

Explaining Green Party Absence in Northern Cyprus

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Abstract:

In this paper, the author attempts to explain why there is no Green Party in the northern part of Cyprus. Since the public opinion surveys give a blurred picture to the researcher trying to solve the puzzle, the author relies on in-depth qualitative interviews. Findings suggest that the Cyprus problem, economic problems and low trust in the output legitimacy of the system are the main variables to explain Green Party absence in northern Cyprus. The finding on the impact of the belief in the deliverability of the political system on Green Party formation stands out as a proposition that has to be tested in other cases as this has not yet been discussed in new party formation literature.

Keywords: Environmental attitudes, new party formation, northern Cyprus, Green party, postmaterialism

Introduction

When it comes to research about politics in Cyprus, nearly all the attention has been given to the Cyprus problem. This is not surprising as the conflict affects all areas of both political systems on the island. However, political research has been dangerously limited when it comes to other political issues. This is not only problematic with regards to our knowledge of the system as such, but has a further and even grimmer consequence of unconscious policy-making. Because of its *de jure* unrecognised status, the northern area of Cyprus suffered from this phenomenon even more than the Republic of Cyprus. Although the 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus' is internationally not recognised; it works as a representative democratic system, hence the unrecognised status of this polity cannot be a justification for the inadequate data we currently possess about political affairs.

Northern Cyprus is one of the only four political systems in Europe that does not have an established Green party!¹ In this paper, the author tries to make a contribution to what he calls 'the need for normalization of political science in Cyprus' by trying to find explanations for the absence of a Green party in this area. In the quest for exploring the determinants for Green party formation, independent variables can be classified under three headings: social determinants, institutional determinants and political competition.

Public opinion survey results for the northern part of Cyprus proved to be insufficient to explain Green party absence, thus the author conducted interviews with four environmental

1 Other political systems are Liechtenstein, Monaco and San Marino.

organisations, a non-governmental organisation (NGO) which works in civil society development issues, a member of the party assembly of the Social Democratic Party, and the ex-Deputy Prime Minister of northern Cyprus who was responsible for the tourism portfolio. The findings show that economic problems and the Cyprus problem have prevented action on the environmental problems in the north. Also, the case study demonstrates the low trust in the output legitimacy of a political system as an important variable to be tested in new party formation studies.

Social Determinants

Social change was the main explanation for the formation of Green Parties in the late 1970s and early 1980s. According to Inglehart (2007):

'Until the 1970s, it was nearly universal for individuals to prioritize so-called materialist values such as economic growth and maintaining order; on the other hand, postmaterialists give top priority to such goals as environmental protection, freedom of speech, and gender equality'.

Based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, the argument goes as follows: When people are able to satisfy their material needs and reach a certain level of prosperity, they put a higher value on things that are in short supply – things other than economic growth and maintaining order. These 'other things' are postmaterial values such as environmental protection, freedom of speech, autonomy, democracy, and gender equality (Inglehart, 1971, 1977 and 1990).

Formation of new social cleavages that is a consequence of the so-called postmaterialist values and the increased saliency of environmental issues (Rudig, 1990) are cited as the prime factors for Green party formation. Potential party creators would form parties only if they thought that they could be successful (Willey, 1998, pp. 655-666), and this success depends on public support. Therefore, if a society is inconsiderate to environmental issues, this could well explain why there is no Green party in a certain country.

Cyprus did not share a similar story with Western Europe. It has faced civil unrest from 1950s until 1974, and postmaterialist values have not developed in Cyprus as they did in Western European countries. The Green Party of the Republic of Cyprus in the south was formed only in 1996 and it is, in fact, quite a peculiar one, having rather traditional organisational features (Botetzagias, 2007, p. 125) and at times a conservative ideological standpoint (*ibid.*, pp. 126-127).

