

# The 'New Homeland' and Turkish Cypriot Opposition in the 1974-1981 Period

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## Abstract

*The state of exception has been discussed and widely analyzed in academic research, as a space where the dominant force develops its practices through the suspension of the norm. A very large part of research on this topic highlights the ways in which a space can be excluded, surrounded, isolated or converted into a state of exception, as a result of the action of the dominant power. However, the violence or the combination of forms of violence with consent constituting a state of exception produces simultaneously new, unpredictable dynamics. Building on the above theoretical framework, this article seeks to consider the production of 'unforeseen dynamics' which appear against the exceptional spaces. In this article, the epicentre is the Turkish Cypriot community and its relations with Turkey during the 1974-1981 period. It attempts to identify the way in which a colonial type strategy enables exceptional means to transform a space of war into a normal space. At the same time, the article attempts to define the oppositional dynamics generated in the Turkish Cypriot community against the normalization of Cyprus' state of exception.*

**Keywords:** Cyprus, Turkey, Turkish Cypriots, state of exception, hegemony, colonial conquest, normalization

## Introduction

'The emergence of ideological turbulence and the rise of the extreme leftist movements reached dangerous levels for the future of the Turkish Cypriot Federated State' (Sükan, 1981). This was the assessment of the retired Turkish General Sükan regarding the election results in the Turkish Cypriot community, which took place in June 1981. In these elections, just seven years after the Turkish military intervention in Cyprus, the Turkish Cypriot centre-left parties in opposition managed to surpass in percentages and seats the National Unity Party (*Ulusal Birlik Partisi* – UBP) of Rauf Denktaş and create the prospect of forming a government. It was precisely this perspective which symbolized, according to the General, an 'ideological turbulence', a new pursuit of the society, 'dangerous' for the future of the Turkish Cypriot Federated State.

Some crucial questions arise at this point. Why did part of the political elite in

Ankara consider as dangerous the rise of ‘extreme leftist movements’ in the Turkish Cypriot community? What was the dominant expectation for the future of the Federated State, which was questioned by the ‘ideological turbulence’ of part of the Turkish Cypriot society? Why did such ‘problematic’ upheavals emerge in such a short time after the military intervention? The search for answers to such questions requires a more comprehensive and closer look at the dialectical relationship developed between the presence of Turkey in Cyprus since 1974 and the social dynamics of the Turkish Cypriot community.

The present article analyses the role of Turkey as an external intervention force in Cyprus, but also as a force of transformation of space with the aim to normalize the partitionist state of affairs and to legitimate its own influence. Furthermore, it scrutinizes the attempt to create a ‘new homeland’ for the Turkish Cypriot community through the activation of policies such as moving populations, the Turkification of space and the establishment of the foundations for a new economic and political environment. The dynamic development and legitimization of this colonial-oriented rationale requires the decisive contribution of local stakeholders. At this level, the article examines the action and the role played by the Turkish Cypriot nationalist elite in structuring a new state of affairs, as well as the contradictions caused by the internal arrangement of the state of exception.

All the above are dialectically examined with the mobilization of the Turkish Cypriot opposition. The last two sections of the paper analyze the foundations upon which the Turkish Cypriot opposition was strengthened, its political discourse and the actions culminating in the upheavals caused by the electoral results of 1981. Thus this article elaborates more on the identity transformations in the Turkish Cypriot community after 1974. As Lacher and Kaymak (2005, p. 148) underline ‘especially since the declaration of “sovereignty” in 1983, a gradual disenchantment with their state and a growing sense of Turkish Cypriot culture distinctiveness have undermined the political and cultural bases of Turkish nationalism in North Cyprus’. Based on this conclusion as well as on other findings concerning the transformation of the Turkish Cypriot identity (Akçalı, 2011; Ramm, 2006), this article is trying to locate the concept of the Turkish Cypriot ‘oppositional’ identity as it was politically expressed in the aftermath of the 1974 war. The present paper employs the term ‘opposition’ to refer to the general concept used to determine the political parties of the Turkish Cypriots that were created immediately after the events of 1974 and which were positioned against the political agenda of partition (*taksim*), and more broadly against the authority of Denktaş and Ankara’s interventions. The paper thus seeks to examine the contradictions and fluidity entailed in the efforts to normalize the state of exception and the development of a colonial transformation of space. The Turkish Cypriot opposition itself is seen as

a dynamic concept with a dual capacity: its presence is a constant reminder of the difficulty to normalize the conquered space, while its gradual empowerment highlights the refusal of a part of the community to adapt to the content of a 'new homeland'.

### **The Birth of a 'New Homeland'**

In related academic research, the presence of Turkey on the island, particularly from 1974 onwards, is described in terms of 'occupation' or as 'colonial power' (Bryant and Yakinthou: 2012, p. 16). On the basis of this particular phrasing regarding Turkey's presence in Cyprus, the relation developed with the conquered Cypriot space, as well as with the Turkish Cypriot community, is that of a core state with a subordinate administration. The concept of a colonial-oriented intervention underlines the continuous effort of the core state to obtain maximum influence over the setting of the periphery (Doyle, 2004, p. 40), i.e. the subordinate administration. According to Lutz (2006, p. 594), the notion of the modern empire can be employed to analyze a state plan or a collaborative planning of state and private actors which aims to exercise control over all governmental practices and resources of a region outside of its own boundaries.

The application of the above analytical framework in the case of Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot community after 1974 highlights the conversion of the space established in the northern part of Cyprus into a space of reception, reproduction and transformation of the modernization of the core state; namely Turkey. At the same time, the specific conquered space as an 'imperial formation' reproduces, according to Stoler (2006, p. 128), zones of exclusion and constant exceptions. In short, the power structures of the northern territories of Cyprus from 1974 onwards and the international illegality created a state of exception (Constantinou, 2008, p. 158).

