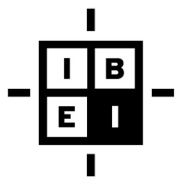


EUROPEANISATION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION: THE CASE OF CYPRUS

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George Kyris

Abstract: This paper investigates the example of Cyprus as a case study for the Europeanisation of conflict resolution. The argument advanced is that the European Union (EU) impacts the positions of the parts of the conflict (here, Greek Cypriots, Turkish Cypriots and Turkey) but not always towards the resolution of the dispute and compliance with EU conditionality. Conformity with EU conditionality depends on its credibility, which is decreased by the internalisation of the conflict into the EU. In this context, this work contributes to the discussion on Europeanisation and the aptitude of the EU in conflict resolution as well as the role of the EU in the Cyprus conflict during the post-accession years.

Keywords: European Union, Conflict resolution, Enlargement, Turkey, Cyprus, Europeanisation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This paper seeks to investigate the role of the European Union (EU) in conflict resolution, taking Cyprus as a case study of an ‘internalised’ conflict. The accession of Cyprus into the EU failed to become a catalyst for the resolution of the island’s dispute. After years of inflexibility, Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots supported reunification before accession in order to advance their own EU integration, which was conditioned on the resolution of the dispute. But Greek Cypriots, who had safeguarded their entry into the EU as the Republic of Cyprus (RoC), rejected reunification and Cyprus entered the EU still a divided island. This accession of Cyprus into the EU has fundamentally altered the parameters of the dispute: now, the conflict is internalised into the EU, due to the accession of the RoC, which has triggered a return to Turkish and Turkish Cypriot inflexibility. This unique situation raises a series of research questions and calls for an investigation of the way the internalisation of a conflict impacts the role of the EU in its resolution.

In exploring how the EU has impacted the conflict in Cyprus, this work engages with the debates on Europeanisation, which contemplate the impact of the EU on its partners. Discussing the example of Cyprus, research draws on the Enlargement-driven Europeanisation literature, which has ‘mushroomed’ in recent years to explain how EU accession and conditionality impact the domestic scene and policies of candidate states. The argument advanced is that the prospects of EU integration impact the positions on the conflict, however not always towards compliance with EU conditionality and resolution of the dispute. Conformity with EU conditionality depends on the latter’s credibility, which is decreased by the internalisation of the conflict into the EU. In this context, this work contributes to the discussion on Europeanisation and the aptitude of the EU to ‘shape’ domestic matters and policy, especially in conflict situations.

2. EUROPEANISATION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION: BETWEEN EU ENLARGEMENT AND MEMBERSHIP

What is Europeanisation is still at the centre of a heated academic debate. Yet, a very good part of the literature has used Europeanisation to study the process via which the EU impacts national setting. In a rather accommodating definition, Radaelli (2000, 4) terms Europeanisation as:

'process of (a) construction (b) diffusion and (c) institutionalisation of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, 'ways of doing things' and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the making of European Union decisions and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, identities, political structures and public policies'.

As a result, Europeanisation studies have looked at how the EU impacts domestic politics, policy and polity (Ladrech 1994, Börzel 1999, Wallace 2000, Hix and Goetz 2001, Buller and Gamble 2002, Töller 2010) and this work seeks to investigate EU-induced changes in Greek Cypriot, Turkish and Turkish Cypriot policies towards the Cyprus issue.

But each side of the Cyprus conflict relates to the EU in different ways: the Greek Cypriot-led RoC began as a candidate for EU membership but is now an EU member state. On the other hand, Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots are third parties to the EU: Turkey is a candidate for EU accession, while the Turkish Cypriots rest in a place of limbo due their territorial and administrative separation from the RoC, which means that, although the entire island is an EU territory, EU law does not apply in the secessionist Turkish Cypriot administration in north Cyprus. Indeed, the relationship between Brussels and the community resembles a lot the context of Enlargement: the EU has focused on the preparation of the Turkish Cypriots for full European integration, in the event of a reunification and replacement of the RoC by a new federative country of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. These fundamental differences in the ways the sides of the conflict relate to the EU 'shape' the process of Europeanisation in each instance and how we investigate the impact of EU integration.