The party manifesto makes no reference to globalisation, immigrants or sexual minorities. According to EU Profiler team's research, the Green Party of Cyprus is in favour of more restrictive immigration into Cyprus. Furthermore, they argue that immigrants coming from outside of Europe should be required to accept Cypriot culture and values. The party also has reported that they have no opinion on the legalisation of same sex marriages (EU Profiler). Finally, they were against the Annan Plan of 2004, which foresaw the unification of the island (Botetzagias, 2007). Overall, we can argue that the Green Party of Cyprus is more materialistic

than other Green parties in Europe that are strictly postmaterialist. Nevertheless, they run elections, based on, among other things, environmental issues, and a considerable amount of its supporters are environmentally motivated. Can the absence of a Green Party in northern Cyprus be explained by indifference towards the environment? Between 2005 and 2007, the World Values Survey (WVS) Project posed this question to gauge attitudes towards the environment in their research. Table 1 shows the attitudes of ten Western European countries plus the Turkish Cypriot Community.

The Cyprus data was collected in 2006 and includes answers from both sides of Cyprus. The sample is weighted to reflect the difference in population size between the two communities. For the current purposes of this study, Greek Cypriot respondents have been removed from the analysis. Included in the table are 11 Western European societies with a considerable degree of postmaterialism. All of these societies have a Green party and some of these parties have been consistently very successful in the elections. It can be seen in the table that northern Cyprus ranked seventh among eleven societies when it comes to preferring environmental protection to economic growth and creating jobs. The average percentage of those in these societies who would choose to protect the environment stands at 63.30%, just below 64.20% in northern Cyprus.

Table 1: Choosing between 'Environmental Protection' and 'Economic Growth and Creating Jobs' in Ten Western European Societies and the Turkish Cypriot Community (2005-2007)

		Society					
Environment versus Economy		Norway	Switzerland	Finland	Italy	Spain	Sweden
	Protecting Environment	78.67% (782)	78.58% (877)	66.33% (656)	65.94% (544)	65.53% (675)	65.46% (631)
	Economic Growth and Creating Jobs	21.33% (212)	21.42% (239)	33.67% (333)	34.06% (281)	34.47% (355)	34.54% (333)
		100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Environment versus Economy		Northern Cyprus	Great Britain	France	Netherlands	Germany	
	Protecting Environment	64.20% (321)	62.50% (600)	56.34% (520)	50.69% (479)	42.10% (693)	
	Economic Growth and Creating Jobs	35.80% (179)	37.50% (360)	43.66% (403)	49.31% (466)	57.90% (953)	
		100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	

Source: World Values Survey Five Wave Integrated Dataset 1981-2005

One can also add to this the findings of the European Values Study (EVS) in 2008 (table 2). Asked if they would give part of their income towards preventing environmental pollution, 82.28% of the Turkish Cypriots agreed to do so whereas 65.09% of the Europeans answered positive. Therefore, one could debate the reliability of using social values as a variable for explaining why there is no Green Party in the northern part of Cyprus.

In spite of such an obvious positive attitude towards the environment, it is quite surprising to see that when they are asked about the two most important problems facing them, Turkish Cypriots put the environment well below issues such as the economic situation, unemployment, rising prices/inflation, crime and the Cyprus problem. Only 3.14%² of the people think the environment ranks as one of the two most important problems in northern Cyprus.

Table 2: Percentages of Those Who Agree to Give a Part of their Income for Preventing Environmental Pollution

		Region	
		North Cyprus	Europe
Income for the Environment	Agree	82.28% (376)	65.09% (40,384)
	Disagree	17.72% (81)	34.91% (21,658)
		100%	100%

Source: European Values Study 2008 (4th Wave)

Table 3: What Issues Do the Turkish Cypriots believe are the Two Most Important Problems Facing their Community?

		Time							
		2007 Autumn	2008 Spring	2008 Autumn	2009 Spring	2009 Autumn	2010 Spring	2010 Autumn	Mean
Issue	Economic Situation	32%	30%	35%	43%	51%	38%	47%	39.43%
	Unemployment	32%	30%	25%	37%	46%	49%	43%	37.43%
	Cyprus Problem	44%	37%	27%	27%	22%	23%	32%	30.29%
	Rising Prices/ Inflation	14%	28%	24%	18%	16%	18%	16%	19.14%
	Crime	21%	19%	18%	17%	16%	19%	18%	18.29%
	Housing	2%	3%	5%	9%	1%	1%	2%	3.29%
	Environment	3%	2%	6%	2%	2%	4%	3%	3.14%

Source: Standard Eurobarometer 74 (EB74), Cyprus National Report

2 The average of the latest seven Eurobarometer surveys.

One explanation to this confusion could be that Turkish Cypriots value protecting the environment more than economic growth, yet believe environmental problems in northern Cyprus are not at all serious, and there is no political space for a Green party. However, this cannot be a sound argument since the northern area has for years faced environmental problems serious enough to warrant media attention. Dikmen Garbage Dump is not only harmful to the environment but also to human health. It has been looming over the Turkish Cypriots for many years and the public has become very sensitive to this issue over time. In 2010, environmental organisations took action by organising a demonstration in this area and attracted attention to this problem.

