



The Birth of the “TRNC” and Its Contradicting Interpretations

A NATIONALIST DREAM: THE TURKISH CYPRIOT STATE

“I feel like a family leader would feel when the doctors finally manage to save the mother who was slowly losing her life, and the child whose birth was delayed for artificial reasons. I thank God” (KTFM 1983a, 21). These words were pronounced by the Turkish Cypriot leader, Rauf Denктаş, at the end of the extraordinary session of the parliament of the “Turkish Federated State of Cyprus” (“TFSC”), expressing his joy about the unanimous approval on the declaration of the “Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus” (“TRNC”). The idea and the act of a separate Turkish Cypriot state on the island was, for Denктаş, a natural development just like a birth. It was historically a longstanding demand and was delayed in its creation because of artificial obstacles. According to the ideological background of the Turkish Cypriot leader, the “TRNC” was, in a sense, the legitimate end of a historic course that may have been delayed but could not be cancelled.

This kind of retroactivity that Denктаş attributed to the creation of the “TRNC”, on 15 November 1983, refers to a complex reading of this particular political act. On the one hand, the creation of a separate state in 1983 was an act of continuation, and perhaps a deepening of the dynamics released by the 1974 war. Not accidentally, a few years after the declaration, Denктаş underlined that: “The natural result of the peace operation of 20 July 1974 was that we salvaged our just cause and our independence, but also that we managed to make them specific in our

state. Our highest duty is to protect our state” (Anagnostopoulou 2004, 274).

On the other hand, however, it seems that the claim for a second state in Cyprus can be placed within the wider context of the policies of *Taksim*. In this sense, the historic roots of a separate Turkish Cypriot state within the ideological programme of the nationalist elite can be traced back to the period of the establishment of TMT. On the occasion of the 32-year anniversary of the establishment of TMT, a long-time partner of Denktaş, Fuat Veziroğlu, noted the following: “It has been 16 years since the 20th of July, when the struggle of TMT resulted in victory... if we are to understand the present we have to look to the past. We have to live the 1958 period. The 20th of July did not fall from the sky, nor did it descend with a parachute. The same applies to the TRNC. The TRNC is the seed that TMT planted in 1958” (An 2002, 139).

There are two documents that are often referred to in order to promote the view that the Turkish Cypriot nationalist elite did not abandon the idea of creating a separate state, even after the establishment of the Republic of Cyprus in 1960. These two documents were found in the office of the Vice-President of the Republic of Cyprus at the outbreak of the intercommunal conflicts at the end of 1963 (Arslan 2014, 396). The first document was titled Interim Phase Plan (*Geçici Merhale Planı*). According to the document, the Turkish Cypriot leadership had consented to the Zurich-London Agreements only on the condition that the Republic of Cyprus would be a temporary phase on the road to the realization of the ultimate goal (*nihai gaye*), that is to say, the full independence (*tam istiklal*) of the community (An 2002, 99–100). The second document, dated 14 September 1963, largely referred to the economic implications and strategies in the event that the Republic of Cyprus Constitution was abolished or not implemented by the Greek Cypriot leadership. In case the constitution was abolished, the plan underlined that the Turkish Cypriot community would have to proceed with the creation of a separate state outside the framework of the Zurich-London Agreements (An 2002, 106–11).

Regardless of the confirmation, or not, of the aforementioned confidential documents, it seems that the idea of a separate Turkish Cypriot state structure during the 1960s was retained among Denktaş’s political goals. Several decades later, he resurfaced this issue in an interview, stressing that the conditions of the intercommunal conflicts called for the creation of a second state, since on an international level the Republic of

Cyprus continued to be recognized as the only legitimate entity, under the control of Greek Cypriots, while Turkish Cypriots were treated as minority (Gürkan 2005, 67). Despite being aware of the difficulties of such a venture because of the absence of a territorial concentration of the Turkish Cypriots, Denктаş believed that the separate statehood of the community was perhaps the only way to guarantee its political equality (Billuroğlu 2012, 81).

If the seclusion of the Turkish Cypriots in isolated enclaves in the 1960s prevented the creation of a separate state, the territorial concentration of the community in the north part of Cyprus after 1974 and the violent creation of a homogenized area formed facts that could support the emergence of a second state. For the Turkish Cypriot nationalists, the 1974 invasion symbolized the success of *Taksim* by enforcing borders and a separate social and economic formation for the Turkish Cypriots (Bizden 1997, 83). The new status quo created dynamics such as the complete separation of Turkish and Greek Cypriots, the existence of separate government mechanisms, which, according to General M. Haydar Sükan (1981), fully justified the claim for the declaration of a second independent state on the island.