Indeed, there are some important differences in the way Europeanisation literature has discussed EU member and third or candidate states. Regarding EU member states, scholars have talked about a 'circular' phenomenon of Europeanisation (Goetz 2002), whereby states are impacted by EU integration but they are also able to 'upload' their policy preferences at the EU level and therefore actively impact the process of EU integration (Connolly 2008). This might be the case with the RoC after the EU accession in 2004, but Turkish Cypriots and Turkey are a different story: cases of Enlargement centred Europeanisation are better conceptualised as solely 'downloading' process, whereby candidate countries lack any power in affecting EU decision-making and the content of conditionality, which becomes the channel of their Europeanisation. And, indeed, it is conditionality that remains the most powerful tool for triggering domestic reform in the framework of accession, as long as this conditionality is credible (Sedelmeier 2011): the EU needs to be clear about the conditions of accession and the country also needs to be certain that fulfilment of reforms will indeed bring the prize of accession. Credible conditionality is also expected to generate a lot of public support of European integration and thus facilitate govern-

mental effort towards reform (Agh 1999, 841; Lippert et al. 2001, 1001-1002). Finally, Europeanisation is thought to be greater where there is incompatibility between EU demands and existing national policies or structures (Radaelli, 2000; Cowles et al., 2001; Börzel and Risse, 2002; Featherstone and Radaelli, 2003). This so-called 'goodness of fit' is very evident in Enlargement-driven Europeanisation cases. For example, during the 2004/7 Enlargement round, a transformative process of Europeanisation was facilitated by the important gap between EU conditionality and the political systems that existed at the post-communist candidate states.

In this sense, conflict resolution has been a particularly interesting aspect of EU accession conditionality. Many works have concentrated on enlargement-induced incentives for conflict resolution, some of which discuss the example of Cyprus during its early accession period (e.g. Tocci 2004, Christou 2004). But the eventual EU accession pending resolution of the dispute makes Cyprus a case that is different to other examples, where conditionality relates to a conflict that arose between an already existing member state and a candidate (e.g. Greece and Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) or between two candidates, which both have to overcome the 'barrier' of the conflict before advancing their EU prospects (e.g. Serbia and Kosovo). In the Cyprus dispute, Turkish and Turkish Cypriot integration into the EU has always been linked to the conflict but the same was not the case with the Greek Cypriots, who acceded to the EU (under the RoC) without any effective conditionality to change their policy towards the dispute. By welcoming Greek Cypriots into its circles, the EU has now 'internalised' the Cyprus issue, whereby a side of the conflict is within the EU while the rest are outside but still developing their relations to the EU, and this makes Cyprus a particularly interesting example of Europeanisation. The argument advanced is that internalisation of the conflict reduces the credibility of conditionality for all sides of the dispute and works counterproductively to resolution: firstly, the internalisation of the conflict reduces the credibility of conditionality for the acceding part, which remains with no motives to change policy towards the dispute. In addition, internalisation of the conflict undermines conditionality for the parts outside the EU, because they no longer see Brussels as a neutral player in the dispute and because of the wider loss of momentum in their relations to the EU. In this regard, this work aims to make a contribution to the empirical investigation of post-accession years in Cyprus and the new dynamics of the conflict, which remain comparatively neglected. Most importantly, this case study contributes to the wider discussion on Europeanisation, particularly in conflict situations and amidst 'internalisation' of the conflict in the EU. Analysis also focuses on the different forms of relationship to Brussels (such as EU member or candidate states) and how those shape the way and degree of Europeanisation of policies and, ultimately, the conflict.

