partners. The decision by the European Council to invite Cyprus to commence accession negotiations with the European Union, while Turkey's request was rebuffed in Luxembourg in December 1997, generated more tension.

As Joseph reminds the reader, controversies over Cyprus were common during the Cold War, when shifting relations between and among Greece, Turkey, the United States, and the Soviet Union enabled the government of Cyprus to play the various sides off one another politically. Hence, although this is a small and often overlooked island, it is one that has played, and continues to play an important role in international affairs.

For many of those reasons, the United States has been actively engaged in mediation trying to bring some resolution to the conflict. In 1997, Richard Holbrooke, who mediated the end of the war in Bosnia, was named special Cyprus envoy of President Clinton. He made a number of trips to the island and the region, but was unsuccessful in altering the situation. According to Holbrooke, the differences that exist between the two sides on the island are much deeper than those that separated Serbs, Croats and Bosnian Muslims. In short, Holbrooke found the situation in Cyprus to be intractable, although he was able to mediate peace in Bosnia.

How to bring the two sides together? As Holbrooke learned, the North now has nothing to gain and everything to lose by compromising. The South, which professes the need to move toward unification once again, also faces economic costs not unlike those West Germany faced when that country was unified. Both, however, have a great deal to lose if the uneasy truce that prevails were to move toward an armed and violent conflict.

In this book, Joseph carefully and methodically walks the reader through the history and background of the conflict and the impact of it on the international community. A point that he makes is that, even though the conflict is often overlooked, it has had and continues to have an impact on NATO, the EU, and the United Nations. Moreover, as he points out quite clearly, Cyprus played quite a role in the Cold War maneuvering between the United States and the Soviet Union. These stories are told clearly and Joseph uses ample sources to support his analysis and interpretation of events.

As one who has studied and been on the island, I found this book to be well crafted and documented. As would be expected in any book dealing with a topic as emotionally charged as this one, there are times when Joseph's own biases do creep in. However, to his credit, these times were few and did not interfere with his analysis in any way. The appendices provide access to important treaties and documents pertaining to the island, including the 1960 Treaties of Establishment, Guarantee, and Alliance. His references to various Security Council

resolutions are strengthened by the inclusion of some of those resolutions as well. All of these make the book easy to follow as Joseph's arguments unfold in a persuasive way.

The structure of the book makes each chapter a story about a particular period in the history of the island. This allows the reader to place Cyprus as it fits into relations among the NATO countries, the EU and the Cold War rivals. However, it also means that there are some redundancies as different chapters occasionally review the same parts of history.

This volume is an updated, expanded, and revised version of Joseph's 1985 book *Cyprus: Ethnic Conflict and International Concern* which I did not read. However, it is clear that a great deal has happened since 1985 that has changed the role of Cyprus in international politics, most of which is included here. I would have liked to see the author update the bibliography a bit more, especially in the parts pertaining to the Atlantic Alliance, but I see that as a minor flaw when the entire book is taken into consideration.

Overall this is a good and timely book that illustrates for the student of international relations, international security, or the Eastern Mediterranean why Cyprus needs to be studied and taken far more seriously than it has been.

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