Shortly after 1974, Denктаş intensified his efforts to promote a confederal settlement of the Cyprus problem, the prerequisite being a separate state of the Turkish Cypriots. According to Glafkos Clerides, during his meetings with the Turkish Cypriot leader on 19 and 20 December 1974, the latter reiterated the goal of creating a separate state and even asked for its “twenty-four hour” unilateral recognition by the international community (Kızılyürek 2009, 46). Denктаş, of course, was forced to walk a fine line. Promoting the idea of a second state in Cyprus placed the government of Turkey in a difficult position. Ankara officially held the position of a federal solution to the Cyprus problem and sought to reduce international pressure after the military intervention (Kızılyürek 2002, 282).

The creation of the “TFSC” in February 1975 seems to have been a conscious retreat by the Turkish Cypriot leader following Ankara’s objections to the potential unilateral independence of the Turkish Cypriots. In the face of Denктаş’s persistence about establishing an independent state in 1975, the Foreign Minister of Turkey at the time, Melih Esenbel, argued that the separate structure in the north of Cyprus should be limited to a “federated state” as the practical confirmation of the position for a federal solution in Cyprus. According to Esenbel, only in the

case that the Greek Cypriots did not agree to a federal solution could new policies be planned (Gürkan 2005, 68–9). The basic working hypothesis of Ankara and the Turkish Cypriot leadership, which formed the basis for the declaration of the “TFSC” in 1975, was that the Greek Cypriot side would be obliged to transform the Republic of Cyprus into a Greek Cypriot Federated State and then the two parties would agree on the territorial boundaries and the powers of the central federal government (Dodd 1993a, 105).

It is a fact that even this prospect did not satisfy Denktaş. The Turkish Cypriot leader believed that the Republic of Cyprus should be reduced to a communal authority or alternatively, the Turkish Cypriot community statehood should be internationally recognized as a distinct entity (Hasgüler 2004, 40–2). The Turkish Cypriot nationalist elite believed that this policy could gain ground in manoeuvring against possible delays by the Greek Cypriot leadership in the negotiation process. The key protagonists of the Turkish Cypriot right legitimized the necessity of unilaterally proclaiming independence using the notion of “Greek Cypriot intransigence”. For example, Mustafa Çağatay, repeatedly declared in the parliament that the community should not remain without alternatives beyond the federation, nor should it depend upon the intransigent position of the Greek Cypriots (KTFM 1981, 16).

However, despite objections from part of the government in Ankara concerning the prospect of the unilateral independence of the Turkish Cypriots, the 1974 military intervention and the occupation of territories formed acts that released multiple dynamics of a deep rupture in the political framework of the time, both in Cyprus and in Turkey (Anagnostopoulou 2004, 215). These new dynamics naturally affected the idea of the Cyprus federation as well. From 1974 onwards, the position for a federal solution to the Cyprus problem, at least as far as Ankara was concerned, formed a tool for legitimization at international level, but also the basis for conflicts internally. Therefore, while Ecevit appeared as the most stable supporter of a federation on a geographical basis, Necmettin Erbakan promoted the idea of a “veiled federation”. As the leader of Turkey’s Islamic Movement explained to the journalist Mehmet Ali Birand, “there must be a constitution that appears as a federation on the outside, but when the veil is removed a completely divided Cyprus would be revealed” (Birand 1979, 302).

Denктаş made clear from the start that he could exploit the above-mentioned delicate balances of the Turkish political system in order to serve his goals. The formation of the “Nationalist Front” (*Milliyetçi Cephe*) governments under the Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel with the cooperation of the Justice Party (*Adalet Partisi*), the National Salvation Party (*Milli Selamet Partisi*) and the Nationalist Action Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*) formed important developments that helped to prepare for the unilateral declaration of independence in 1983 (Kızılyürek 2002, 282). The stabilization of the successive conservative governments in Turkey consolidated a particular ideological environment in Ankara that approached closely, if not completely, the ideological background of the Turkish Cypriot leader. Ambassador Ecmel Barutçu (1999, 14), who had headed the department for the Cyprus problem in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Ankara, admitted that after the resignation of the Ecevit government, the solution to the Cyprus problem became even more difficult. He explained that the governments that followed could not cope with the possibility of public reactions claiming that they were “giving away what Ecevit had gained”.

