

Book Review

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THE EUROPEANISATION OF CONTESTED STATEHOOD: THE EU IN NORTHERN CYPRUS

Author: George Kyris

The increasing influence of the European Union (EU) in the domestic affairs of its member states and its 'near abroad' (the EU's eastern, such as Ukraine, Belarus, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and southern, such as Morocco, Syria, Israel, Palestine neighbours) has attracted a significant degree of academic interest in the past two decades. Yet much of the scholarly work has studied the EU informed changes at the domestic level in relation to uncontested states, while the relevance of the EU for contested states (i.e. states unrecognized in world politics) remains an under-researched topic (2015: 1). *The Europeanization of Contested Statehood: The EU in Northern Cyprus* (2015), by George Kyris, is a remarkable contribution to the literature of Europeanization on the EU's engagement with contested states and how the unique context of the contested statehood relates to the EU's impact on their domestic affairs, with a focus on the case of Northern Cyprus (Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus - TRNC). It is for a broad range of academic audiences, specialists and non-specialists alike, who are interested in Europeanization, the EU's role in contested statehood, and the Cyprus problem.

The main research questions are, *how has the EU affected the Turkish Cypriot civil society, political parties, and institutions and how has contested statehood affected this impact?* [Emphasis added]. Accordingly, the book consists of seven chapters. After a brief introduction that places the study in its field, the second chapter provides an overview of the literature on Europeanization and contested statehood. It highlights that the effect of the EU will be examined based on three main mechanisms of Europeanization (institutional compliance, change of domestic opportunity structures and ideational change). Additionally, the chapter determines a set of characteristics of contested states that are expected to influence the process of Europeanization (lack of recognition, international isolation, influence of a 'patron state', lack of effective state structures, lack of effective territorial control, importance of the regional dispute for domestic affairs). This allows the author to set a precise research framework about the EU's impact in the affairs of Northern Cyprus. The third chapter places the Turkish Cypriots in historical context, where the focus is on the evolution of the Turkish Cypriot administrative bodies, and successfully prepares the reader for the empirical study. The following three chapters track the effect of the EU in three domestic remits of the affairs of the Northern Cyprus; Civil society and political parties (politics), as well as institutions (polity) as the main interlocutors with the EU. The final chapter summarizes the findings and addresses further avenues for research in order to understand the EU's engagement with contested states.

The book captures the different ways in which Europeanization has taken place (in Northern Cyprus, the contested state) between the pre- and post-accession periods (of the Republic of Cyprus, the uncontested state). Kyris argues that, Europeanization in the pre-accession period has taken place in

relation to the prospect of the EU membership, which was linked to a potential reunification of the island. A set of changes with regard to the political parties took place through redefinition of party programmes, the emergence of new political parties based on the EU discourse and shifts in the patterns of party competition between moderates and hard-liners. Similarly, civil society actors reconfigured their initially Eurosceptic interests (e.g. trade unions) and embraced the EU-trend for achieving their long-standing aim of reunification of Cyprus. According to Kyris, these fully EU-informed changes were a manifestation of 'ideational' Europeanization (2015: 82), mainly because they occurred in absence of direct links with between the EU and the contested state. On the other hand, this period showed no Europeanization effects in the Turkish Cypriot institutions, due to their absence from the EU membership preparations of the uncontested state.

According to the author, the post-accession direct involvement of the EU in Northern Cyprus provided new elements to the process of Europeanization (2015: 63). For example, the growing affiliation of the moderate political parties with the EU has increased their power in the Turkish Cypriot politics (2015: 95). Similarly, training and financial and technical assistance under the capacity-building programmes has become a direct link between the EU and the Turkish Cypriot civil society. Such direct link sustained the ideational Europeanization via transfer of knowledge and organizational skills as well as giving birth to new organizations. Additionally, the similar institutionalization experience for dealing with the EU matters in North Cyprus, the influential 'patron state' Turkey, and the RoC is taken as 'socialization' of Turkish Cypriots into the EU environment, which indicates ideational Europeanization (2015: 101).

