

State of Exception in the Mediterranean: Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot Community

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2020 passed into modern Turkish Cypriot history as an important milestone. Amid the pandemic and economic turmoil, Ankara's interferences in the internal political scene of the Turkish Cypriot community, and the impasse in the process of resolving the Cyprus Problem based on the bi-zonal, bi-communal federal formula, the Turkish Cypriot community's leadership changed. In the shadow of these historical developments, the historian and academic Nikos Moudouros, who has for many years been following closely the contemporary Turkish Cypriot reality, proceeded to the publication of his new work titled *State of Exception in the Mediterranean: Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot Community*. Moudouros, who has recently completed his two-year Post-Doctoral Research at the Department of Turkish and Middle Eastern Studies of the University of Cyprus before assuming the position of Lecturer, with his new work introduces us to the historical and theoretical background of the new sweeping developments in the second largest community of Cyprus.

In general, Moudouros' recent work is divided into three parts. With the introduction, and especially the second chapter, the author introduces us to the contemporary Turkish Cypriot socio-political reality, which he characterises as 'state of exception'. In this part of the study, Moudouros analyses the peculiar Turkish Cypriot socio-political context through the prism of Turkey's policies on Cyprus and the Turkish Cypriots. Then, in the third, fourth and fifth chapters, the author takes us on a journey through the modern history of the Turkish Cypriot 'state of exception'. The author seeks the roots of the 'state of exception' in the period 1963-1974, when the Turkish Cypriots withdrew from the short-lived bi-communal Republic of Cyprus and, under the guidance of Turkey, focused on the creation of alternative state structures. After the war of 1974, in the period 1974-1983, the effort to cre-

ate a second state unit in the Cypriot territory sped up. The last stop of this effort was the creation of the internationally unrecognised 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC)'. Alongside the analysis of these developments, the author records the internal, socio-political processes in the Turkish Cypriot community, focusing especially on its resistance to the joint effort of the Ankara-nationalist Turkish Cypriot Right to build a second Cypriot state. The author's approach is important, as it is a rare attempt to present the Turkish Cypriots as an autonomous protagonist of the contemporary Cypriot history and not just as a passive recipient of external developments and policies. In the third part of his study, the author focuses on the interaction of the contemporary autonomous Turkish Cypriot socio-political reality with the political and economic tendencies of modern times. Thus, the author studies the introduction of neoliberal practices and pan-Turkism into the modern Turkish Cypriot socio-political scene. Finally, the scholar frames this analysis with the contemporary wave of socio-political contestation that grew in the shadow of the great economic decline at the end of the 20th century and culminated for a short time during the period of the submission of the UN solution plan for the Cyprus Problem.

Regarding Turkey's attitude towards the modern Turkish Cypriot community, Moudouros, in the second chapter of his study, points out that Ankara's intervention and military dominance were followed by a strategy of transforming the threat to Turkey's national security in the region into an empty virgin land on which a completely new order was built. The effort to convert and transform the northern part of Cyprus included strategies of defining 'borders', establishing checkpoints, creating a specific economic model and an integrated political and administrative system, as well as introducing settler colonization policies. Therefore, in the absence of an international recognition, Northern Cyprus was transformed into a 'particular state of exception', which has a hierarchical power relation with Turkey. The author describes the northern part of the island as a space where the Turkish community had been besieged, secluded, alienated, and marginalised. This development was accompanied by the emergence of opposition voices that are putting forth political demands contesting partition. Moudouros reminds us that in the modern Turkish Cypriot reality, in addition to the passive recipients of Turkey's policies, there are also centrifugal forces who question the boundaries of the division politics. The opposition's front is a diverse political reality, which includes many shades of the Left, political parties, trade unions, and organisations.

In the third chapter of his study, the author discusses the roots of the Turkish Cypriot state of exception. Here, the reader observes the emergence and formation of separate power structures in the Turkish Cypriot community. After their withdrawal from the bi-communal Republic of Cyprus, the Turkish Cypriots scattered to many areas and gathered in enclaves, which were dominated by the 'militant's system'. The system was controlled by the armed organisation 'TMT', Ankara's military personnel and agents, and the nationalist Turkish Cypriot leadership. At the political level, the headquarters of this edifice were the General Committee, which set up committees at provincial level that operated as 'Ministries', composing a kind of 'revolutionary council' where the leadership role was undertaken by the military. Moudouros points out that, in combination with the detachment of Turkish Cypriots from production, this edifice was ultimately unable to suppress the appearance of demands such as cultural pluralism, which put forth the idea of coexistence and coming into an agreement with the Greek Cypriots, as well as the need for autonomy from Turkey. This weakness resulted in the gradual emergence of the first opposition centres of the Turkish Cypriot community.