Apart from the ideological setting created by the 1974 military intervention, a strategic development that helped to unilaterally declare independence was the military coup of 1980 in Turkey. The prevalence of the coup was a circumstance that opened new areas of activation for the Turkish Cypriot leader (Mehmetçik 2008, 175). The military coup of September 1980 resulted in the qualitative change of the power bloc in Turkey and as a result the military establishment headed the consolidation of the new state of affairs (Özkazanç 1998). This structure ensured the prominent role of the military in determining policies related both to domestic and foreign affairs. Especially up until the 1983 elections, the most important pillar of determining and implementing foreign policy was the National Security Council (NSC) (Balci 2013, 160–1). The NSC was established as a power institution that could guide both the state and the political life at large. Under the 1983 Political Parties Act, the NSC secured a status higher than political parties themselves, as well as the authority to represent the Turkish state (Balci 2013, 160–1; Efeğil 2001, 148). Given the circumstances, even the elected government of Turgut Özal concentrated more on economic change (Gözen 2000, 117), without particular interventions on issues of security and foreign policy, which were monopolized by the military hierarchy (Yavuzalp 1996, 265). These balances eventually opened up the prospect for Denктаş to secure

a degree of approval from Ankara on the declaration of a second state in Cyprus. As Denктаş himself confesses about his final decision on the matter: “I got the green light from some centres in Ankara. From the military and senior officials of the Foreign Ministry. It was not from the entire government” (Gürkan 2005, 71). In the same context, Satan and Erdoğan (2012, 450) underline that the NSC in Turkey supported the option of declaring the “TRNC”.

Thus, the fluidity created by the military coup was an important fact that facilitated Denктаş’s initiatives, which had to be calculated at a time of sensitive circumstances. The former Turkish Cypriot leader explained the timing of the declaration of the “TRNC” in relation to the situation in Ankara as follows: “The point was to choose the right moment. The choice was made as follows: in Turkey a government is leaving and another is coming. The one leaving cannot influence us no matter what they say. On the other hand, the one coming will have to face a *fait accompli*. There was therefore no better time” (Gürkan 2005, 72).

Indeed, November 1983 was the “best time” for Denктаş. When Bülent Ulusu ceded his prime ministerial duties to Turgut Özal after the 1983 elections (Çağda 2015, 52), the latter would be left to handle the “hot potato” of the unilateral declaration of independence of the Turkish Cypriots. Furthermore, he would have to manage the situation on the international level. Ambassador Ercüment Yavuzalp (1996, 230) admitted that in several meetings with the new Prime Minister of Turkey the latter made harsh remarks about the declaration of an illegal state in Cyprus. Özal pointed out that it was not at all right for a new government to be faced with such decisions without having prior information and involvement in the decision making.

THE ROAD TO THE DECLARATION

“The Left has strengthened, measures need to be taken” (Billuroğlu 2012, 133). Denктаş stated this after the results of the elections in the Turkish Cypriot community in the summer of 1981. Although Denктаş himself managed to be elected for the second time in 1981 with a majority of 51.7%, the results deprived him of 20% of the votes. In the 1976 elections he had won 77.6% of the votes. The tendency to question the forces supporting partition was even more pronounced in the parliamentary elections. The new balance in the parliament opened the way for the cooperation of the opposition parties and for UBP’s removal from the

government. This was the first major political “shock” for the party that primarily expressed the new partitionist political order. The rise of the Left to the point of becoming a power that could govern alarmed both the Turkish Cypriot leadership and Ankara. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Ankara did not allow the formation of a left-wing government and in this way, just seven years after 1974, Turkey played the role of an “external force” that would restore the partitionist framework.

The political context of the period was complemented by the stagnation in the negotiations for a solution to the Cyprus problem, caused by the various controversies surrounding the internationalization policy of the problem that the governments of Greece and the Republic of Cyprus sought to implement. The response of Denktaş to the above context was to initiate contacts with various political and economic actors in the occupied territories in order to cultivate a climate in favour of the unilateral declaration of independence (Dodd 1993a, 125). Starting with the 1981 election campaign, the Turkish Cypriot leader, aware of the increasing pro-federal dynamics, clearly promoted the idea that the term “federated” should be deleted from the name “Turkish Federated State of Cyprus”. He even believed that this name imprisoned the Turkish Cypriots in a dead-end policy that multiplied their socio-economic problems, while on the contrary, full independence would aid the smoother development of the Turkish Cypriot community (Billuroğlu 2012, 87).

