

The Islamification of Occupied Cyprus **[Η Ισλαμοποίηση της Κατεχόμενης Κύπρου]**

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Turkey's conduct towards Greece and in the wider Eastern Mediterranean region has become an ever more pressing issue in recent years. This obviously creates a need for us to understand Turkey's motives and the means it uses to pursue its ends. One of these means is the burnishing of political Islam's image within and beyond Turkey's borders. Cyprus is one of places where Ankara is employing this strategy.

In the context of my personal and academic interest in both Turkey and Cyprus, I read Petros Savvides' *The Islamification of Occupied Cyprus* published by Armatolos Editions in 2019. In this book, Mr Savvides undertakes a detailed inventory of key elements that point to the systematic and intensive nature of Ankara's efforts to alter the political, cultural, demographic, and religious landscape in the territory of the Republic of Cyprus that has been under illegal occupation for 47 years now.

Mr Savvides's work is divided into three sections. The first chapter gives us a cultural and religious profile of the Turkish Cypriots, highlighting and interpreting the qualitative differences between the characteristics of Turkish Cypriots and Turks, through a comparative analysis of the typology and morphology of places of worship in Cyprus.

In the second chapter, the reader is given a detailed and analytical inventory of the three action plans Turkey has systematically implemented in occupied Cyprus since 1974 in its efforts toward political, demographic, religious, and administrative Turkification of both the Turkish Cypriot people and the nature of occupied Cyprus as a whole.

In the third chapter, Mr Savvides points to the accelerated pace of Turkey's Islamification campaign in occupied Cyprus under the Justice and Development Party (the Turkish political party headed by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan), in particular following the failed attempt to resolve the Cyprus issue through the 2004 Annan Plan.

The book's structure helps the reader gain not only the necessary background to assess and understand the differences between the Turkish Cypriots and the Turks,

but also a picture and clear timeline of the evolution of Turkish efforts to islamify occupied Cyprus. This timeline of Turkey's activities, separated into distinct periods, convincingly differentiates the quality and intensity of the Turkification operations in occupied Cyprus under secular governments in Ankara, on the one hand, and the Islamic governments of Erbakan and Erdoğan on the other. These differences, as Mr Savvides is right to underscore, are directly related to the efforts to islamify Turkey itself during the same period.

The writer's straightforward, clear style, coupled with extensive use of photographs and maps, makes this book —and the arguments it puts forward — easy to read and understand, even for readers with no previous knowledge of the subject.

Also commendable is the author's reliance on primary sources which are accessed in the field and are mainly Turkish in provenance. He thus avoids influences that could undermine the objectivity of his work, given the sensitive nature of his topic.

I was fascinated by Mr Savvides' groundbreaking analysis of Turkey's political, military, and religious use of minarets in occupied Cyprus throughout the period under examination. This alone, I think, elevates the book to the status of required reading.

However, I also wanted to read more about how political Islam is linked and intertwined with Ankara's geopolitical doctrine: a deeper analysis that highlights the strong interdependence between the two, given how the nature of political Islam has changed during Erdoğan's time in power.

In short, I believe that Mr Savvides's *The Islamification of Occupied Cyprus* is a study that offers a unique perspective on a chronic but also very current issue that concerns not only experts in the field of international relations but also the Greek public as a whole. Its structure, clear style, and use of photographs and maps make this book an important tool for future researchers and scientists. At the same time, it is good reading for anyone who wants to deepen their knowledge of this subject.

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