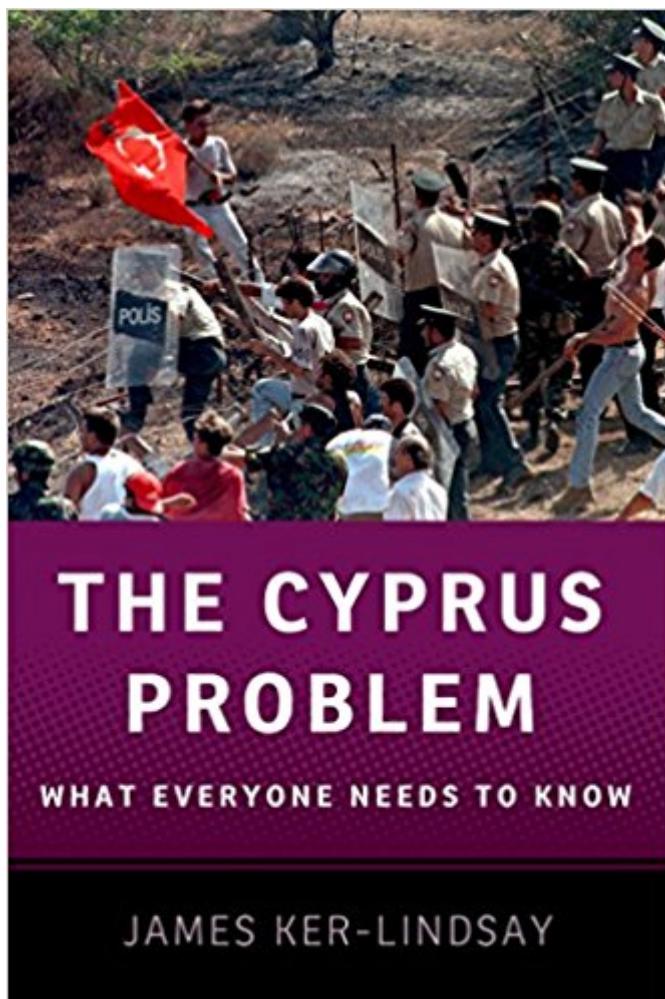


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# The Cyprus Problem: What Everyone Needs To Know®



## Synopsis

For nearly 60 years--from its uprising against British rule in the 1950s, to the bloody civil war between Greek and Turkish Cypriots in the 1960s, the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in the 1970s, and the United Nation's ongoing 30-year effort to reunite the island--the tiny Mediterranean nation of Cyprus has taken a disproportionate share of the international spotlight. And while it has been often in the news, accurate and impartial information on the conflict has been nearly impossible to obtain. In *The Cyprus Problem: What Everyone Needs to Know®*, James Ker-Lindsay--recently appointed as expert advisor to the UN Secretary-General's Special Advisor on Cyprus--offers an incisive, even-handed account of the conflict. Ker-Lindsay covers all aspects of the Cyprus problem, placing it in historical context, addressing the situation as it now stands, and looking toward its possible resolution. The book begins with the origins of the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities as well as the other indigenous communities on the island (Maronites, Latin, Armenians, and Gypsies). Ker-Lindsay then examines the tensions that emerged between the Greek and Turkish Cypriots after independence in 1960 and the complex constitutional provisions and international treaties designed to safeguard the new state. He pays special attention to the Turkish invasion in 1974 and the subsequent efforts by the UN and the international community to reunite Cyprus. The book's final two chapters address a host of pressing issues that divide the two Cypriot communities, including key concerns over property, refugee returns, and the repatriation of settlers. Ker-Lindsay concludes by considering whether partition really is the best solution, as many observers increasingly suggest. Written by a leading expert, *The Cyprus Problem* brings much needed clarity and understanding to a conflict that has confounded observers and participants alike for decades. *What Everyone Needs to Know®* is a registered trademark of Oxford University Press.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The Cyprus Problem by James Ker-Lindsay is concise about the divided island's history before and after 1960 independence. Before 1960, Britain was the island's colonial master. The island wasn't allowed to join the Greek nation. After independence, a small nation was created with two languages, Greek and Turkish, two religions, Greek Orthodox and Sunni Islam, two ethnic histories, Greek and Turkmen, and a long geographic enmity between islands and mainland going back at least to the Trojan Wars. Ker-Lindsay's main theme is showing how these divides have kept Cyprus from achieving a workable self-government. While reading about Cyprus, he got me thinking about small European nations with problems in self-government, Belgium and Ireland. Belgium's Flemish/French language problem in self-government seems bad, even without two ethnic histories, nor two religions, and Belgium isn't an island physically outside its larger European community. Cyprus clearly has more problems than Belgium, and more than Ireland, which it resembles in being an island. Ireland's religious division is only between denominations of the Christian religion, and both use the same Holy book. Ireland's Gaelic language is mitigated by general use of English. Ireland's history of geographic enmity goes back 500 years, not thousands of years. So I see Ker-Lindsay's Cyprus as a more comprehensive study of problems in Mediterranean self-government. Ker-Lindsay describes problems from each side. There were personality clashes between party leaders who didn't really represent the desires of their populations. Popular referendums were tried in attempts to bypass these leaders, but the populations were easily pushed and pulled by media campaigns. New confederations were proposed in attempts to bypass clashes over which group would lead a continuing nation of 1960 Cyprus, but they were seen as preludes to easy secession from confederation. Ideas for rotating or sharing power at the top didn't satisfy either