Apart from the creation of barriers to the rise of the opposition through the redefinition of the hegemonic framework, the claim for a unilateral declaration of independence was, for Denktaş, a method of reproducing his own presence in power. Under the constitution of the “TFSC”, the President could only be elected for two consecutive terms, and these were completed with the 1981 elections. The renewal of Denktaş’s term could only pass through a change in the constitution and a total institutional restructuring of the community (Mehmetçik 2008, 175). Turkey’s Foreign Minister, Türkmen, even admitted that “we should not forget that an effort made with the establishment of the TRNC was to ensure the continuation of the Denktaş presidency” (Erol 2015, 305). In this sense, the restoration of the partitionist framework that took place with the open intervention of Ankara after the 1981 elections continued with the efforts of the Turkish Cypriot leader to modernize the separate structures in a completely new political environment.

In early 1983, Denktaş gradually began to implement a strategy for the unilateral declaration of independence. This strategy had two broad axes: the first was to exploit the stagnation in the negotiations for the solution of the Cyprus problem and to highlight the necessity for a new policy that would force the Greek Cypriot side to accept the equality of the Turkish Cypriots. The second was to integrate left-wing circles into the expressions of the necessity for independence and consequently to widen the social basis of support for the idea of a second separate state in Cyprus.

The first pillar of action involved the necessity for a new policy of disengagement from the federal solution that was achieved through the cultivation of the position on the Greek Cypriot intransigence. The Secretary-General of UBP at the time, Enver Emin, stressed that since the Greek Cypriots were questioning the Makarios–Denktaş and Kyprianou–Denktaş High Level Agreements, then it was perfectly normal for the Turkish Cypriots to seek the choice of a separate independence (*Yeni Düzen* 1983b). Within this framework, it was supported that, due to the unpleasant developments in the Cyprus problem, the Turkish Cypriot community should proceed to change the parliament decision of 5 November 1976, which underlined the community’s commitment to the search for a federal solution to the problem (Eraslan 2009, 28–33). The supporters of this idea claimed that the intervening period since 1976, in combination with the lack of progress in the negotiations, created new facts that should be included in a new political decision by the Turkish Cypriots (Dodd 1993a, 127). For Denktaş and the nationalist elite, the creation of the Federated State in 1975 and the decision of the parliament on a federal solution were practical expressions of goodwill on the part of the Turkish Cypriots. The “goodwill” for the Denktaşian establishment was translated into a temporary acceptance of an “inferior form” of administration and an expectation that Greek Cypriots would also take similar steps to agree a federal structure (KTFM 1983b, 59). Eight years later, the non-conversion of the Republic of Cyprus into a federated state signalled, for the same circles, the need for the immediate upgrading of the Turkish Cypriot administration to the same level as that of the Greek Cypriots (KTFM 1983b, 59), i.e. to state level.

The clearest pretext for the thorough development of the will to change the unanimous decision of 1976 was the adoption of the UN Resolution 37/253 by the UN General Assembly on 13 May 1983 (Dodd 1993a, 125). This resolution confirmed, *inter alia*, the right of

the Republic of Cyprus and its people to full and substantial sovereignty and control over the entire territory of Cyprus; it demanded the immediate withdrawal of all occupying forces from the Republic of Cyprus and condemned the illegal granting of property titles of Greek Cypriot property by the Turkish Cypriot side (UN 1983, 48–9). Fuat Veziroğlu, who had already resigned from TKP and who supported the policy of establishing a separate state as an independent MP, described the UN resolution as a “decree of death for the Turkish Cypriot people” (KTFM 1983b, 58). The references to the sovereignty of the Republic of Cyprus over the entire territory, as well as the promotion of the concept of “one people”, were particularly disturbing for the Turkish Cypriot leadership, but also for part of the opposition (Göktuğ 1990, 163).

