



William Mallinson

Cyprus: Diplomatic History and the Clash of Theory in International Relations. (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010, ISBN 978-1-84885-416-1, xvi + 228 pp., £ 54.50 hb.).

The Cyprus issue has dominated a substantial part of the literature on the Eastern Mediterranean, as regards both international relations and history, in the last 35 years. There has been a multitude of works on the history of the island and its 1974 troubles (see, for example, other books published recently by I.B. Tauris, including Dimitrakis' *Military Intelligence in Cyprus: From the Great War to Middle East Crises*; Asmussen's *Cyprus at War: Diplomacy and Conflict During the 1974 Crisis*, and Mallinson's own *Cyprus: a modern history*). Where the present study differs considerably from other texts on the subject is its unique approach. Mallinson (a former diplomat and a lecturer at the Ionian University of Greece) uses his experience as an international relations historian, theorist and practitioner to shed light on the causes of conflict over Cyprus.

As stated in the first sentence of the book, Mallinson 'uses the most recent diplomatic documents available on Cyprus to illustrate the latest state of the practice and theory of international relations. Thus, the diplomatic history of the Mediterranean island is employed as both the medium and the example to explain IR theories and, most saliently, geopolitics, which the author discredits as 'a justification of power politics'. However, Mallinson's critique of the theoretical field is far from sterile; he puts forward the alternative of a 'geohistorical' approach, as the 'most detached and simple way' of understanding Cyprus, as well as other international conflicts. As he goes over his approach he makes some strong and often provocative statements, maintaining, for example, that 'only history can teach us about relations between states', and that the only constant in history is human nature (10).

The book's structure is quite straightforward. After two short chapters which explain the rationale and approach to the subject, Mallinson provides an analysis of (mainly) British and US involvement in Cyprus and the Eastern Mediterranean, in chronological order. The first chapter of the analysis focuses on the geopolitical importance of Greece and Cyprus, as well as British perceptions of this, up until the Second World War, with the author introducing two key concepts of his thesis; namely Britain's obsession with Russian power, and its 'elginistic' attitude vis-à-vis Cyprus (as the author explains, his term 'elginism' means 'being obsessed with hanging on to something that is not yours'). In the next chapter, Mallinson continues his criticism of British foreign policy, by concentrating on the Greek Civil War (a story of 'foreign interference, mainly British'), and castigating the Foreign Office for using the communist threat to carry on Disraeli's policy, hang on to Cyprus and bring in the Americans. Chapter five retells the story of the 25 years between the end of the Civil War and the 1974 coup, and is even more condemning for the British. The author of *Cyprus: Diplomatic History and the Clash of Theory in International Relations* identifies suspicions of Soviet intentions and the role of France as the main factors that influenced London's actions of the period; these included: Whitehall's desire to divide the two main communities in Cyprus; Britain retaining its bases there solely due to US pressure to do so; Britain's attempts to exacerbate Greek-Turkish relations, and its secret collaboration with



Turkey in the 1950s, as regarded Cyprus; FO's misgivings about the ('paper tiger') Treaty of Guarantee, and London's policy of not honouring the Treaty; and, finally, secret British and American agreement not to resist the Turks in 1974. Chapter six and seven deal with the Turkish invasion and its aftermath, respectively, and reveal (through diplomatic documents) Britain's foreknowledge of Turkey's invasion plans, as well as its decision to hide behind the US and play second fiddle to the Americans - although they had no legal locus standi in relation to Cyprus. In chapter eight, Mallinson takes London's conclusion that 'Turkey was more important to Western strategic interests than Greece' (96) even further, by incorporating in his analysis recent and current US policy in the region. Despite recent diplomatic spats, he makes reference to a 'US-Israel-Turkey Axis', and stresses the significance of the defence of Israel in considering Cyprus' future. The author recognizes only EU and Russian power as possible countervailing influences to London and Washington's strong support of Turkey (including the latter's application to the EU). The final chapter of this intriguing book turns to the current state of the Athens-Ankara-Nicosia triangle and its relations with the British and American capitals, to conclude that apart from the protection of Israel, oil is an essential part of the strategic picture. Mallinson also claims that Britain and the US envisage a re-united but emasculated Cyprus, and rejects the Annan plan outright, referring to it as 'simply a device to continue the age-long international game of macho power politics' (140). Finally, the author supports that the US' relationship with Turkey is 'the most pertinent factor in the Cyprus question' (143).

All in all, the book is well-written and the author succeeds in the goals he sets out in the introduction. He concludes that the ideal way of understanding international conflicts is a combination of theory and practice, transcended by a geohistorical approach, also emphasizing the importance of basic human characteristics, such as ambition and lust for power. The contribution of Mallinson's short but meaty book is quite multifarious. Apart from the excellent use of recently released archival resources that ideally compliment the well thought out arguments, the author's uncommon approach in both analyzing Cyprus' problems and reviewing the advantages and shortcomings of international relations theories, makes *Cyprus: Diplomatic History and the Clash of Theory in International Relations* a unique and appealing read. The book is of direct interest not only to experts and students but to all those interested in Cyprus, the Eastern Mediterranean and IR theory in general, as well as those engaged in the practice of conflict resolution.

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