3. BEFORE EU ACCESSION: THE OPPORTUNITY THAT NEVER WAS?

After decades of failed efforts to reunify the island, the accession of Cyprus into the EU raised hopes for a resolution of the dispute. The EU was seen as an opportunity to resolve the conflict before accession and, for that reason, the UN embarked in yet another mediation effort, which cultivated in the so-called ‘Annan Plan’, a proposal for the establishment of the ‘United Cyprus Republic’, a loose federation of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots that would accede to the EU. Despite early enthusiasm, when the plan was put to twin referenda in the two communities of the island, Turkish Cypriots approved reunification but Greek Cypriots rejected it and Cyprus entered the EU as a divided country. Although the accession failed to become a catalyst for resolution, this does mean the EU did not shape the policies towards the conflict. Indeed, both the Greek rejection and the Turkish Cypriot/Turkish support of reunification can be seen as examples of a rather unique process of Europeanisation.

When the RoC applied for EU membership in 1990, Greek Cypriots viewed EU accession through the ‘lenses’ of the Cyprus problem. It appears that Greek Cypriots thought that EU membership will increase their diplomatic position in the Cyprus issue and vis a vis Turkish Cypriots and Turkey but also protect them from potential Turkish military threats (Nugent 2003, 10). As for Brussels, initially, the resolution of the Cyprus dispute was linked to the island’s EU accession. However, this condition was soon dropped¹ and Greek Cypriots remained with no EU-induced motives to resolve the dispute. Although EU bodies expressed ‘preference for a reunited Cyprus to join the Union’ (European Council 2003, 12), accession conditionality did not include the resolution of the dispute. In contrast, rejection of reunification now equalled the accession of a Greek Cypriot-dominated state (RoC), a possibility that offered Greek Cypriots renewed diplomatic power in the dispute, especially giving the increasing interest of Turkey in furthering relations with the EU.

In this climate, it is not surprising that, in April 2004, the Greek Cypriots rejected the Annan Plan by 75 per cent and few days later Cyprus acceded to the EU as a divided island. The words of the then Greek Cypriot President Tassos Papadopoulos clearly reflect how EU integration became a reason to reject reunification:

‘[i]f our people reject the plan [...], in a weeks’ time the Republic of Cyprus will become a full and equal member of the European Union [...] ;I call you to reject the Annan Plan’ (Cyprus.net 2009, my translation)

1. The decision to not include the resolution of the dispute in accession conditionality seems to have been informed by a series of events and considerations, including: the diplomatic efforts of Greece to include Cyprus in the next enlargement round, also by threatening to block the entire Enlargement if Cyprus is not admitted, and the importance of the Enlargement in the EU agenda at the moment; the good progress of the RoC in meeting the rest of conditionality reforms and the then intransigence of the Turkish Cypriot side, which raised fears that conditionality on the dispute could make the EU accession hostage to Turkish Cypriot approval.

While Greek Cypriots opposed reunification, Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots moved in the opposite direction. In 1999, the EU finally recognised Turkey as a candidate for EU membership, on the condition that the Cyprus issue is resolved. This led to an ‘Europeanisation’ of Turkish policy and the support of reunification and the Annan Plan. Compliance with EU conditionality on the Cyprus issue was also helped by the new, pro-EU Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi –AKP) government in 2002 and the extensive public support of European integration (European Commission 2004b). At the same time, Turkey favoured resolution due to the strategic preference to stop a Greek Cypriot-only state to enter the EU (Suvarierol 2003, 66) but also because of the growing Turkish Cypriot pro-solution/ EU attitudes (see also later and Christophorou 2005). This EU impact on Turkey-in a rather typical ‘downloading’ Europeanisation fashion- is in line with other cases, whereby sides of the conflict have adopted positions that facilitate the resolution of the dispute, in order to improve their accession prospects (e.g. Serbia and Kosovo, Croatia and Slovenia). Furthermore, the large ‘misfit’ between the long-standing Turkish inflexibility towards reunification (see also Kazan 2002) and the elasticity that EU conditionality asked for facilitated a true transformation of policy, which was part of the so-called ‘golden era’ (1999-2005) of Turkish reforms in the name of EU accession.

