

Preface

Like all books of this nature, *Cyprus and the Roadmap for Peace: A Critical Interrogation of the Conflict* has forged its own narrative. The book has its genesis in a peace project awarded in 2014 by the Istanbul-based Journalists and Writers Foundation – which due to unforeseen political developments was deprived of its core funding. However, together with my co-editor, Yücel Vural, I persevered and embarked on what appeared as an overtly ambitious and near impossible undertaking. But history – or as some prefer *kismet* and *moira* – has an annoying propensity of thwarting even the most fastidious of plans.

As the Cyprus talks intensified, it seemed timely to take stock and review how an imagined solution would impact on the politics of change and continuity. But from the outset, we were – as an early reviewer kindly reminded us – ‘a little worried about timing’. For, should there be a ‘solution, [the reviewer unrelented] the book will become obsolete before it is published’. So, as we explain in Chapter 1, in order to best prepare for such a contingency, we devised a two-pronged approach that required us to constantly monitor developments at the Cyprus talks throughout 2016–17. Unfortunately, and we say this with complete sincerity, the talks did not result in a successful outcome. As it transpired, in hindsight, the book’s eventual publication comes at, what the UN Secretary-General António Guterres pronounced as, a ‘period for reflection’.¹

The Cyprus talks at Mont Pèlerin, Geneva and Crans-Montana promised so much that it was, psychologically, inevitable that they could not possibly live up to their expectations. The media – as communicative sifter between the elites and the rest of us – was initially overwhelmed by an almost voyeuristic infatuation with the situational predicament of the Cyprus talks that often alluded to the seriousness of the occasion. In conjunction with the parties and facilitators non-disclosure policy, a communication lacuna compounded a culture of secrecy, speculation and misinformation that, more often than not, nourished the pessimistic disposition that many Cypriots have about the talks, their prospects and ultimately their residual value.

While leadership is imperative to Cyprus’s peace process, it is also burdened with layers of over-expectations, political and structural

limitations and a rather inflated presumption that somehow a successful outcome to the Cyprus problem (by which we mean a solution that satisfies all, or a great majority, of the Cypriots) rests exclusively on the sole discretion of the two leaders. Even though the 2015–17 Cyprus talks took place between two compatible and affable leaders and a rather ‘creative’ and diligent UN, Mont Pèlerin, Geneva and Crans-Montana reminded us that first-track diplomacy – imperative as it is – in itself is handicapped by its exclusive ownership of Cyprus’s peace process. As previous attempts revealed, negotiations by themselves are unable to overcome the constraints that steadfastly prevent the resolution of the Cyprus conflict. There appears to be a missing link that impedes progress at Cyprus’s peace process from resonating at either the inter- or intra-communal level.

Cyprus’s current dilemma between separatism and unification is expressed more tangibly in the new challenges posed by the doctrine of pre-emption. The difficulty of constructing a new peace paradigm in Cyprus is not only exacerbated by the island’s communal polarization, but also by internal and external tensions, particularly as they relate to Turkey’s (and to a lesser extent Greece’s) unpredictability and the growing disparity between the ‘accommodated’ and ‘dislodged’ classes on both sides.

If not handled properly, the talks run the risk of furthering the mood of despair amongst Cypriots and increasing their readiness to surrender to the certainty of the status quo. In such a case, failure of the current peace talks would see both communities, for different reasons, trading federalism for separatism as their preferred second-best solution. Under such circumstances, there is always the danger that the two-state solution will become, either deliberately or by osmosis, a historical endgame for both Greek and Turkish Cypriots.

In our attempts to solicit a wide-ranging ‘agonistic’ participation – especially, but not exclusively, from leading public figures – for this volume, I was conscious of the ubiquitous and ever-present ‘deal breaker’: officialdom’s contestation surrounding the whole recognition/non-recognition discourse. A rigid adherence to such state-centric logical syllogism stifles conversation and constitutes an anathema to (deep) dialogical engagement. However, it would be negligent of us not to highlight a much needed caveat over the usage of terms that inundate the Cypriot discourse that has beleaguered many well-meaning forays into intercommunal communication, collaboration and partnerships. In addition to the qualification that all views expressed in this book are *strictly* those of the particular authors and do not in any way or shape necessarily reflect those of the editors and/or the other contributors, I feel the need to restate such a disclaimer.

This book does not concern itself with the legality or even legitimacy of various governing institutions – self-declared or otherwise. For reasons

of clarity, domestic institutions are referred to by their official names as used by their agents themselves. In this context these terms are purely descriptive, not prescriptive nor normative. This should not be interpreted or misconstrued as a statement by the editors endorsing, or not, the validity or otherwise of such institutions and instrumentalities, nor should it be associated with, or be considered to reflect the views of, any of the contributors in this book.

Ultimately, the book's value will be judged by others. For my part there are many people that I need to thank for their assistance, at various junctures, starting first and foremost with my dear friend and co-editor Yücel Vural. I first met Yücel in 2009 in the middle of a desolate 'ghost' road that slithered through the conflict landscape as a back route to Famagusta. I was, then, canvassing support amongst various colleagues for mounting the Cypriot Academic Dialogue – which, I am pleased to see, has, since then, taken on an independent subsistence of its own. Since then we have collaborated and partnered, together and with others, on an array of collaborative projects and dialogues, and have come to share an affinity that renders our 'communal' belonging totally irrelevant. His persistence with methodology and egalitarian pragmatism often grounded my rather 'anthropological' propensity for generalizations and obfuscation.

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Finally, I would like to thank our respective families and especially my wife Maria and my sister Helen for all their support, encouragement and perseverance in what must have seemed to them at times an endless task.

Michális S. Michael
Melbourne
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NOTE

1. United Nations, Security Council, *Strategic Review of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus: Report of the Secretary-General*, S/2017/1008, 28 November 2017, para. 14, p. 3, accessed 16 February 2018 at <http://undocs.org/S/2017/1008>.