The nearly universal critical stance of the political parties towards this development eventually helped the Turkish Cypriot nationalists to further promote the need to “exercise a separate right to self-determination by the Turkish Cypriot people” (Billuroğlu 2012, 93). Denктаş believed that the main reason for the adoption of such a resolution against the Turkish Cypriots was the delay of the community to create a higher-level administrative structure (KTFM 1983b, 2). In the same context, he emphasized that only by moving towards the exercise of a separate right to self-determination by Turkish Cypriots would Greek Cypriots and the international community be forced to take serious steps to resolve the Cyprus problem (KTFM 1983b, 7–8). He even insisted that the Turkish Cypriots should take such political measures that would immediately clarify that there were two separate peoples in Cyprus with separate rights to self-determination, and consequently the decisions of international organizations should adopt the aforementioned reality (KTFM 1983b, 4).

As part of the wider preparation for the oncoming unilateral declaration of independence, the Council of Ministers of the Federated State decided on 23 May 1983 to officially forward to the parliament a draft amendment to the decision of 5 November 1976. The new decision of the parliament was not only a change to the previous one made in 1976, but a completely new text with different political orientations. It was approved on 17 June 1983, after many controversies within parliament. The new text adopted the prospect of a unilateral declaration of independence. It started by underlining that the Turkish Cypriots were one of the two equal peoples of Cyprus who had the right to self-government and self-determination. This people—according to the new decision—had the

right to live in their homeland freely, in a democratic system, and to be able to defend their national and cultural identity and their national rights (Eraslan 2009, 36–43). All the above, according to the decision, did not form an obstacle to the continuation of the talks for the establishment of a state within the framework of the 1977 and 1979 High Level Agreements (Dodd 1993a, 126). This decision was adopted by a majority of 33 MPs in favour and 6 against. Against stood the six MPs of CTP, which submitted its own proposal similar to the 1976 decision, underlining the need for autonomy of Turkish Cypriots within the frame of a federation (Dodd 1993a, 127). The existence of “the Turkish Cypriot people with safeguarded right to self-determination” (Eraslan 2009, 43) was one of the key elements of the parliament’s decision on 17 June 1983, upon which the declaration of the “TRNC” relied.

The second axis of action moved in the direction of integrating part of the Left in the demand for a second state in Cyprus. A typical example of this effort was Denktaş’s support for the creation of the Union of Patriotic Intellectuals (*Yurtsever Aydınlar Birliği*). Actors of different political structures undertook the work of the Union. High-ranking officers of the Embassy of Turkey and of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were working through the Union. Members included Ahmet Okan and Doğan Harman, who were better known as Leftist intellectuals. In this context, texts that theorized on the issue of a separate independence and a separate right to self-determination were published from a leftist-oriented approach (Billuroğlu 2012, 94). It was no accident that the concepts of independence, freedom and equality of the Turkish Cypriots were largely promoted by the Turkish Cypriot Right during this period. In this way, the activation of political concepts of a largely left-wing mobilization, even in a partitionist context, formed a tool for the Turkish Cypriot leader who sought to exercise further pressure on the Turkish Cypriot Left. Enver Emin emphasized the following: “The fact that some circles that base their political activity on the concepts of freedom, democracy and equality are now against the exercise of the right to self-determination is a contradictory approach that raises questions” (KTFM 1983b, 52).

Within this framework, a few days before making the unilateral declaration of independence official, the parliament of the Federated State approved by majority an Emergency Bill (*Söz* 1983). In protest against the bill, TKP and CTP boycotted the parliament’s proceedings and organized a protest march (*Halkın Sesi* 1983a). According to the opposition, the enforcement of a state of emergency drastically limited the prospects

for the democratization of the community, while it questioned in essence the basic philosophy of the Constitution of the Federated State (*Halkın Sesi* 1983b). The institutional safeguarding of the emergency state in the above-mentioned context was not accidental. It was the first phase of the “conspiratorial manner” by which Denктаş decided to proceed with the declaration of the “TRNC”. The second phase was even more indicative: On 14 November, the Turkish Cypriot leader invited the leaders of the political parties to dinner. There, he announced that the next morning he would declare the independent state and called for unanimous approval of the decision. After informing them that he had interrupted all telephone communications, he warned them that “the parties who would say no to the birth of the state would naturally be excluded from the new parliament” (Kızılyürek 2002, 284–5). The next morning, the establishment of the “TRNC” was unanimously approved.