group's fundamental desire to wield power over the opposing population. The border between the populations is physically vague, yet legislative attempts failed to set a firm border. Outsiders tried to mediate between the groups, but there was no trust. Trust in a combined national government is lacking in the partitions: the government isn't trusted to prevent subversion of one partition by the other, and the government isn't trusted to handle external relations with Greece and Turkey without favoring one partition over the other. Ker-Lindsay says he has no solution to offer. He feels the 2004 entry of Cyprus into the European Union may help lead out of the impasse, but he observes that Turkey's delay entering the European Union has been delaying the effect. He got me thinking again. Maybe both Cypriot groups, now clashing over who will be on top of their island, might accept a third and better answer, neither of them. It wouldn't be the first *partitions smaller, community larger* success.

America's states put political and religious differences under common defense, diplomacy, and treasury. In a large community, immigration can be shared, new religions accepted, and children educated in a shared language for interstate commerce. Europe is already years along a similar path. He got me thinking parts of the Mediterranean might enter onto similar paths. Until then, Ker-Lindsay's Cyprus descriptions, written before the 2011 Arab Spring, seem able to predict and explain problems in small Mediterranean attempts at democratic self-government. All have minorities unable or unwilling to accept majority rule while living near the majority.

Ker-Lindsay's insights into the Cyprus problem might help others understand their small nation failures. They might seek, as Ker-Lindsay suggests, larger communities taking away from both minority and majority the divisive roles of defense and diplomacy. As small partitions in a larger community, their repeating Mediterranean clashes would lose weight, even while historic enmity continued. Bottom line: Ker-Lindsay earns 5 stars. He understands the Mediterranean better than diplomats who think talk ends tribalism. He thinks mutual benefit trumps tribalism.

The intended audience of this book, like all those in the Oxford Press' "Need to Know" series, consists of those who have almost no knowledge of the subject whatsoever. Just about anyone who is more knowledgeable on the subject would gain little. Hence the relevant question becomes, does this book provide a decent introduction at that level? The answer to this question is an unequivocal yes. The book provides a few pages on many of the key issues surrounding the topic such as a brief history of the island from antiquity to today (with emphasis on brief), who the various nationalities inhabiting the island are (i.e., predominately Greek and Turkish but also Maronite, Armenian and Gypsy) and other issues such issues. Each of these issues is discussed in a very brief 5 page

section or so. These short mini-chapters do a fairly good job at introducing the uninitiated to the issues. For anyone over and above the uninitiated however the information in these brief sections would not provide anything new. The book does have some weaknesses that prevent this reviewer from granting it a five star rating for its intended audience. One is that it does not do a good job at describing how the tensions between the Greek and Turkish communities lead to the Turkish invasion partitioning the island. Much more importantly, there is no discussion whatsoever of the precedent of this invasion on international political order. This very issue is why so many books have been written on the Cyprus issue since the partition of the island. This issue is of great importance not only in regional terms but broader global terms. In regional terms it is of importance because Turkey used the justification that it needed to "protect" the Turkish minority on the island and this protection required the de facto partition of the island and the creation of a "Turkish" state. As both Greece and Bulgaria have significant Turkish populations of about 10% and 20% of their total populations, this same justification can also be used to partition both of these nations in order to protect the Turkish minority. More important, and more realistically, Turkey is pushing forth the same argument to "protect" the Turkomen (a group related to Turkey ethnically) in Northern Iraq. This is despite the fact that Turkomen barely account for 1% of Iraq's population. Turkey is also pushing forth the view that the capital of such a Turkomen state would, naturally, be Kirkuk (the heart of the Kurdish part of Northern Iraq and a major oil producer not only in Iraq but in the world). The global dimension of the problem is that the same justification can be used worldwide by many other nations. For example, India could invade and partition Sri Lanka in order to protect the sizeable Hindu portion of that island. China could use the same excuse to invade neighboring nations where sizeable Chinese communities exist to "protect" them too. Any recognition of the "Turkish" state let in Cyprus would add legitimacy to such actions. Not recognizing the starlet would do the exact opposite and make any nation thinking along these lines think twice and hard. Unfortunately this issue is not even brought up in the book.

This book provides a clear outline of the events that led to the division of Cyprus, and the issues surrounding reunification. A good read for those who are unaware, yet wanting to understand the roots of the conflict.

Great overview of the issues that persist in Cyprus. For someone just beginning to study this situation, this book was perfect.

Very good to get going and get the basics but surely needs more to go more in depth and truly understand

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