

Κυπριακή Δημοκρατία 50 Χρόνια, Επώδυνη Πορεία

[50 YEARS OF THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS:
A PAINFUL PATH]

Edited by CHRYSOSTOMOS PERICLEOUS
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This book is a welcome inter-disciplinary contribution on Cyprus. The title implies that the focus here is on the *state* of Cyprus and, without doubt, post-independence years are at the 'heart' of the edition. Regardless, the book embraces many works that go beyond the strictly-speaking Cypriot *state*. Indeed, the volume ends up covering Cyprus as a whole and the wider Cypriot economic, social, political, even cultural landscape. With Cyprus at the spotlight and limited comparative contribution in its entirety, this book is destined to have a Greek-speaking audience that is almost exclusively interested in Cypriot affairs. However, this is a rare inter-disciplinary collection on the island's affairs, which is relevant to a diverse number of disciplines but with an added focus on politics and international relations, not least due to the thematic centrality of the Cyprus problem. In this regard, the main readership here is a variety of scholars focusing on Cyprus, but those coming from a politics background will enjoy a far more interesting reading of the book as a whole. All the same, some of the contributions deviate from 'traditional' academic writing (taking into account pieces that have an added diplomatic or personal 'flavour' to them, for instance, part one, chapter 5 and part two, chapters 9 and 15) and, in this context, the edition opens up to a slightly wider audience too.

The volume is structured into five different sections. The first part is on Greek-Cypriot 'society', which incorporates a study of the bi-polarity of the party system (chapter 1), an investigation of media (chapter 2) and a critical contribution on how public discourse has impacted political competition in relation to European integration (chapter 3). In the rest of the section issues of identity are touched upon in reference to the political game (chapter 4), the 1974 war (chapter 5) and language policies of the Republic (chapter 6).

Section two, which is by far the longest one, debates a series of aspects of the Cyprus issue, covering: the diplomatic background at different stages of the conflict (e.g. chapters 1, 6 and 10); various matters of the Republic of Cyprus, such as constitutional provisions (chapter 2) or the failure of bi-communal co-operation (chapter 4); the role of domestic actors, such as Makarios (chapter 9) or AKEL (chapter 13), but also external players, including Greece (chapter 6), United Nations (chapter 11) or the USA and Great Britain (chapter 14). Particularly interesting are the studies on the Turkish Cypriots (chapters 7 and 8) and the more theoretically-informed contributions (chapter 16).

The third part contemplates the relevance of the European Union (EU) to the country by focusing on the role of the EU on the Cyprus issue before (chapter 1) and after accession (chapter

4, an empirically rich account), the role of the European Court of Human Rights (chapter 2) in the inter-communal conflict but also the role of Greece in Cyprus' EU accession (chapter 3).

The following 'economic' section concentrates on the Greek-Cypriot economy and how this is affected by EU integration (chapter 1) or the recent global financial crisis (chapter 2). The section concludes with a chapter that takes the interesting form of policy suggestions for the economy of a reunified country.

To finish, the book closes with a section on cultural matters, which reflects on Greek-Cypriot education (chapters 1 and 2) but also literature (chapter 3) and the illustrative arts (chapter 4).

This is a timely addition to the literature on Cyprus that is overall welcome. From the onset, an important weakness is the rather unclear and unjustified focus of the edition. In an effort to establish a link to the timing of publication and the fifty-year anniversary of the Republic, the title of the book suggests a focus on the *state* of Cyprus. Nevertheless, this is not followed throughout the edition, which hosts a variety of works on aspects falling outside of strictly-speaking state matters (and, indeed, makes the book far more interesting). In this regard, a clearer introduction of the focus, scope and limitations of the edition would have gone a long way towards a more explicit 'roadmap' for the reader.

That said, it is this effort to bring together different aspects of the domestic Cypriot mosaic, such as society, economy and culture, that is noteworthy and a rare contribution to an over-'politicised' literature on the island. Also, particularly welcome is the increased attention paid to more recent years, which have been marked by the European integration of the country and are still a comparatively 'virgin territory' of research. In this regard, the empirical input of the edition is often significant. Besides, it is also very refreshing to see works from a diverse range of authors, including academics, politicians or journalists.

Despite addressing a broad range of topics, it is fairly obvious that the majority of studies in the edition are preoccupied with the Cyprus issue (to a varied degree). Of course, this is somehow expected in a domestic scene that is dominated by the inter-communal dispute. Yet, this focus on the Cyprus issue, despite contributing to the understanding of the conflict and its evolution, often overshadows other aspects of domestic affairs. For example, chapters on party competition (section one) extensively debate the importance of the Cyprus issue but fail to provide any insight on other cleavages of the political debate (e.g. economy, the EU). At the same time, the investigation of the Cyprus problem – the single most popular topic of the literature on the country – restricts room for original contribution to the knowledge.

A particularly neglected topic in the edition is that of the Turkish Cypriots. Besides a few (undeniably fascinating, i.e. section two) studies exclusively devoted to the Turkish Cypriots, there is a serious lack of discussion of the issue. Instead, there is an increased focus on the Greek-Cypriot side (not least because of the monopolisation of the Republic by the Greek Cypriots), which nonetheless provides for incomplete accounts of several aspects of Cypriot affairs – for example, it would have been far more interesting to investigate economic or social matters on both sides of the 'Green line' (e.g. section on 'society' completely overlooks the Turkish Cypriots. In contrast, part two, chapter 17 on political competition is a remarkable example of successfully threading together the investigation of both communities).

What is also interesting in the edition is that contribution often lies in the personal viewpoint of the author (e.g. chapters written by politicians). But, this does not come cost-free: many chapters that rely heavily on personal experiences are victims of bias, which undermine the argument

credibility. In other instances, serious writing and structural problems and often lack of appropriate introduction of sources not only limit the quality of the argument but also the opportunities of readers to expand on their reading.

All in all, this is a noteworthy collection of essays on Cyprus, which does not come free of limitations, most importantly an unclear focus, pre-occupations of the mostly Greek/Greek-Cypriot authorship and often bad writing practice. Nevertheless, this is overall an empirically rich and rare inter-disciplinary contribution that succeeds in shedding light on a wide range of matters in the Mediterranean island.

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