On 2 December 1983, the creation of a founding parliament was approved by majority, with the task of drafting a new constitution and promoting it in a referendum. Denктаş believed that a new constitution was necessary in order to strengthen the institutional structure of the new state. In this context, he wished to follow a similar process as the one for the creation of the Federated State (Dodd 1993a, 129). The opposition reacted to this prospect by arguing that a new constitution was unnecessary since the declared goal was the federal solution to the Cyprus problem. In the end, Denктаş’s proposal was adopted with 24 votes in favour and 16 against (Çağda 2015, 56). The composition of the 1983 founding parliament consisted of the existing members of the House of Representatives and, additionally, of 10 members appointed by Denктаş himself, 19 members representing organizations, trade unions and extra-parliamentary political parties, and one member appointed by Fazıl Küçük. As in the previous founding parliament, there was lack of uniformity in representation, giving particular weight to power circles that supported the Turkish Cypriot leader. For example, Türk-Sen was represented by three members, and the leftist Dev-İş by none (Çağda 2015, 59).

On 23 December 1983, the constitution committee of the founding parliament was set up. Denктаş filed a draft constitution in January 1984 on the grounds that he could contribute to the drafting of the new text. Although his supporters raised again the issue of a presidential system, the proposals of the Turkish Cypriot leader led in another direction. However, they entailed the element of strengthening the executive powers of the

president (Dodd 1993a, 130). The draft of the new constitution was completed in June 1984. Some initiatives on the Cyprus issue prevented the holding of a referendum in August 1984. In the end, the debate in the plenary of the founding parliament regarding the endorsement of the draft and its promotion to a referendum was completed on 12 March 1985. The text of the new constitution was sanctioned after fierce disputes and despite CTP and Arif Hasan Tahsin, who represented the trade union of teachers KTÖS, voting against it (Dodd 1993a, 131).

THE SEPARATE STATE THROUGH “LEFT PERCEPTIONS”

“Six years passed since then. In these six years, how close have we reached to the objective of establishing the Turkish Cypriot Federated State? Have we set the economic and social life of the community on healthy grounds? Have we defended the independence of Cyprus sufficiently? Have we made arrangements that would push toward a Federal Republic of Cyprus?... We cannot prevent partition or the annexation of Cyprus when we overlook the Constitution and the goals of the establishment of the Federated State, and when we keep talking about an independent Turkish state” (*Yeni Düzen* 1981).

The above excerpt is taken from the speech by Özker Özgür, President of CTP, six years after the establishment of the “TFSC”. With these words, he introduced the different perceptions that the forces of the Turkish Cypriot opposition had on the Federated State, as well as on the concept of the separate power structures. It is true that, albeit from very different starting points and different goals, there were many political forces within the community that believed the creation of a state or an autonomous administrative structure was a necessary component for the survival of the Turkish Cypriots as a separate communal existence in Cyprus after 1974. For this reason, the idea of creating a federated state, which would comprise one of the two key parts of a future Cypriot federation, was strongly supported by the Turkish Cypriot left opposition.

The decision of 13 February 1975, which established the Federated State, was important for this particular part of the opposition against Denktaş because it formed a barrier against the Turkish Cypriot leader’s partitionist tendencies. The emergence of this structure was deemed by Özgür (1981) as a comprehensive confirmation that the community would not be oriented towards actions challenging the independence of Cyprus or actions that would encourage the annexation of the island.

At the same time, it was a superior form of autonomous administration of the Turkish Cypriots outside the boundaries of the pre-1974 enclaves and, in this sense, it formed a basis for improving the socio-economic situation of the community. For Alper Orhon, president of the People’s Party (*Halkçı Parti*), the creation of the Federated State and the resulting institutional restructuring of the community, formed important achievements that strengthened the parliamentary system against an arbitrary presidential system (KTFM 1979b, 26). In such a framework, the creation of the Federated State formed, for the Turkish Cypriot opposition, a basis for defending the autonomy of the entire Cypriot space from the risk of annexation to a foreign state, as well as offering a prospect of democratization away from the authoritarian conditions of the enclaves of the previous decade. The president of TKP, Alpay Durduran, for instance, stressed that the greatest guarantee for the independence of Cyprus and the prevention of *Enosis* (Union) with Greece was not only the very existence of the Turkish Cypriot community, but also the Federated State (KTFM 1979b, 11). The organized groups of Turkish Cypriot teachers also foresaw that through the political organization and institutionalization offered by the Federated State, the Left could “come out to the community with clear language and a loud voice” (Tahsin 2012, 80).