As for the Turkish Cypriots, they too experienced a radical depart from previous policies on the Cyprus issue. Similarly to Turkey, the community had been dominated by political forces that backed the separate Turkish Cypriot existence and were rather sceptical towards a federal Cyprus, the formula of solution that both communities are formally committed to². But the years leading-up to the EU accession of the island saw a tremendous Turkish Cypriot trend in favour of the EU and reunification based on the Annan Plan. This was because European integration (through reunification) was regarded as the exit from the international isolation of the community and, essentially, the beginning of Turkish Cypriot existence in world affairs. In the end, Turkish Cypriots elected new, pro-solution leadership (elections 2003/2005) and, most importantly, approved the Annan Plan by 65 per cent. Indeed, statements of civil society organisations, which led the pro-EU/ solution movement in the community, are indicative of the way Turkish Cypriots viewed reunification and EU accession:

[r]eaching a [...] solution in Cyprus followed by EU membership for the whole of the island means [...] increased freedoms, prosperity and security [...] It means the end of our isolation from the rest of the world’ (The Common Vision 2002).

2. In 1977, the two communities signed the ‘four point agreements’, which set the basic principles for future negotiations: any solution should be based on a federal, bi-communal and non-aligned state, where the territorial division should not be strictly based on population ratio. (Fisher 2001, 315). These agreements would be later enriched in the ‘ten points’ (1979). The latest confirmation of this understanding is the 23rd May 2008 agreement that calls for a bi-zonal and bi-communal federation with political equality between the two Cypriot communities (Republic of Cyprus 2008).

In this regard, the pre-accession period of Cyprus witnessed the Turkish and Turkish Cypriot support of resolution of the dispute, as a step to fulfil the conditions of their EU integration. Indeed, the important gap between the entrenched inflexible Turkish and Turkish Cypriot strategies on the dispute and EU conditionality helped a true transformation of policies. But the Greek Cypriot case is the exact opposite: the lack of a credible conditionality on the Cyprus conflict meant that Greek Cypriots had no motive to resolve the dispute. Quite the opposite, rejecting resolution and acceding to the EU alone became an EU-induced strategic choice. This shows that the ticket of EU membership does remain a powerful tool in triggering domestic reform, also in policies towards conflicts, but only if conditionality is credible. The credibility of conditionality in the Cyprus issue was meant to be further damaged, this time for all sides of the conflict, by the accession of Cyprus despite resolution and the internalisation of the conflict into the EU.

4. AFTER EU ACCESSION: THE “INTERNALISATION” OF THE CONFLICT

The accession of Cyprus despite the ongoing conflict fundamentally changed the dynamics of the dispute. Although inter-communal negotiations since 2008 have been slow, the Greek Cypriots (as represented by the RoC) have deployed their EU membership in order to ‘upload’ their preferences at the EU level and secure concessions from those parts of the conflict that are outside the dispute, the Turkish Cypriots and particularly the candidate for EU membership Turkey. Shortly after accession, the RoC listed a series of demands for Ankara to address before Turkey’s accession negotiations begin (see also Faustmann 2011). Although this agenda did not win the support of EU partners, the opening of Turkey’s accession negotiations was still conditioned on ratification of the Additional Protocol (Turkey’s custom union with all EU member states, including the RoC-Council of the EU 2006). The Turkish government signed the Protocol but issued a declaration that ratification did not imply recognition of the RoC or the opening of Turkish ports to it. Years after the start of accession negotiations for Turkey, the implementation of the Protocol still forms part of conditionality and the EU has frozen negotiations on many chapters and decided to close none before Turkish ports open to the RoC (Council of the EU 2006).