This irregular state of exception, into which the Turkish Cypriot community entered after 1974, was the result of complex processes. Between the 1964-1974 period, tens of thousands of Turkish Cypriots were living in the overcrowded conditions of enclaves. They were actually living in a stage of siege as a result of the violence between the two communities and the collapse of the bi-communal nature of the Cyprus Republic. According to Richard Patrick's (1976, pp. 46-47) data, the period between December 1963 and the summer of 1964 was the most violent period of inter-communal conflict during which 350 Turkish Cypriots and 200 Greek Cypriots and Greeks were killed. Immediately after the outbreak of the riots, the mass displacement of the Turkish Cypriots and their movement into enclaves was completed very soon. The main reason was that the Turkish Cypriots were numerically a minority compared to the Greek Cypriot population. The violence of this period more easily forced the

smallest community to be displaced into areas where they could continue their life with members of the same community (Attalides, 1977, p. 83). A supportive factor was naturally the immediate diffusion of fear among the Turkish Cypriots: a fear which originated mainly from the possibility of more intensified attacks by the armed Greek Cypriot groups. Describing the feeling of the time, the veteran trade unionist Kamil Tuncel (2011, p. 268) said: 'People started running scared ... For some people, this was the moment that the Greek Cypriots would attack us and slaughter us all'.

Up until late December 1963, a total of 22 Turkish Cypriot villages were evacuated, while in January 1964 the residents of 55 Turkish Cypriot villages were added to the long list of refugees (Gibbons, 1969, pp 128-129). According to data cited by Oberling (1982, Appendix 1), from December 1963, when the conflicts began, to August 1964 a total of 103 villages were evacuated. The mass displacement of Turkish Cypriots was accompanied by Greek Cypriots from neighbouring villages looting properties. In Packard's research (2008, pp. 50-51), he cites an excerpt from the UN Secretary General's report on 10 September 1964 which highlights that up to that moment 977 Turkish Cypriot homes were completely destroyed while 2000 more were partially looted. As a result of the conflicts, approximately 25,000 Turkish Cypriots became refugees, a number corresponding to a quarter of the community (Bryant and Hatay, 2009, p. 3). The proportion of displacement for such a small, numerically speaking, community as well as the impoverishment immediately set the base for a deep restructuring of its social and economic tissue (Bryant and Hatay, 2011, pp. 634-635). These conditions actually set the bases upon which the military intervention of Turkey was welcomed by many Turkish Cypriots. As psychoanalyst Vamik Volkan (1979, p. 111) claims, a big part of the community was 'seized with frenzied excitement' seeing the Turkish paratroopers jumping on 20 July 1974.

In fact, Turkey decided to intervene militarily in the island on 20 July 1974 supposedly to restore the constitutional order of the Republic, which was challenged by the occurrence of the coup d'état against President Makarios. The coup aimed at uniting Cyprus with Greece. The prospect of Union of Cyprus with Greece was perceived as a threat to the national security of Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot community. So Ankara decided to activate its military force in a 'space of threat' which, after the military victory, is transformed into a bare 'virgin land' (Ram, 2015, p. 28) upon which an entirely new state of affairs was to be created. As noted by Mbembe (2003, p. 25), in colonized territories, the state of exception tends to become the rule. Such conquered territories are accompanied by efforts to create an entirely new set of social and spatial relations on the ground.

Similarly, in the case of Cyprus, Turkey activated extraordinary politics with the aim of creating the rule anew (Ram, 2015, p 22). Immediately after the partition of Cyprus and removing its previous 'threatening' capacity, Ankara sought to normalize

the conquered space by introducing a new rationale. In short, it tried to normalize both its own presence, and the new partitionist state of affairs through the production of what Ram (2013) calls a 'peaceful war landscape'. The violent creation of two separate 'national zones' would, from then on, be the physical and geographical basis upon which a degree of separation of the two communities would form a key element in a permanent settlement of the Cyprus problem (Scott, 1998, p. 142). As noted by the retired General Sükan (1981): 'In Cyprus the two communities were separated and their reunification is but a fantasy. The northern part is 100% Turkish and the southern part 100% Greek. It is an island with two opposing ethnic groups that have no possibility of living together'. The geographical division, the emergence of the notions of 'northern and southern Cyprus' as separate political entities, formed the legitimizing dynamics of the claim of regulating, solving or mitigating the ethnic and communal conflicts (O'Leary, 2007, p. 888) that had preceded in the island. Beyond this, the geographical partition was the start of the creation of a new order of things by force (Kızılyürek, 2016, pp. 528-532), the start of the development of a colonial rationale and taming of the war landscape through processes such as population movements, Turkification of the space, structuring of a new political and economic system. Thus the rationalization of the partition included the creation of a 'new homeland' for the Turkish Cypriot community.

One of the most important founding elements of the 'new homeland', as a consolidation of the territorial partition, was a large-scale population division (Kızılyürek, 2016, p. 535). This spatial dimension of the new order in Cyprus entailed the massive displacement of people from the south to the north and vice versa, creating a purely Turkish region and thus alienating a large part of the Turkish Cypriot community from their homes and place of origin (Arslan, 2014, p. 46). The movement of Turkish Cypriots from the south to the northern regions of the island was initiated on 20 July 1974, but it was escalated, in an organized manner, in the following period (Morvaridi, 1993, p. 223). Reports in the Turkish Cypriot press indicate that already, by mid-November 1974, around 20,000 Turkish Cypriots had moved from the southern to the northern regions of Cyprus (Zaman, 1974a), while, by December 1975, it is estimated that this number rose to 40,000 (Hocknell, 2001, p. 168). For the purposes of the population relocation, the Ministry of Resettlement was created in 1976, while in 1977 the Resettlement, Land Distribution and Equivalent Property Law (*İskan, Topraklandırma ve Eşdeğer Yasası*) was endorsed, through which a large part of the Turkish Cypriot community took possession of Greek Cypriot properties (Morvaridi, 1993, p. 223). The delay in the adoption of legislation created additional problems, since its implementation legitimized, in political terms, the distribution of Greek Cypriot properties that had started in the summer of 1974 in the midst of chaotic conditions (Gürel, 2012, p. 22). Through such arrangements, the Turkish Cypriot

refugees from the southern part of the island were called to renounce their rights over the properties they left behind. Essentially, they were forced to abandon their desire to return to their homes (Scott, 1998, p. 143), since that was the only way to acquire what was necessary to survive in the frame of a 'new homeland'. This strategy was a fundamental piece of the overall ideological background for the alienation of the Turkish Cypriot community from its Cypriot past and its integration into the new divisive reality.