The Turkish Cypriot opposition forces had a similar response to the decision of the parliament of the Federated State made on 5 November 1976, which clarified the community’s support for a federal solution to the Cyprus problem (Kızılyürek 2002, 291). This decision eventually formed one of the foundations for the defence of the federal reunification of Cyprus by those forces who were in conflict with partition. Although this decision was made on the initiative of Denктаş, it was soon transformed into an almost “holy text” by which the pro-federal forces of the Turkish Cypriots could defend themselves against the open aspirations of the nationalist elite for the creation of a second state on the island (KTFM 1983c, 9–10).

Özgür believed that the Turkish Cypriot community could not gain influence at international level and press for the solution of the Cyprus problem because its leadership did not adopt the world values of the time. The values of anti-imperialism, of independence, territorial integrity and of the non-aligned identity of states were the only ones that could, according to the CTP leader, function as the “current currency” of international relations and have a positive impact on both the UN and the socialist states (KTFM 1979a, 75–6). The Secretary-General of the party,

Naci Talat, criticized the promotion of partitionist positions, saying that: “The world is reacting against annexations and the cancellation of the independence of states. While such a reaction is recorded, we should avoid adopting views like ‘integration with motherland’ or ‘declaration of an independent state’. Who do we think we are for God’s sake? And who do we think we are threatening with such statements?” (KTFM 1979a, 86).

It is, however, a fact that the developments that followed in the next few years did not justify the expectations of the wider Turkish Cypriot opposition. The multidimensional crisis caused by the Turkish Cypriots’ exclusion in the partitionist framework of 1974 influenced all the spheres of economic and social activity. It caused a form of depression even in terms of cultural references to the identity of the Turkish Cypriots (Yashin 2012, 7–8). Ankara’s open intervention after the 1981 elections, which prevented the formation of a government by the opposition forces, turned Turkey from a “saviour-state” into an “oppressor-state” in the eyes of part of the community (Mehmetçik 2008, 173).

Precisely within this context, the promotion of an undefined concept of independence was positively received by the wider social strata (Mehmetçik 2008, 177–8). In a different manner and with a controversial perception, the idea of a fully independent Turkish Cypriot community could not only assimilate the reactions caused by the crisis of the partitionist framework, but it could also become a new local political vision. In a contradictory manner, independence became part of a live debate and confrontation between the Turkish Cypriot Right and the Turkish Cypriot Left. Mehmetçik (2008, 179–80) argued that the idea of an independent Turkish Cypriot state derived from the desire for a cohesive structure that could protect the things that the Turkish Cypriots felt they were losing due to the pressing problems of the time: the sense of belonging and the real ownership of space. This desire was bluntly depicted by Keskiner (1983a) in his text in the newspaper *Ortam*, who among other things highlighted that: “Independence... How nice it is to be independent. Without the need of anyone, to financially succeed, to stand on your own feet. To defend and protect democratic rights and freedoms. To save your country from international monopolies and smugglers. To produce modern policies and protect the conditions of freedom of thought. And to establish governments adapted to the free will of the people”. Therefore, for part of the Turkish Cypriot opposition, and more specifically the Left, safeguarding the Turkish Cypriot independence involved, in essence, the

need to become independent and autonomous (Mehmetçik 2008, 178) from Turkey’s tutelage.

An important part of the Turkish Cypriot Left, which positioned itself outside TKP and CTP, agreed with Denktaş’s position on the existence of two peoples in Cyprus. At the same time, however, the actors who represented this line of thought believed that the separate right to self-determination of the Turkish Cypriots should be exercised in the direction of a federal reunification rather than of the finalization of partition (Billuroğlu 2012, 107). For Sabahattin İsmail¹ (1982), the progressive part of the Turkish Cypriots should defend the separate right to self-determination, since this was a modern Leninist principle that was later adopted by the international system. Based on this reasoning, the Turkish Cypriots, as a separate people from the Greek Cypriots, should exercise their right to self-determination in a way that would prevent the union and partition. At the same time, the columnist deemed it was necessary to combine the exercise of the right of the Turkish Cypriots to self-determination with an organized effort to overthrow the capitalist relations of production and the prevalence of the socialist transformation. A similar example of a “leftist interpretation” of the separate state was the position of the journalist Şener Levent. Levent called on the socialist states to immediately recognize the new entity a few days after the declaration of the “TRNC”. In his text “Listen to our Voice” (Levent 1983), he wrote: “In Northern Cyprus, a small state was founded, independent, non-aligned, resisting fascism, chauvinism and Zionism... In this small state that we founded there is no room for foreign bases... We believe that Greek Cypriot workers are also against the bases. Recognize us so we can fight by their side in the future”.