Yet, this is not the only environmental problem in Cyprus. Substances that are severely dangerous to human health have been left in the Lefke area as a concomitant of the long and aggressive mining activities of the Cyprus Mining Corporation (CMC), which lasted from 1916 to 1975. Enver Bildir, who conducted his own research – as the president of an environmental organisation – in the Lefke area in 2000, reported that half of the deaths in the area were caused by cancer (*Star Kıbrıs*, 2007). According to research in 2011 conducted by well-known KADEM, which provides public opinion research on various issues, the northern part of Cyprus has one of the highest rates of cancer diagnoses in the world (Özgeç, 2011). The contribution of environmental factors to cancer diseases in northern Cyprus is as high as 85% (Ülker, 2010).

Recent atrocities against the environment included an attempt to violate the protected nature reserve area in the Dipkarpaz region by planning to bring electricity and then hotels to this district. Water shortage is still a problem, as it has been for years. Governments have not taken any substantial action towards transforming seawater into usable water. The community has not taken enough advantage of solar energy and relies heavily on non-renewable energy. Public transportation does not work effectively and nearly everybody drives a car, including large engine vehicles that emit considerable amounts of greenhouse gases. Also, there is no waste recycling system in the northern part of Cyprus.

WVS clearly supports the thesis that Turkish Cypriots take environmental problems very seriously.

Table 4: Perceived Seriousness of Environmental Problems (2006)

		Poor Water Quality	Poor Air Quality	Poor Sewage and Sanitation	Global Warming
Perceived Seriousness	Very Serious	88.00% (440)	78.20% (391)	83.20% (416)	78.60% (393)
	Somewhat Serious	6.00% (30)	10.60% (53)	7.40% (37)	14.40% (72)
	Not Very Serious	5.20% (26)	8.00% (40)	7.60% (38)	5.20% (26)
	Not Serious at All	0.80% (4)	3.20% (16)	1.80% (9)	1.80% (9)

Source: World Values Survey Five Wave Integrated Dataset 1981-2005

Results obtained from Eurobarometer surveys could indicate support for Inglehart's (1977) argument based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory that environmental demands emerge in the case of economic affluence. In this sense, the case of the northern part of Cyprus is not so different than the case of Southern Europe in the 1990s. Although people in Southern Europe were aware of the environmental problems, they felt that their economic backwardness was a greater priority compared with Northern Europe and they were not prepared to put environmental issues ahead of other concerns even though they might be aware of the environmental problems (Richardson, 1994, pp. 14-15; Rootes, 1994 p. 233; Müller-Rommel, 1998, pp. 151-152). The comparison between Southern Europe and Northern Europe is still quite valid. In fact, the Turkish Cypriot economy is much worse than that of most of the EU countries, and the figures are even lower than the Southern European figures from the early 1990s.

Table 5: GDP Per Capita in North Cyprus (2006-2009)

	Year				
GDP Per Capita (\$)	2006	2007	2008	2009	Mean
North Cyprus	11,837	14,765	16,158	13,354	14,029
European Union	28,434	30,074	30,800	29,689	29,749

Source: TC. Başbakanlık Kıbrıs İşleri Başmüsavırlığı KKTC'nin Ekonomik Yapısı ve Yatırım Alanları 2011 and International Monetary Fund [www.imf.org]

Table 6: Unemployment Rates in Northern Cyprus and European Union (2006-2009)

	Year				
Unemployment	2006	2007	2008	2009	Mean
North Cyprus	9.4%	9.4%	9.8%	12.4%	10.25%
European Union	8.2%	7.1%	7.0%	8.9%	7.80%

Source: TC. Başbakanlık Kıbrıs İşleri Başmüsavırlığı KKTC'nin Ekonomik Yapısı ve Yatırım Alanları 2011 and Eurostat

Nevertheless, basing the argument on the social values by looking at the Eurobarometer and economic figures clearly contradicts WVS and EVS data since these survey questions not only ask about environmental concerns but compare those concerns with concerns about economic growth, creating jobs and giving part of people's incomes towards overcoming these problems. Economic figures clearly show that this is a puzzle, as environmental consciousness is supposed to emerge as economic affluence grows. One can argue that economic figures and public opinion

survey data that we currently possess do not match and thus cannot really explain the absence of a Green Party in the northern area. Therefore, social determinants will be discussed more in-depth with the interviewees.