Further to the above process, the Turkification of space was expanded through a broad campaign of renaming Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot villages with new 'authentic' Turkish names (Yashin, 2010). Originally this policy was implemented with the decisive role of special committees of the Turkish army (Copeaux & Copeaux, 2009, p. 101), and acquired a more organized form with the establishment of the Turkish Cypriot Federated State in February 1975 (Kızılyürek, 2002, p. 291). The aim of this policy was to 'erase the Greek Cypriot traces', but also to create a more comprehensive status to the territorialization of the new Turkish entity, to delimit the owners of space (Turkish Cypriots) with new symbolisms and thus to distinguish them from the foreigners (Greek Cypriots) (Kızılyürek, 2016, p. 560). In the same context lay the population movements from Turkey. The settlement policy, which had started as a policy of reinforcing the new social division of labour, eventually became a key pillar for the creation of additional pressures against the expression of the Cypriot identity of the Turkish Cypriot community (Kızılyürek, 2005, p. 257).

In addition to the above, a key pillar of the normalization efforts of the new regime was the economy. The great dissimilarity in the development of the two communities, as well as the economic inequality, preoccupied Ankara so intensely that it made a priority of creating a new economic environment (İpekçi, 1974). In August 1974, Bülent Ecevit's government created the Cyprus Coordination Committee (*Kıbrıs Koordinasyon Kurulu*), led by Ziya Müezzinoğlu who was responsible for the implementation of a state planning for the economy of the northern regions. As Müezzinoğlu reports, 'our goal was to assign a personality to the Turkish community, to revitalize the economy and aid the establishment of a state' (Birand, 1976c). The selection of an economic content of a separate state structure was not accidental. The state planning, and the strong state interventionism in the new economy of the Turkish Cypriots, was the result of two main factors. The first was the absence of a strong business class in the community, which could undertake the investment venture of developing the private sector (Wilson, 1992, p. 122). The second was the intention of Ankara to export its own economic development model (Gülalp, 1985, p. 337) to the territory that it had previously controlled by military forces. The importance of these two factors initially weakened the reactions of part of the Turkish Cypriot nationalist elite, who clearly preferred a development model based on private initiatives (Sonan, 2014, p. 94).

Within the frame of the Coordination Committee's work, technical and administrative personnel was transferred from the state economic enterprises of Turkey with the aim to establish the respective business units in Cyprus, as well as to train the local staff (Birand, 1976c). In exceptional cases, the economic planning was led by Turkish Cypriots with studies and experiences in the Turkish state. Typical examples of this were Alper Orhon, who undertook the task of establishing the Planning Ministry (Bozkurt, 1974), and Çağlar Yasal, who worked for the creation of the Ministry of Tourism in Cyprus (Zaman, 1974b). Within a short period of time, around ten large state economic enterprises were created, which dominated over all sectors of the economy. Industrial and agricultural production, foreign trade and transport, tourism and the banking sector were sectors that developed under a state planning model with five-year plans (Billuroğlu, 2012, pp. 59-60). As noted by Strong (1999, p. 164), the northern part of the island soon became one of the most intensely state-led economies all over Western Europe.

### **Division Seeks Its Divisionists**

O'Leary (2007: 904) notes that division seeks its divisionists, i.e., agents that will support it, legitimize it and act as partners of the stronger external actor that had imposed it. In the case of the Turkish Cypriot community, the internal agent of legitimization of the status created by the division of 1974 was the nationalist elite. For the nationalist elite, under the guidance of Denktaş, 1974 was a historical vindication for the implementation of the partition plan that had been adopted since the 1950s (Kızılyürek, 2002, p. 290). The division of space and of the population was as if the long course of Turkish nationalism in Cyprus had been completed, and it irrevocably confirmed that the two communities could not, and should not, live together (Kızılyürek, 2016, p. 162). The year 1974 was, for the agents of Turkish nationalism in Cyprus, another opportunity to ideologically lift the island's status as a 'self-sustaining country'. Cyprus was a geopolitical and cultural space that acquired meaning only if it was perceived as a projection of Turkey and the Turkish nation (Kızılyürek, 2017). More specifically, only 'half' of the island should form the island for the Turkish Cypriot community, stripped of any memory, nostalgia, and mostly of political positions related to the notion of 'total Cyprus' (Kızılyürek, 2005, p. 385). Denktaş's answer to Birand's (1976d) question, 'Which should be the solution to the Cyprus problem?', was: 'If there is to be life with rights, division is a precondition. The degree of division is also of importance'.

As Cyprus alienated itself from its autonomous status, so did the Turkish Cypriots lose aspects of their Cypriotness. So long as Cyprus was merely perceived as the 'small

homeland of mother Turkey’, the Turkish Cypriots were distinguished merely as part of the Turkish nation. The Cypriot identity could neither describe nor define the ‘Turks of Cyprus’ (Vural and Rustemli, 2006, p. 332). Apart from being unable to do so, in case the Cypriot identity attempted to express the collectivity of the Turkish Cypriots, it was discarded as being anti-national and serving the communist danger. Ahmet Ötüken (1975) commented on this in *Zaman* newspaper: ‘Supporting positions such as “Cyprus belongs to the Cypriots” or “an independent and democratic Cyprus without bases and armies” serves Russian ambitions. Let us be sensitive on this issue and not leave a chance to those who seek goals outside the Motherland’. The delegitimization of the politicization of the Cyprus consciousness of Turkish Cypriots was expressed by Denктаş as follows: ‘If we fool ourselves and start thinking that we are Cypriots, then we will boil in the cauldron of Greek Cypriots’ (Dodd, 1993b, p. 149).

Within this ideological framework, the border dividing the island turned, almost immediately, into one of the most important symbols of a separate Turkish Cypriot sovereignty (Yashin, 2005, p. 109). A separate sovereignty that was interpreted exclusively by the nationalist hegemony. Explaining the value of the ‘Peace Operation’ for the community, the President of the Parliament of the Federated State, coming from UBP, Oğuz Korhan, said in a session: ‘The most important thing was that we experienced the joy of having a secure territorial integrity with clearly defined borders’ (Tutanakları, 1981a). In this space – the space defined by the invasion – there was no free field of mobilization for those forces that placed themselves outside the aforementioned ideological realm.