In the fourth chapter, Moudouros focuses on the development of the dynamics of the opposition in the Turkish Cypriot community after the war of 1974, during the period of 1974-1981, when the 'Federal Turkish Cypriot State' was de facto created in the northern part of the island. In this effort, the author discusses important developments, such as the resettlement of the Turkish Cypriots in the northern areas of Cyprus and the state-building process based on Greek Cypriot properties and funding from Turkey, the Turkification of space and state planning, and the strong state interventionism in economy. The scholar frames this record with the consolidation of the Turkish Cypriot opposition in new political formations and the occurrence of dynamic interventions in the Turkish Cypriot socio-political scene, such as strikes.

The record of the attempt to establish a second state entity in Cyprus continues in the fifth chapter. The author relates the creation of the internationally unrecognised 'TRNC' to the effort of the Turkish Cypriot leadership to pressure the Greek Cypriots to accept the equality of the two communities. Also, he describes the effort to position the left-wing circles under the umbrella of independence and, thus, to widen the social base which would support the idea of establishing a second separate state in Cyprus. As in the previous period, this effort faced the reaction of the opposition which is examined by the author.

In the sixth and seventh chapters, Moudouros focuses on the interaction of the 'TRNC' and its forces of contestation with recent phenomena and currents that were introduced to the Cypriot scene during the last two decades of the 20th century. The writer analyses the effort for the neoliberal 'TRNC's financial reconstruction and transformation of the northern regions of Cyprus into a free trade zone. At the same time, he summarizes the imposition of the economic discipline measures introduced by Turkey on the Turkish Cypriot community. The Turkish Cypriot opposition reacted to these initiatives, arguing that the economic underdevelopment of the Turkish Cypriots reinforced 'external tutelage', meaning the political and economic dependency on Turkey. Apart from imposing its own economic prescriptions on Turkish Cypriots, during the last two decades of the 20th century, Ankara approached the 'TRNC' as an 'experimental laboratory', where the effectiveness of pan-Turkist post-Cold War visions could be tested. Therefore, the adjustment of the community to the context of the 'great Turkic world' of the post-Cold-War period was crucial in this experimentation.

In the eighth, ninth and tenth chapters of his study, Moudouros introduces us to the socio-economic impasse experienced by the Turkish Cypriot community at the end of the last century, and the reaction of the Turkish Cypriot opposition to the great crisis. During this period, Ankara and its nationalist Right attempted the reproduction of their right-wing and nationalist policies. The intensification of political violence formed one of the basic tools in this direction. The Turkish Cypriot opposition attempted to resist the authoritarianism of the Right both through its participation in power and the utilisation of various resistance practices. As Moudouros points out in the ninth chapter of his book, the resistance peaked during the period of the great crisis in the banking sector (1999-2000), when the Turkish Cypriot opposition reacted to the unprecedented crisis with a series of strikes and demonstrations. In the tenth chapter of his new book, Moudouros turns his attention to the culmination of this wave of political and social dissent during the period of the UN solution plan (2002-2004).

In the conclusions of his study, the author refers to the ideological collapse of the four-decades-long status quo and the complete delegitimation of the 'TRNC'. Also, he makes mention of the opposition current that lives on during this period. Moudouros concludes that 'the contradiction of the illegal structures lies in the fact that they were, on the one hand, generating the political and economic integration of the Turkish Cypriots in power, and were therefore building the framework

for the maturity of this power, but on the other hand, these same structures were undermining the prospect of this power being fulfilled due to the heavy shadow of Ankara at all levels’.

All in all, Moudouros’ book constitutes a most valuable tool for the multidimensional analysis of the contemporary Turkish Cypriot reality. However, the analytical scope of the study could be broadened if more emphasis were to be applied to Ankara’s view of the whole of Cyprus as a Turkish sphere of influence. At the same time, some aspects of the Turkish Cypriot Right, which holds a multidimensional cooperation with Turkey, remained unexplored. Except for the limited reference to the emergence of the opposition within the community of Turkish citizens in Northern Cyprus towards the end of the Chapter 8, the study neglects to make mention of the vocal opposition pockets that exist within the Turkish Cypriot Right. Nevertheless, Moudouros’ innovative and original work adds a great deal to the contemporary Cypriot historiography, being a scientific study that approaches the complex Turkish Cypriot reality as an authentic, autonomous, and colourful aspect of the Cypriot reality of the 21st century.

Nikolaos Stelgias