Institutional Determinants

Environmental concern and postmaterialist values do not automatically result in Green party formation. We also owe it to the literature to find hypotheses about the relationship between new party formation and institutional and structural aspects such as the electoral system, and rules relating to party registration and public funding (Miragliotta, 2010, p. 2; Alber, 1989, p. 208; Tavits, 2007, pp. 115-116; Cox, 1997).

Many argue that proportional representation and low-electoral thresholds are correlated with Green party success (Müller-Rommel, 1989; Richardson, 1994, p. 18; Rochon, 1985, pp. 420-421; Tavits 2007, pp. 115-116; Spretnak and Capra, 1985, p. 163; Rootes, 1994 p. 241; Carter, 2007, pp. 105-107). A plausible argument can be made that proportional representation and low-electoral thresholds can be encouraging factors for elites to consider forming a new party since they may be convinced that they can make their voice heard through political means rather than other means such as inside and outside lobbying. As Miragliotta (2010) argues, such discourse follows the line of Duverger (1959), Cox (1997), Donovan (2000), Rae (1967) and Lijphart (1984, pp. 151-161) who argued that disincentives in the electoral system influence the party number. The number of scholars who see proportional representation as conducive to Green party formation is not trivial even though they may disagree on the degree of importance (Selb and Pituctin, 2010, p. 148; O'Neill, 1997, pp. 434, 470; Redding and Viterna, 1999; Kitschelt, 1988, p. 232). In northern Cyprus, the system is proportional representation and the electoral threshold is 5%, which is not particularly low, thus, further inquiry is needed to ascertain the relationship between the threshold level and the absence of a Green party.

Apart from proportional representation and low-electoral thresholds, district magnitude is also important as it is directly related with proportionality (Tavits, 2007, p. 116; Richardson, 1994, p. 18). If the campaign for the election of new parties is fought in small districts, their chances of winning seats will be decreased since the number of MPs in these areas will be lower. This, without doubt, creates a problem for the smaller, rather than the bigger, parties. Most scholars advocate that three to seven seats per district is a reasonable number but more seats can be allocated in order to boost proportionality (ACE Project). District magnitude in the northern part of Cyprus ensures proportionality with the fewest seats in a district being six and the largest being sixteen. Consequently, district magnitude could not have been a hurdle for Green party formation in this area.

Actors also need to calculate how easy it is to register as a party. Registration requirements demanding time, effort and money have negative associations with new party formation. Is there a monetary deposit needed to register as a party to run in the elections? Does a party need a certain

number of signatures so that it can run in the elections? These variables should be negatively correlated with new party formation (Hug, 2000, pp. 190-191; Tavits, 2007, p. 124). In northern Cyprus, registering is fairly easy, there is no threshold for members and no petition is required, one simply needs to gain approval from the Ministry of Interior by showing a charter and a list of names of the founding committee. No deposit is required to register candidates for the elections.