In this way, in the period following the military intervention, Denктаş and the nationalist Turkish Cypriot elite sought and largely succeeded to assign a partitionist, rather than a unifying, content to the official position on a federal solution to the Cyprus Problem (Kızılyürek, 2016: 565). In this context, they built close relations with the pan-Turkish movement of Turkey (Birand, 1976b), as well as with the Islamic movement of Necmettin Erbakan, seeking thus to challenge the popularity of Ecevit amongst the Turkish Cypriots and to promote in a more pronounced manner the deepening of the division (Birand, 1976b). To do so however, the Turkish Cypriot leader at the time was in need of a party which would function as a mechanism that would legitimize partition both on an ideological and social level (Sonan, 2014, pp. 120-121). This party should function as an obstacle to the reappearance of centrifugal opposing forces (Dodd, 1993a, p. 109), which had already been organized within the enclaves in the period that preceded.

It was precisely this opposition movement that forced Denктаş to proceed with the creation of the UBP in October 1975 (*Zaman*, 1975a). As Sonan (2014, p. 122) reports, in terms of personalities and political objectives, this party may be seen as a continuation of the ‘Cyprus is Turkish Party’ (*Kıbrıs Türktür Partisi*), which appeared



in the early 1950s. According to Sonan, the party was created by personalities of the time who already had political and economic influence in the community, people who already identified with the politics of *taksim*. Not accidentally, the ideological identity was reflected in the first article of its political programme as follows: 'The elimination of existing threats against the Turkish community, the unity and protection of all its rights, the development of the areas of national security, politics, economy and society, depend completely on the development of the community as an inseparable and indivisible part of the Turkish nation' (*Zaman*, 1975b).

In the context of reproducing the partitionist identity of space, and in view of the first general and presidential elections in June 1976, Denktaş and UBP developed a dual strategy aiming to marginalize the centrifugal 'ideological turbulence' of the community. The first aspect of delegitimizing the opposition was the constant invocation and reminder of the state of exception. The creation of an 'internal enemy' that was ready to cooperate with the Greek Cypriot community and that identified with the Left, was a key tactic which culminated right after Turkey's military intervention (*Milliyet*, 1976). Denktaş himself, describing his role in this, said: 'I'm trying to protect the community, both from the Greek Cypriots and from the extreme Left. My struggle is not over ... If it were so would be my duty' (Birand, 1976d). Based on this rationale, the 'national cause', even after 1974, was pending. This pending issue imposed the perpetuation of the state of exception and hence of the concentration of powers in the hands of the leader. The existence of opposition parties, the emergence of new claims, and the politicization of disagreements with the leader's programme, were perceived as 'treason' and 'disruption of unity' (İpekçi, 1976). Thus, nourishing fear and reminding people of the 'communist threat' that could be a setback to the national cause (*Yeni Düzen*, 1976a) were the main axes of the first campaign of the Turkish Cypriot leader and UBP in this new framework. In many election gatherings, for instance, Denktaş underlined the following: 'If UBP does not become government with 25 seats (out of 40), then Communists will take over' (*Halkın Sesi*, 1976).

The assumption of 'power by the Communists' triggered the second aspect of the strategy to marginalize the opposition. Reproducing the state of exception, i.e. the pending national cause, not only aided in activating negative reflexes against a federal settlement of the Cyprus problem but also in conserving the foundations for satisfying the interests of the Turkish Cypriots who identified with the economy of partition. UBP made politics in a manner that transformed the Federated State into 'its own property' (Mehmetçik, 2008: 158). All the mechanisms of distributing the resources and the spoils of war were at its disposal and these mechanisms were activated intensely throughout the period before the 1976 elections. Mehmet Ali Birand (1976a) described the dependency that UBP's cycle of power created by using the words of a Turkish

Cypriot ‘Do you need a loan? Do you want a house? Surely you must know someone from the government. If you have no such aid, you are dead...!’.

UBP rapidly turned into a patronage party concerning the distribution of resources. Partisan and bureaucratic mechanisms identified fully and reproduced Denktaş’s power by developing a substantial clientele network. The perfection of this network was made clearly evident before the elections. The exploitation of Greek Cypriots’ immovable and movable properties to attract votes was not something the nationalist elite tried to hide. To the contrary, large trucks were at the disposal of the party mechanism, and, until the last day before the elections, they carried products, objects and other goods to voters in exchange for their support (Sonan, 2014, p. 136).

The general and presidential elections took place under these conditions on 20 June 1976. UBP managed to win 50.3% of the votes and 30 seats. The Communal Liberation Party (*Toplumcu Kurtuluş Partisi* – TKP) got 20.2% and 6 seats, the Republican Turkish Party (*Cumhuriyetçi Türk Partisi* – CTP) 12.8% and 2 seats, while the People’s Party (*Halkçı Parti* – HP) got 11.7% and 2 seats (Aydoğdu, 2005, p. 94). In the presidential elections, Denktaş prevailed with 76.6% against 21.8% of the CTP candidate, Ahmet Mithat Berberoğlu (Aydoğdu, 2005, p. 86).

Almost immediately after the election, UBP began to promote, even more pronouncedly, the idea of a unilateral proclamation of independence. This prospect was presented as a method that would coerce the Greek Cypriot side to accept the political equality of the Turkish Cypriots. The opposition parties, especially TKP and CTP, reacted against such a development, which they saw as a prospect of permanent division of Cyprus and double union (Dodd, 1993a, pp. 111-112). As it eventually turned out, the general stagnation of the Cyprus Problem was not the only reason for the intensification of the idea of a separate state proclamation. In the period under investigation, the economic stagnation and the social problems began to strongly question the stability of the partitionist status quo.