But the internalisation of the conflict means that Greek Cypriots have been able to use their EU membership power in a series of other diplomatic fronts that relate to Turkey, beyond the strictly-speaking accession process. For example, the RoC tried to veto Ankara's involvement in EU-Syria talks over the crisis in the middle-east country (Today's Zaman, 30 November 2011) or to limit Turkey's opposition to Greek Cypriot attempts for gas exploitation (Reuters, 14 September 2011). Most importantly, Greek Cypriots have opposed the efforts of the EU to support Turkish Cypriots, also as a reward for their positive vote on the Annan Plan (General Affairs Council, 2004). Few days before Cyprus accession and Greek Cypriots gaining access to EU decision-making, the EU approved the 'Green Line Regulation' (Council of the EU 2004), which controls movement of goods and persons through the border that separates the communities and also aims to promote Turkish Cypriot economic development. In the aftermath of the aborted reunification, the Commission proposed two additional regulations: the 'Direct Trade Regulation' (European Commission 2004), which represents a trade agreement between the EU and the community, and the 'Financial Aid Regulation' (Council of the EU 2006b), which aims at development and preparation for implementation of the EU law in north Cyprus, in the event of a reunification. The Financial Aid Regulation was finally adopted in 2006 but the implementation of the Direct Trade Regulation is still pending, due to objections from the Greek Cypriots, who claim that implementation equals recognition of the self-declared Turkish Cypriot state.

In this sense, the troubled neutrality of the EU in the Cyprus issue due to the membership of Greece is now even more compromised, since one part of the conflict (Greek Cypriots) joined the EU. The impartiality of the EU was also undermined by the actual decision to allow the accession of the RoC regardless of the Greek Cypriot position on the Cyprus issue (unlike Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots, whose European integration had always been linked to the resolution of the dispute), something that high-ranked EU official regards a 'great mistake' that the EU should try rectify (interview 2013). In the end, the Greek Cypriot effort to promote their interests via EU decision-making put an end to the neutrality of the EU for Turkey and left her with fewer motives to meet EU conditionality, particularly in the Cyprus problem. The increasing friction between Greek Cypriots and Turkey has also reduced Ankara's incentives to meet conditionality. For example, the Greek Cypriot opposition to EU efforts to assist Turkish Cypriots has displeased both north Nicosia (interview with member of the EU Coordination Centre 2009, interview with Turkish Cypriot Leadership Representative 2009) and the 'motherland' Turkey, who has linked the implementation of the Additional Protocol to the approval of EU trade with the Turkish Cypriots (BBC News, 13 September 2006). Though inter-communal negotiations on resolution have been slow, Turkish political rhetoric is increasingly inflexible, with added references to the self-determination of the Turkish Cypriots, which go against the agreed parameters of a solution based on a centralised federation. In this sense, the internalisation of the conflict has naturally led to the slow-down of the accession of Turkey, the side of the dispute that is outside the EU. The awaiting

resolution (most vividly depicted in the pending implementation of the Additional Protocol) has created a hermetic barrier in the country's road to the EU³.

As for the Turkish Cypriots, the accession of Cyprus as a divided island has led to a decrease of pro-EU attitudes and, therefore, EU-induced incentives to compromise on the dispute. Similarly to Turkey, the neutrality of the EU has been undermined. Indeed, the decision to allow Greek Cypriots to enter the EU despite their rejection of reunification, while Turkish Cypriots who supported the Annan Plan remained outside, caused a lot of frustration. At the same time, frustration with the EU grew even bigger, when the promises of the EU to develop relations with the community and address its isolation were not materialised due to Greek Cypriot objections (interview with Turkish Cypriot representative of civil society 2009). Consequently, the appeal of the EU amongst Turkish Cypriots, although still high (European Commission 2013), is constantly decreasing. This is also reflected in political matters, where hardline forces have increased their vote share (2009/ 2010 elections). During the slow negotiations on the Cyprus dispute, the hardline leadership has taken a rather inflexible stance and, similarly to Turkey, has focused on the separate existence of the Turkish Cypriots and the often support of their self-declared administration.