In Germany, availability of public funding has facilitated the formation of the Green Party (Smith, 2005, p. 31 and Frankland, 1995, p. 34). Actors, if they believe that they will not be able to acquire sufficient funding to make an impact in the political arena, would be more sceptical towards creating a new political party. In northern Cyprus, state funding is guaranteed for political parties that have representation in Parliament. But a 5% threshold may produce a problem for the new parties. This threshold is much above 0.5% in Germany, 0.6% in Portugal, 1% in France, Israel and Austria, 2% in Canada and Japan, and 2.5% in Sweden (Katz and Crotty, 2006, pp. 448-449 and Pedahzur and Yihai, 2001, p. 195). In Spain the threshold is 3% at the constituency level and in the Swiss Cantons of Fribourg and Geneva it is 5% (Van Biezen, 2003, p. 46). Eastern European countries, which have seen the emergence of Green parties later than Western European countries, also have lower thresholds for public party funding compared to the northern area of Cyprus. Around the year 2000, figures were: 1% in Bulgaria and Hungary, 2% in Romania, 3% in Lithuania, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, 4% in Slovenia (representation in Parliament) and 5% in Estonia (representation in Parliament) (Van Biezen and Kopecký, 2001, p. 421; Gaube, 2002; Ikstens *et al.*, 2001; Sikk, 2003, p. 12). According to Van Biezen, 3% is already a high threshold for public funding (Van Biezen, 2003, pp. 46-47). As a result, the high threshold for being eligible for public funding in northern Cyprus might be a factor for explaining the absence of a Green party if we consider that Green parties in all European countries receive more than 80% of their income from state funds (Katz and Crotty, 2006, pp. 448-449). Constraints that may have been created by the high threshold for public funding eligibility in northern Cyprus and its effect on the absence of a Green party were discussed with the interviewees.

Political Competition

The likelihood that a Green party will be formed does not depend only on social and institutional determinants. It is the failure of the political parties to address environmental issues that gives an opportunity to new environmental actors to move into the political scene (Kitschelt, 1986 and 1988; Richardson, 1994 p. 19; Rootes, 1994, pp. 241-247; Kaelberer, 1998; Meguid, 2005; Lago and Martinez, 2011, p. 8; O'Neill, 1997, p. 469; Willey, 1998, p. 655; Selb and Pituctin, 2010, p. 151; Alber, 1989, p. 208; Smith, 2005, p. 9; Harmel and Robertson, 1985; Rohrschneider, 1993, p. 165; Müller-Rommel, 1985a and 1985b, p. 484).

This variable also encompasses Kitschelt's argument (1988, p. 213) that high labour corporatism has a negative association with left-libertarian party formation. If labour is incorporated heavily into governance, there will be less incentive to form new parties since the

actors would have other means to realise their goals (Kitschelt, 1988; Redding and Viterna, 1999, pp. 495-496). Even though environmental organisations may be actively engaged in discussion with governments, governments' failure in addressing environmental issues might result in Green party formation. The behaviour of the existing parties, therefore, requires extensive attention.

Doubtless, it matters what other parties do, but what Green party actors do is also important for their party's success (Smith, 2005, pp. 9-10, 11-12; O'Neill, 1997, pp. 437-438). Similar reasoning applies in the case of Green party formation. The capacity of the few elites and their decisions could make a huge difference. There may be enough demand from the public to politicise environmental issues, institutional settings can be welcoming towards the creation of a Green party and the current parties may not be taking Green issues on board. In this case, environmentalists are expected to step on to the political scene. Regardless, even in this case, it is up to the strategic choices that environmentalists make which will decide whether such a party can exist or not (Tavits, 2007, p. 115).

Political competition can be complex to analyse and as Rootes (1994) argues:

'Although one can point to the ways in which social, economic and political institutional considerations create the framework for political competition, how that competition is worked out in practice depends on any number of the caprices of humanity and nature. And, because Green politics is, after all, politics, the outcomes of the complex processes of political competition will depend in no small part on the actions and reactions of Greens themselves. Their philosophical, strategic and tactical disputes, their personality conflicts, their political inexperience, all have complicated progress' (p. 249).

Northern Cyprus is included neither in the Comparative Manifesto Project nor in the EU Profiler project. Thus, the author will rely on newspapers and interviews to learn more about political competition as well as environmentalists' decisions.

Explaining Green Party Absence in Northern Cyprus: The Role of Social Determinants and Trust in the Political System

In order to solve the puzzle, the author conducted seven interviews in April 2011. The sample size for environmentalists was decided by the number of environmental organisations registered in the CSO Directory (2007) plus the list of organisations and political parties that can be found on the environmental platform that was created in June 2010. Included in the sample size were four of the most active environmental organisations³ (Lefke Environment and Publicity Association, Green Action Group, Friends of Karpaz Association and Environment and Energy Association). The

3 All of the interviewees are the presidents of the organisations except for the Friends of Karpaz Association where the author interviewed the ex-president. She is currently the president of the EMU Environmental Research and Implementation Centre.