The repressive measures of UBP against the trade union movement came to a peak. Until October 1976, 1000 workers were laid-off without compensation, while those already registered as unemployed reached 3,500 (An, 2014). From the first months of 1977, inflation climbed to 44% and the budget of the Federated State had a deficit of about 10% (Dodd, 1993a, p. 112). Indicative of the general destabilization was the fact that UBP managed to draft the first five-year development plan in 1979, which would cover the period 1978-1982 (*Yeni Düzen*, 1979a). This plan foresaw a growth of 7%, which was a goal that eventually proved to be far from realistic (Saygun, 1981). The economic growth rates were negative, while by the end of 1978, inflation reached 214%. Under such conditions, the discussions on the 1979 budget were marked by strong reactions of the opposition that stressed the impoverishment course of the workers. The reduction of the purchasing power of employees in 1979 reached

230% (*Yeni Düzen*, 1979b), while the cost of living indicator in 1980 rose to 46.01% (Candan, 1981).

The political cost of the economic destabilization soon brought serious restructuring. In the beginning of 1978, Prime Minister Nejat Konuk resigned. He was replaced by Osman Örek, who only lasted in the same position until November of same year. Konuk and Örek's resignations from UBP marked the first major rift in the Turkish Cypriot right-wing. In view of the new elections of 1981, Konuk created the Democratic People's Party (Demokratik Halk Partisi – DHP) which Örek soon joined, along with a small group of UBP MPs (Dodd, 1993a, pp. 114-117). Within this setting, the new UBP government, led by Mustafa Çağatay, was forced to move on a delicate balance. In view of the reinforcement of the opposition movement, the government chose to confront it with repression. In May 1979, it signed a financial protocol with Ankara which abolished all barriers on imported products from Turkey. This protocol deepened the uneven economic integration, especially since northern Cyprus imported 4,500 different goods from Turkey while it exported merely 100 products (*Yeni Düzen*, 1979c). In June 1979, the Çağatay government issued a directive that banned the import of 108 specific products, the vast majority of which came from the Greek Cypriot community (*Yeni Düzen*, 1979d). It thus sought to completely cut off the little commercial contact between the two communities (*Yeni Düzen*, 1979e), creating more prospects for a one-way integration with Turkey.

In short, the period up to the elections of 1981 was marked by the questioning of the stabilization efforts of the partitionist environment. The Turkification of space and the economic planning progressed with many 'necessary distortions'. The structural weaknesses in production were accompanied by the lack of foreign exchange (Olgun, 1993, p. 272), by setbacks in the clientelist network, constant increase of the cost of living and a general impoverishment of the community (Sonan, 2014, p. 168). The party which undertook to represent the internal legitimacy of 1974, and to implement part of the normalization process of the 'new homeland' of the Turkish Cypriots, was soon found before an enlarged social opposition which did not seem to comply with the principles of the new founding framework produced by war.

### **The Social Dynamics of the Opposition**

'I could see that we had reached the end of our struggle. We would create political parties, we would have free elections, we would apply the rules of democracy as in Western Europe. We would shift to the parliamentary system and thus limit the powers of Denктаş within democratic frames. The army would be under civilian control and the Turkish Ambassador would no longer work as governor of Cyprus' (Tahsin, 2012: 73).

With these words, Arif Hasan Tahsin, head of the Teachers Trade Union, outlined his expectations from the events of the summer of 1974. For the Turkish Cypriot opposition, the community's exit from the enclaves of the previous decade and its concentration in a 'secure area' was recorded with codes different than those of a colonial-oriented normalization of space imposed by Ankara and the nationalist elite. The separate institutional structuring of the community, according to the expectations of the opposition, would create new areas of mobilization away from the siege of the enclaves. For instance, the organized teachers and others supported the creation of the Federated State in 1975 because, as Tahsin notes (2012, p. 76): 'In this way, young people would engage in politics, we would create a serious opposition and by taking command of the government, we would prevent the subordination of the community to Turkey'.

As it soon turned out, the expectations of the Turkish Cypriot opposition were cancelled. Before completing two years from the military intervention, Birand (1976a) observed: 'The Turkish Cypriot community reminds more of a boiling cauldron that complains about everything... Although it has been almost two years, the Turkish Cypriots have not overcome the shock of the events and have not managed to adapt to the new situation'. The state of affairs in which the Turkish Cypriots found themselves after 1974 was essentially a renewed situation of enclaves. The power structures created were internationally illegal and completely dependent upon Turkey. They produced what Caspersen (2012, p. 101) describes as an 'ambiguous statehood'. In this sense, the community was trapped into a new framework that reproduced the basic characteristics of the enclave life of the previous period.

As noted by Douglas (2006, p. 12), once the primary reason for creating such an enclave disappears or weakens, then it collapses because of internal disputes and conflicts. In the Turkish Cypriot case, when the community began to realize the lack of grounds to be placed in new enclaves, it began to question the new situation. This questioning was the result of two dialectically related developments. On the one hand, the imposition of partition may have ended the conflicts between the two nationalist programs of the previous period, but it contributed to the rise of a vulnerable 'negative peace' (Ryan, 1995: 85-86). In turn, this negativity was the result of the efforts to normalize the Turkish influence, the demand to erode the historical experiences of the community in its own homeland and the efforts to denounce the local mentalities and cultural references (İnatçı, 2008, p. 40). This process constantly alienated part of the community from the 'new homeland'.

On the other hand, the concentration of the Turkish Cypriots in a new 'unified geography' enabled the centrifugal forces to come into contact with the entire social structure and redefine the divided space as an area of conflict with the hegemonic nationalist programme of Denktaş. For the opposition, the military victory of

Turkey was a 'relief' which bore the expectation of renegotiating the relations of the community, not only with the Greek Cypriots, but also with the experience of the Turkish Cypriot authoritarian power. Berberoğlu (1976) described the dual dimension of this relief as follows:

'The peace operation found our community in a two-front struggle: On one side, we resisted against the Greek Cypriot administration which had deprived us of our constitutional freedoms and rights and which had the privilege to rule the country. On the other side, we struggled against the administration of Denktaş who used the Greek Cypriots as a pretext to keep the Turkish Cypriot community away from freedom and democracy... We claimed that the peace operation removed the pressures exercised by the Greek Cypriot administration, but also it put an end to the Turkish Cypriot administration that was holding our community back from freedom and democracy'.