In more recent years, the EU internalised the conflict and allowed Greek Cypriots to use their membership in order to promote their positions on the Cyprus issue. This has damaged the EU's neutrality and has induced more inflexible Turkish and Turkish Cypriot policies towards the Cyprus issue. The internalisation of the conflict into the EU has led to a decrease of EU appeal amongst Turkish Cypriots and has brought back less flexible elites and similar positions in the dispute. For Turkey, the overall loss of momentum in the process of accession, which directly relates to barriers posed by internalisation of the Cyprus issue, has decreased the clarity of EU reward, the credibility of conditionality and, therefore, incentives to meet conditions on the dispute. This is indeed a stark contrast to early stages of the accession process, marked by widespread pro-EU attitudes.

3. On top of the Cyprus problem, the accession of Turkey is also undermined by other reasons including: the so-called 'Enlargement fatigue' following the big-bang expansion of 2004-7 and the broader decline of EU external policies vis a vis internal matters, such as the economic crisis; rising reservations about Turkish accession at both public and elite level and, oppositely, the decreasing Turkish public support of EU membership (from 62 per cent in 2004 to 36 per cent in 2012 - European Commission 2004, 2012), which also limits the government's room for conditionality-related reform (Hannay 2006), especially in sensitive matters like the Cyprus dispute.

5. CONCLUSION

The period before accession, Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots supported reunification, as the only way to advance their EU aspirations. This success of conditionality nests in the credible threat that, absence of a resolution, EU hopes of both sides will be disappointed. But the credibility of conditionality for the Greek Cypriots was undermined, since a support of reunification - although encouraged by the EU- was never an explicit part of accession conditionality. Not surprisingly, this did not motivate Greek Cypriots to change their policy and, after their rejection of the Annan Plan, Cyprus entered the EU pending the resolution of the dispute.

The 'internalisation' of the conflict and the ability of one side (Greek Cypriots) to use EU structures to promote their positions have transformed the dispute. Interestingly, this Greek Cypriot 'uploading' of preferences has increased the clarity, and therefore credibility, of conditionality: it is now very clear that, for Turkey to be admitted to the EU, normalisation with the EU member state Cyprus is necessary; the same goes for the Turkish Cypriots. Indeed, the RoC has succeeded in keeping a strict conditionality upon the candidate Turkey but other factors work counter-productively to a credible conditionality: the 'clarity' of EU reward is compromised as the momentum in the relations between Turkey and the EU is decreasing; most importantly, the EU membership of the Greek Cypriots has reduced the neutrality of Brussels in the eyes of Turkey and has given less incentives to meet conditionality, especially in sensitive issue like the Cyprus dispute. As for the Turkish Cypriots, the 'internalisation' of the conflict has come with a failure of the EU to help the community and this has led to a decline of the pro-solution/EU trend and a return of less compromising attitudes in the dispute.

Similar to other conflict cases, Cyprus testifies to the power that EU membership has in triggering changes in policies towards disputes. What is more, Cyprus is indicative of the paramount importance of credibility of conditionality: it is only where strict conditions regarding the resolution of the conflict (e.g. Turkey, Turkish Cypriots before accession) that the EU can impact policies towards the dispute; where conditionality is softer, the EU has limited aptitude to influence policy towards a certain direction. Lastly, the unique case of Cyprus shows that 'internalisation' of the conflict is likely to further reduce credibility of conditionality, because it damages Brussels' relations with those outside the EU and also limits the neutrality of the EU in their eyes. Years after the accession of a divided island, the accession of the island remains controversial but Cyprus can be a rather interesting lesson for the limits that internalisation of the conflict could pose to the EU's ability to promote its resolution.

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