Management Centre of the Mediterranean,⁴ which is responsible for various civil society development projects and CSO training, was also included in the sample size because of their in-depth knowledge about societal matters and social movements. One more addition to the sample from the environmental platform included a representative from the Social Democratic Party's assembly (Toplumcu Demokrasi Partisi). The representative was selected because of his in-depth knowledge about political competition and institutional matters, alongside his environmental concern and activism. And last of all, the author interviewed Mustafa Akıncı, who was Mayor of Nicosia from 1976 to 1990, the Deputy Prime Minister responsible for Tourism from 1999 to 2001, leader of the Social Democratic Party (Toplumcu Kurtuluş Partisi) from 1987 to 2001, and leader of the moderate leftist party (Barış ve Demokrasi Hareketi) until 2008. Finally, he was a Member of Parliament from 1993 to 2009, the year he ended his long active career. In 2008, he held a meeting with the current co-chairman of the German Green Party 'Die Grünen', Cem Özdemir, in northern Cyprus, but he rejected the allegations that he was trying to establish a Green Party in that area. He argued that Toplumcu Demokrasi Partisi has already been doing what the Green Party is doing in Europe. Three of the interviews were conducted online and the remaining four, face-to-face. The average duration of the interviews was 30 minutes.

When it comes to social determinants, all of the interviewees agreed that other problems facing society pushed the environmental issue away from the scene. First of all, in contrast to the results of the World Values Survey and European Values Study, the interviewees acknowledged that economic problems have been a strong preventive factor against developing environmental consciousness. One interviewee argued that:

'Problems since 1950s created traumas in society. Being isolated from the world caused differences in mentality and this made everyone make short-term calculations and concentrate on getting money instantly. This also created corruption and people started to concentrate on short-term issues and neglect long-term issues like the environment. Economic pressures have been a cause for neglecting the environment' (Sahir, 2011).

Another interviewee stated the following: 'Before finding a solution to economic problems, we cannot convince the masses' (Erdil, 2011). This is very much in line with Inglehart's thesis based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Before a solution can be found to economic problems, it is unlikely that there will be enough demand for environmental action. The rationale for the contradictory data collected from the public opinion survey results could not be explained in this paper. Nevertheless, combined with the results obtained from the Eurobarometer, data gathered by the author suggests that there is strong empirical basis in arguing for the postmaterialist thesis.

A second social determinant has been the Cyprus problem, which is unique to northern Cyprus. Apart from the economic effects this problem has created; people's anxious expectations

4 For this organisation the author interviewed the chairman and executive director.

and hope for a solution to this long-lasting problem generated a peculiar attitude among society. People believe that before anything else is done, the Cyprus problem has to be solved. Consequently, environmental protection has been treated as an issue that has to be dealt with only after a solution. Eroğlu (2011) suggested that:

'The Cyprus problem and all the problems that were caused by this problem have been major obstacles for the Turkish Cypriots to develop environmental consciousness, recognise environmental issues as a priority and become active'.

Still today, political parties run on the grounds of their stance on the Cypriot issue more than any other concern, including the economy.

Not all of the interviewees asserted that the 5% threshold for ensuring representation in the Parliament has created an obstacle for Green Party formation. Also, there were strong objections for the effect of party funding. One plausible argument was that the latter did not create any problem since there has been no serious attempt to create a Green Party. It can be argued that this variable becomes significant only if the environmentalists show serious willingness to work on the creation of a Green Party. In contrast to this, the electoral threshold might become a more discouraging factor even from the beginning. Environmentalists' concern is to gain a political voice. They are immediately aware of the electoral threshold factor, whereas they do not really contemplate what, how, and how much money they can receive from the state. Notwithstanding the fact that institutional determinants cannot be totally disregarded, all of the interviewees conceded that these variables are definitely of much lower importance when compared to social determinants, and might become totally insignificant if social problems are solved. As Dayıoğlu (2011) succinctly expressed:

'As soon as we can develop consciousness about environmental issues, an institutional constraint, such as the electoral threshold, loses its relevance in a discussion about obstacles to Green Party formation'.