It soon became clear that the second aspect of expectations was not feasible. As mentioned above, one of the reasons for establishing UBP was to set obstacles to the apparent rise of the opposition. In November 1974, eight MPs of the opposition established the 'Freedom Group' (Özgürlük Grubu) as a further indication that Denktaş's authoritarianism was under question (Ergün, 1974). This group, as well as CTP which was already established, prioritized the empowerment of the parliament as a means to confine the Turkish Cypriot leader's powers and to exercise better control. The aim was to create a parliamentary system which would prevent the 'dictatorial tendencies of Denktaş', as noted by Fuat Veziroğlu, member of the Group (Sonan, 2014, pp. 109-110). Although clearly weaker than the nationalist elite, the opposition's organized expressions were particularly dynamic. Their first cooperation was reflected in the effort to change the draft Constitution of the Federated State filed at the founding parliament in April 1975. The joint statement of organizations such as alumni associations of universities of Ankara, Istanbul and Izmir, of the Chamber of Architects and Engineers, of the trade union of Turkish Cypriot teachers and of CTP, stressed that the draft provided for an undemocratic constitution which strengthened the executive powers of the president against those of the legislative power. They warned that if the changes they proposed were not approved, then they would organize a campaign to vote against the constitution in the upcoming referendum (Cemal, 1975). Eventually, they managed to reduce the executive powers of the president and to guarantee that the president could be re-elected for only two consecutive terms (Sonan, 2014, p. 112).

This first organized reaction against the nationalist elite continued immediately after the adoption of the law on political parties. Within a very short time, the Turkish Cypriot community passed to a multiparty system, leaving behind, in theory at least, the peculiar single-party military regime of the period of the enclaves. Next to CTP, HP was established in August 1975 under Alper Orhon (Dodd, 1993b, p. 109). This party brought together both those who opposed Denktaş from the period of

TMT, and the circles that Orhon himself influenced (Kızılyürek, 2005, p. 254). The Freedom Group, as well as Turkish Cypriot teachers, had a strong presence in HP. Its name was deliberately chosen to refer to the ideological affinity with the CHP of Ecevit, while its political programme adopted the basic characteristics of social democracy and supported the federal solution to the Cyprus Problem (Halkın Sesi, 1975). The distinct groups within HP eventually failed to co-exist for a long time. In March 1976, a few months before the first elections, the main nucleus of the former Liberty Group, along with the younger representatives of trade unions such as Alpay Durduran and Mustafa Akıncı, left the party and founded TKP (Dodd, 1993b, p. 109). The new party also adopted the federal solution to the Cyprus Problem and emphasized the need to safeguard social rights through a 'Cypriot reading' of Kemalism (Bozkurt, 1976). The Marxist Left eventually concentrated in CTP, which, by 1976, had made a substantial turn towards its left identity (Yeni Düzen, 1976b), which was completed when Özker Özgür undertook the party leadership.

As mentioned above, although the first elections of 1976 certified the hegemony of Denktaş, they also made room for the organized expression of the opposition. As it later became evident, the presence of the opposition had multiple dimensions in the rupture caused in the founding principles of the new state of affairs. The different expectations of 1974, in conjunction with the polarization produced by the immediate collapse of these expectations, led to a diverse mobilization. The consequences of the partition, the deep dependence upon Turkey, the perpetuation of the authoritarian state of exception and its expansion through the clientelist network, set the preconditions for the dissolution of any prospect of 'social peace' (Strong, 1999, p. 216). As a result of social inequalities and the sense of enclaving, the influence of the dominant discourse about 'the national cause', 'freedom and salvation' subsided. The front page article of the newspaper of CTP, Yeni Düzen, on 3rd May 1979 noted: 'for as long as workers watch the bank accounts of the rich become bigger, as they see those who became rich millionaires overnight from war looting, the more it becomes obvious to them whom the 'national cause' serves' (Yeni Düzen, 1979f). In June 1979, Denktaş himself confessed that now 'we are in the midst of a crisis both in our commercial and economic life' (Dodd, 1993b, p. 117).

The strikes immediately after the 1976 elections were quite intense. By August of the same year, around 4500 workers protested against the policy of lay-offs which was initiated by UBP (An, 2014). In late 1976, the strikes expanded with the participation of organizations of Turkish Cypriot refugees. This was a development that forced UBP to adopt even tougher measures of repression and prohibition of trade unionist action. In early 1977, the polarization reached such levels that TKP officially for the first time called on the government to resign (An, 2014). The situation remained equally intense in the next period. In 1978, the Turkish Cypriot trade union movement escalates its

activities by announcing general strikes demanding reduction of the prices of basic goods, the adjustment of wages to the cost of living, a fairer tax system reform, the protection of collective agreements and the stabilization of the currency (Billuroğlu, 2012, p. 61).

On 12 February 1979 one of the most dynamic strikes of the time began by workers in Cypruvex company. The workers protested about wage cuts and the wider impoverishment of the community. Over the next few days, the strikes expanded in Morphou and Famagusta and employees of other companies like ETI also joined. The police tried to suppress the strikes by force. By 15 February, dozens of workers were injured and as many arrested. The political context of the protests expanded to the issue of defending democracy and confronting authoritarianism (Dede, 1981). The radicalization of the workers' demands eventually led the government to back down and by the end of February it was forced to sign a new collective agreement (Yeni Düzen, 1979g).

These events formed landmarks in the sense that the public debate about the ideological background of the division was now consolidated. Faced with the emerging social reaction, Denktaş and UBP chose the strategy of reproducing the state of exception. They sought to impose new regulations against the organized trade union activity. At the same time, they sought to criminalize any effort to promote alternative approaches to the Cyprus problem. For example, during the period before the elections of 1981 they obstructed many joint initiatives of Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot leftist unions (e.g., Dev-İş and PEO) (Yeni Düzen, 1979h). The Turkish Cypriot community moved to the next elections in a context of polarization and almost total collapse of the consensus that the clientelist network would supposedly produce.