The book portrays the post-accession Europeanization of institutions as an example that resembles the experience of EU enlargement, yet a 'different enlargement', due to the unique characteristics of the contested statehood (2015: 97). There is an EU-informed strengthening of the executive branch vis-à-vis the legislative branch of the state for adoption of the EU *acquis communautaire* and needed reforms. However, the EU avoids official contacts with the contested state institutions and its officials, in order to prevent, what is called, 'recognition by implication'. Instead, new influential interlocutors are empowered, which are less identified with the contested state, and the state structures are by-passed (2015: 113). For example, Turkish Cypriot Chamber of Commerce a civil society actor, has been given a set of responsibilities involving interaction with 'Brussels', which are normally activities dealt by official governmental structures. Similarly, the European Union Coordination Centre, maintaining EU matters, such as legal harmonization with the EU law, is developed in less identification with the state institutions to acquire more direct contacts with the EU.

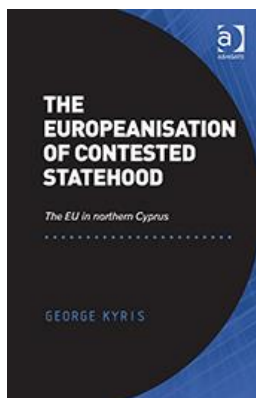
It is noteworthy how the book captures the characteristics of the EU's engagement with Northern Cyprus. Yet, the extent that such relationship form remains valid in different issue areas in Cyprus, or in other examples of contested statehood invites more research. For example, the 'cooperation via de-politicized engagement' pattern did not occur on the recent hydrocarbons dispute in Cyprus, despite the call of the Turkish Cypriot side for cooperation under a similar de-politicized framework (an ad-hoc committee to by-pass state structures). The EU did not utilize the same approach to push cooperation on the island, which escalating tensions brought the peace talks to a temporary halt in late 2014. This aspect brings some important questions into the discussion, how does the political flexibility of both the uncontested and the contested state relate to formation of the de-politicized relationship that the EU inclines to develop in engaging contested states? Also, would the impact and the routes of Europeanization in Northern Cyprus be significantly restricted if the Turkish Cypriot authorities did not show the political flexibility to empower the 'non-state' interlocutors? Some discussion on these questions would further help the reader to understand the EU's opportunities and limitations in engaging with contested states.

A few issues could be addressed at the empirical level. One in particular is the statement that the declaration of the TRNC excluded ‘any’ references to a ‘federal state’ in Cyprus and did not take into account the UN-supported efforts towards establishment of a federation (2015: 78). In fact, the text explicitly states that TRNC does not hinder efforts to establish a ‘genuine’ federation, but ‘such proclamation can facilitate efforts in this direction by fulfilling the necessary requisites for the establishment of a federation...and urges the pursuit of negotiations under the auspices of the UN Secretary-General’ (KKTC Meclisi, 1983: 10). In addition, with regard to the explanation below a table on the Turkish Cypriot election results, where the ‘lighter colours indicate moderate/ pro-EU parties, while hard-line/ Eurosceptic are presented in darker colours’, the case is just the opposite (2015: 79). Finally, there are some inconsistencies in using the Turkish characters such as Kıbrıs/ Kibris, Türk/ Turk, Öğretmenler/ Ogretmenler, Sendikası/ Sendikasi (2015: 56). Nevertheless, it should be noted that these issues do not reflect badly upon the analysis or hinder the findings in any aspect.

Kyris’ study develops a deep engagement with academic literature and a strong analytical framework that is successfully applied throughout the research. It is adequately supported by empirical evidence such as interviews, data, figures, as well as by visual tables. Overall, this study is an invaluable contribution not only because it fills the gap of scholarly work on Europeanization of Northern Cyprus. The analysis adds on the conceptual approach and it significantly improves our understanding of how the EU behaves and extends its influence into contested states. In a timely manner, this book is also a rewarding read in view of the acceleration of the peace-talks following to the victory of the pro-solution Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akıncı in the 2015 elections. It is particularly relevant because of the growing consensus between the two leaderships on the island, and the European Commission, that the Turkish Cypriots should be prepared for implementation of the *acquis* prior to a potential reunification on the island, which will accelerate Europeanization in Northern Cyprus.

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