According to the interviewees, no political party has been responsive enough for the environmental concern of the people. Nonetheless, some of the interviewees were of the mind that Toplumcu Demokrasi Partisi (TDP) is currently the most responsive party for environmental issues. Various newspaper articles since the beginning of 2010 seem to back these assertions. However, this concern cannot be a substitute to what a Green party could offer the northern part of Cyprus. Hence, it is not very likely that strategies of the current parties have been a serious obstacle against Green Party formation:

'Right now, I can say that TDP is the political party that is most responsive to environmental issues. They try to attend our events and engage in information exchange. However their efforts are simply not enough' (Sahir, 2011).

Another explanation worthy of note in relation to the absence of a Green party proposes an additional variable to those in the literature on new party formation that needs to be examined in

other cases. This variable is people's belief in the effectiveness and responsiveness of the political system. Interviewees mentioned people's very low level of trust in the political systems' capability of delivering desired results. That being the case they argued that people are less likely to use political means to try to get things done. One of the reasons behind this belief is related to the Cyprus problem. Because of the unrecognised status of northern Cyprus, it has relied heavily on Turkey. This reliance however, came at a cost, because it allowed Turkey to have excessive influence on Turkish Cypriot politics, and the people started to believe that what they will get in the end is not quite what they want but what Turkey wants. Also, contributing to this distrust in the political system was corruption and nepotism.

This should not necessarily be understood to be a lack of trust in political parties. As a matter of fact, having a low level of trust in the political parties may be positively correlated with new party formation. When people lose their trust in the political parties, it is possible that they might create a new party.⁵ That being said, when people believe that the political system is not functional or responsive enough, then those who want to change things do not follow the party politics road.

Losing faith in the capability of the political machine to produce results is what held prominent environmentalists back from forming a political party. The leader of the Green Action Group in the north of Cyprus argued that, when the two governments on the island first allowed contacts between organisations across the divide in the early 1990s, there were discussions between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot environmentalists to form a Green party in the north as partners of a Green party in the south; however, the Green Action Group representative advocated that what the Greek Cypriot counterparts were trying to create was incompatible with Green ideology as they included nationalist elements in their agenda.

Afterwards in the north, environmentalists gave a great deal of thought to the idea of creating a Green party but they decided that this would not be a good step to take. Northern Cyprus is special and they believed that they could not achieve their goals by creating a party. They would not be able to do much as a Green party because political decisions depend on Turkey. This phenomenon can clearly be seen by the words of the leader of the Green Action Group in the north of Cyprus:

'We [environmentalists] gave it a great deal of thought and decided that creating a political party would not have been a good idea because north Cyprus is special. We would not be able to achieve much by creating a party because decisions depend on Turkey. Money comes from Turkey, and without Turkey's approval, it is unlikely to do anything. I have received offers to form such a party before but without power there is no point in forming it. The best thing to do is to infiltrate each party and try to influence them as much as possible. The Green Action Group now has many people within the political authority, even Ministers

5 Trust in political parties in northern Cyprus is higher than that of the EU average. In May 2010, trust in political parties in northern Cyprus was 21%; whereas, in the EU, it was 15% (Eurobarometer 74).

and MPs. This method does not work perfectly, but it is better than creating a Green party. We get certain information and present our ideas to Ministers, MPs, and political parties, and use them for producing “Green’ results” (Sahir, 2011).

Conclusion

Even today, there are those who argue that Green parties are just ‘flash parties’. Yet, in reality, Green Parties have taken firm ground in Europe. The success of most of the Green parties in the 2009 European Parliament elections and the latest accomplishment of the Die Grünen in Baden-Württemberg (who gained power in that federal state of Germany) cannot just be a coincidence. Amid these developments, the author deemed it necessary to analyse the political systems in Europe that are yet to produce a Green Party.

This paper looked at the northern area of Cyprus as a case study. The findings suggest that the Cyprus problem, economic problems and the lack of trust in the output legitimacy of the system are the main variables to explain why a Green party is absent in this part of Cyprus. The impact of the institutional determinants and political competition is not as conspicuous as the social determinants. Despite all these hurdles for the environmentalists to politicise the environmental issue, they tried to transform the current environmental policy of the government by means other than creating a political party, such as organising protests and lobbying ministers and parties. Taking into consideration all the complications and obstacles standing in the way of forming a Green party, it is fair to say that it is not likely that a Green party will be established before the next Parliamentary elections in northern Cyprus.

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