### **The Second Intervention for the 'Exceptional' Restoration**

'Is the crisis ending? If you ask us, we do not return from Cyprus with optimistic impressions. The crisis is not over, it is just starting. Why? The image of peace in domestic politics is artificial'. This is how the reporter of *Milliyet*, Örsan Öymen (1978), described in the beginning of 1978 the failure to normalize the post-1974 state of affairs within the Turkish Cypriot community. The acknowledgment of an 'artificial' and hence vulnerable 'domestic peace', which created spaces that questioned the regime, was a key component that impacted on the political choices of all actors in the Turkish Cypriot community before the elections of 1981. The overall setting was already stigmatized by the enormous social and economic problems, as well as by the political instability that affected not only the dynamicity of the center-left opposition, but also UBP itself. The assessment that the autocracy of Denktaş-UBP

was coming to an end, was a generalized one. By the end of 1980, commercial circles of the Turkish Cypriots expressed their concern about the loss of UBP's power and sought to economically support the campaign of the party (*Yeni Düzen*, 1981a).

The 1981 elections were held in conditions of inertia in Cyprus (*Kurtuluş*, 1981a), while the domination of Evren's Junta in Turkey in September 1980 paved the way to more intense interventions by Ankara in the political life of the Turkish Cypriots (Hasgüler, 2006: 267). Faced with the rise of the Turkish Cypriot opposition forces, the establishment in Ankara did not hide its intentions for external assistance to UBP. Even in June, the month of the elections, the financial aid increased from 75 million Turkish Liras to 300 million (*Kurtuluş*, 1981b). This was combined with many visits of state officials who made clear, in their public appearances, that they preferred the perpetuation of the government of the Turkish Cypriot nationalist elite.

Within this context, the virtually total failure of the post-1974 domestic arrangement led Denktaş and UBP to transpose the political confrontation on a 'metaphysical' level. The reproduction of the 'internal enemy' intensified (Mehmetçik, 2008, p. 168). TKP and CTP were accused of being 'anti-Turkish' and therefore 'treasonous'. The joint declarations endorsed by both parties with corresponding Greek Cypriot parties, supporting a federal solution, multiplied the attacks of the Turkish Cypriot leader. The criminalization of the joint claim of the opposition in relation to the Cyprus issue was developed in the political discourse of Denktaş as follows: 'They went to Sofia and signed a declaration of a sell-out. The day they come to power based on this declaration they will take you as a flock and will sell you to the Greek Cypriots' (*Yeni Düzen*, 1981b). In the same vein, those who would not support UBP in the upcoming elections, in June 1981, were 'fans of AKEL and its servants' (*Kurtuluş*, 1981c). The candidacies of Ziya Rizki and Özker Özgür for the leadership of the community, were presented by the nationalist elites as an 'infernal plan' of the opposition with the aim of questioning the only leader who could claim the rights of the Turkish Cypriots on an international level (*Yeni Düzen*, 1981c).

However, the social dynamics were such that the reproduction of the state of exception not only did it not limit the rise of the opposition, but it strengthened it even further. The main reason for this contradiction was the deep awareness that the state of enclaves was renewed after 1974, as well as the maturation of class-oriented approaches that appeared in the public sphere. The headline of *Yeni Düzen* on June 19<sup>th</sup>, 1981, described the shift of approach as follows: 'Our community is no longer the community of 1976... The workers have awoken and shout against the exploiters and looters' (*Yeni Düzen*, 1981d). The experience of the Turkish Cypriots from 1974 onwards, led to the conclusion that the vast majority of the society did not experience any positive development. To the contrary, they were found in a disadvantageous position produced by the geographical displacement, by unemployment, by marginalization of



the clientelist network and by authoritarianism (Mehmetçik, 2008, p. 153).

In short, the period between 1974 and 1981 sufficed to create the conditions for a more comprehensive transformation of the Turkish Cypriot community. This transformation, in turn, led a large part of the community to pursuits outside the imposed nationalist framework. The leader of CTP, Özgür (1981), described these new pursuits as follows: 'In the elections of 1976, UBP had many spoils in its hands to distribute around. And so it did. Ms. Aydin Denктаş leading the way and trucks following behind, visit one home after another. They gave refrigerators, armchairs, chairs, washing machines... The exploitative class was already in power. After 1974, the abundance of spoils made it easier for this class to stay in power. Our compatriots who gave their vote to UBP for a refrigerator have now understood that the problem lies in the system ... The purchasing power has reduced so much that they cannot buy meat to keep in the refrigerator that was given to them... Now, those who sweat to buy a piece of bread are approaching the elections in quite a different manner...'. This situation led to the radicalization of the Left. Both CTP and TKP participated in the 1981 elections with political positions for the strengthening of state planning, as well as with positions about the nationalization of commerce, of social insurance and the strengthening of local governments as a way of removing the 'authoritarian policies of UBP' (*Kurtuluş*, 1981d).

The results of the elections eventually confirmed, even through many difficulties, both the rise of the opposition, and the first substantial rupture in the 1974 state of exception. In the parliamentary elections, UBP got 42.5% and 18 seats as opposed to 53.7 % in 1976. TKP got 28.5% and 13 seats, CTP 15,1% and 6 seats, DHP 8,1% and two seats, while the Turkish Unity Party (TBP) of the settlers got 5,5% and 1 seat (Aydoğdu, 2005, p. 96). Denктаş managed to keep the leadership of the community, nevertheless with an injured regime. He got 51.7% losing over 20% since 1976. Rızki got 30.5% and Özgür 12,7% (Aydoğdu, 2005, p. 86). Based on the results, a coalition of the opposition parties (TKP, CTP, DHP) could potentially take UBP down from power for the first time.

The political shock caused by the re-arrangement of balances in the Turkish Cypriot community was equally important both within the Turkish Cypriot nationalist elite, and in Ankara. In a moment of honesty, Denктаş reportedly said that 'Since the Left has been strengthened, measures need to be taken' (Tahsin, 2012, p. 85). The key aspect of the measures the Turkish Cypriot leader had in mind, included the creation of mechanisms that would prevent the formation of a center-left government and would impose an ideological environment that would adopt the basic features of the coup government in Turkey. In other words, the creation of a conservative nationalist power front that would limit, or suppress, the centrifugal forces (Adlı, 1981). 'We can no longer hide the fact that different ideological camps have been created in Cyprus.

The term nationalist front was used to highlight that there is a Marxist-Leninist front among us' (*Kurtuluş*, 1981e). Reaching this conclusion, Denktaş expressed his disappointment about the outcome of the elections at a press conference in Ankara, which he visited to invite İler Türkmen, the Foreign Minister of Turkey, to Cyprus.

The conclusion by the Turkish Cypriot leader deserves more analysis. On the one hand, the admission of the failure to hide the undesirable opposing ideological camps that appeared in the community, confirmed that the social consensus sought in the context of structuring a 'new homeland' was in essence an artificial one. On the other hand, the acknowledgement that there was a Marxist-Leninist front among the Turkish Cypriots showed, in a perhaps exaggerated manner, that the formerly authoritarian monopoly of Denktaş to represent the community suffered a heavy blow. 'We do not wish to experience the damage of the enclaved community caused by Denktaş... Denktaş alone is not the Turkish Cypriot community and the elections are proof of that.' With these words, Kerem Adlı (1981), reporter of *Söz* newspaper, actually noted the following transformation: If Denktaş managed to become the ultimate representative of the Turkish Cypriots in Ankara using the military intervention and the ideological predominance of partition (Anagnostopoulou, 2004, p. 217), then the elections of 1981 showed that part of the community decided to 'come to the fore' and claim different political demands before Turkey. Ankara was now forced to face a different Turkish Cypriot community, a community that they had not anticipated to become a shaping factor of developments. A few years after 1974, Turkey stood before 'the other' Turkish Cypriots, whose presence was either neglected or the object of repression.

Therefore, suddenly a need emerged for an external force that would repair the wrongdoing. More specifically, the victory of the opposition forced an external restoration of the exceptional situation in order to prevent the domination of the 'unanticipated' Turkish Cypriot voices that expressed different orientations concerning the founding ideology of the 'new homeland'. Therefore, the basic direction of Ankara and Denktaş was to coerce DHP to accept a coalition government with UBP (*Söz*, 1981a), and to exclude the left through a political coup of sorts. Within this context, the efforts to restore the state of exception included schemes of overturning changes to the Turkish Cypriot political system, including the abolition of the parliamentary system and the adoption of the presidential system (Kotak, 1981).

As far as Ankara's moves were concerned, the events that followed the 1981 elections were quite clear months before. In early April 1981, the leaders of the Turkish Cypriot parliamentary parties were called to Ankara, where it was meaningfully pointed out to them how the circumstances of the military coup of 12 September 1980 came to be. In short, this was an implicit suggestion that a possible victory of the Left in the community would be interpreted as a threat of the national interests and thus a reason

for intervention. The restoration intervention peaked in August 1981 when Türkmén visited Cyprus and met with the leaders of the opposition parties. The aim of the meeting was to prevent the formation of a coalition government by the opposition. According to Özgür (1992, p. 99), Türkmén told him: 'Since CTP is against NATO and against the NATO capacity of Turkey, then Ankara does not allow the party's participation in government'.

However, even after the government of Turkey had made its intentions clear, the Turkish Cypriot opposition parties continued their efforts to form a coalition. Denktaş insisted on not granting the mandate for government formation to any other party than UBP (Kurtuluş, 1981f). So by November 1981, the opposition had decided to file a joint motion of censure against the minority government of Çağatay (Söz, 1981b). Finally, on December 10, 1981, Konuk resigned from DHP after the escalating pressures from Ankara, and thus any possibility of the opposition parties to form a government was cancelled. In March 1982, a last effort to restore the state of exception through the formation of a coalition government by UBP-DHP-TBP was made (Dodd, 1993a, p. 122). Many years later, assessing those particular circumstances, Arif Hasan Tahsin said: 'The Turkish occupation showed its teeth ... the existence of the Federated State could no longer benefit the community, nor could its cancellation harm it. The parties failed to protect our right to govern ourselves against Turkey's usurpation' (Tahsin, 2012, p. 87).

## Conclusions

In her work on imperial modes of domination, Lutz (2006, p. 594) argues that this type of conquests should be understood within a context of contradictory and conflicting actions, which may be only partially successful. The case of Turkey's presence in Cyprus from 1974 onwards, along with the rise of the Turkish Cypriot opposition up to 1981, form questions that fall within the above theoretical analysis. Particularly the period between 1974 and 1981 clearly highlights both the way and the content in which Turkey sought to structure a new state of affairs, as well as the contradictions that this stance created within the Turkish Cypriot community. The process of constructing a 'new homeland' for the Turkish Cypriots was a dynamic but also fluid effort, since, in a very short time, it brought about rupture and doubts expressed by the Turkish Cypriot opposition.

As analyzed in this article, Ankara sought, through the military intervention in 1974, to change in its favor the geopolitical balance in Cyprus. At the same time, it sought to export to Cyprus, through the exercise of military power, its own model of modernization, to transform the space through normalization processes and to

legitimize its own influence. In achieving this, the Turkish Cypriot nationalist elite played a decisive role. Denktaş and UBP undertook the strategic aspect of legitimizing in the domestic sphere the new state of affairs that was created in 1974. They sought to become the necessary foundation for the production of consensus and acceptance of the 'new homeland' by the broader strata of Turkish Cypriots.

Soon after powerful reactions appeared from 'the other' Turkish Cypriot community. The northern areas of Cyprus, namely the new state of exception, may have been the recipient of the normalization process promoted by Ankara and the Turkish Cypriot nationalist elite. However, the activation and empowerment of the Turkish Cypriot opposition indicated that these colonial normalization processes failed to turn the partitionist state of affairs into a normal state of affairs. The actions, the empowerment, the smaller and bigger achievements of the Turkish Cypriot opposition in the period 1974-1981, did not eliminate completely the hegemony of the nationalist elite, nor did they overturn the partitionist state of affairs. However, they brought to the surface the inherent weaknesses and inability of a colonial-oriented rationalisation to turn the conquered space into a normal setting. If 1974 was a symbolic victory for the ideological institutions of partition, then the elections of 1981 formed a public declaration of refusing the 'new domestic conditions' imposed on the Turkish Cypriot community.

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