The positions of the majority of the Turkish Cypriot Teachers’ Trade Union (KTÖS) revolve around the same context. A significant number of the trade union leadership believed that the community should pursue even more fervently its independence from Turkey (Billuroğlu 2012, 107–8). They stressed that the creation of the Federated State had been supported by the trade union because it could serve as a basis for the democratization of the relations between Turkish Cypriots and Turkey, for the removal of the influence of the Turkish military in the internal affairs of the community and for the strengthening of the opposition against Denktaş. However, in the course of time, it became evident that the community was unable to ensure its independence from Ankara, and consequently a new, superior state organization could help in this

direction (Billuroğlu 2012, 107–8). As Arif Hasan Tahsin (2012, 174) reported many years later, the Turkish Cypriot teachers supported the declaration of independence of the community as “independence from Turkey”.

The two largest opposition parties adopted a different approach. TKP initially believed that the creation of a second state in Cyprus would form a development that would strengthen the dynamics of the partition of the island. The party adopted the view that the Turkish Cypriots had a separate right to self-determination, but they had exercised it wisely in previous years by pursuing a federal Cyprus. Following this line of thought, TKP emphasized that the right to self-determination existed not only in peoples, but also in communities, and in this sense the Turkish Cypriots had safeguarded this right through their separate electoral procedures and their separate political bodies (KTFM 1983b, 31–2). The president of the party, Alpay Durduran, insisted that the Turkish Cypriots should first prove, through their socio-economic development, that they were a coherent community and should not adopt adjectives such as “people” and “nation” that they could not argue for (KTFM 1983b, 32). A few months before the declaration of the “TRNC”, speaking in the parliament, he said: “Let us first promote that we are a community with our own particular interests... How can a community be taken seriously today when 60% of its budget is financed by Turkey?... In 1979, we decided to terminate our trade relations with the Greek Cypriots and with the rest of the world except Turkey. All these do not indicate that we are a community with its own particular interests” (KTFM 1983b, 32–3).

In the beginning, CTP was even more critical of the creation of a second state on the island. The overall position of the party emphasized that the major conclusion of the developments since 1974, culminating in the elections of 1981, was the “futile” pursuit for independence. Rather, CTP believed that the community should be more focused on defending the local Turkish Cypriot culture and diversification from Turkey (Mehmetçik 2008, 174). In the same context, the party believed that the declaration of a separate state represented a violation of the 1977 and 1979 High Level Agreements, as well as of the unanimous decision of the Federated State Parliament of November 1976 (*Yeni Düzen* 1983a), that is to say of all the important binding texts for a federal solution.

At the same time, for CTP, the idea of a separate Turkish Cypriot state was sufficient to permanently cancel all hopes for a true independence of the whole of Cyprus. The partitionist intentions formed the

continuation of the efforts to marginalize the Left in both communities, as expressed by the coup by EOKA B and those that followed in the Turkish Cypriot community after 1974. Consequently, such a development would strengthen, according to the party, the perception of the international community that the Turkish Cypriots were nothing but a “strategic minority exploited by NATO” (KTFM 1983b, 38–9).

However, as mentioned above, the two main parties of the centre-left opposition, despite their objections, were forced to support the declaration of the “TRNC” on 15 November 1983. They preferred to take this step in the face of the risk of operating in illegality. It is true, however, that the developments that followed the creation of the founding parliament and the new constitution confirmed, to some extent, the objections of the opposition. Soon after the declaration of the “TRNC”, TKP circles foresaw that Denктаş was more oriented towards the introduction of a powerful presidential system that would weaken the role of the parliament and, through that, the opposition itself (*Ortam* 1983a). The same concerns were highlighted by CTP, which believed that the composition of the founding parliament was a political expression of the aim to overthrow the equilibrium created in the 1981 elections. It was, in other words, a “confirmation of the dictatorial tendencies” of the Turkish Cypriot leader, who wished to impose an authoritarian presidential system (*Ortam* 1983b).

The imposed appointment in the 1983 founding parliament of certain individuals who had failed to be elected as MPs in the 1981 elections, as well as the balances Denктаş created with the representation of specific organizations and trade unions, was yet another phase of an “external restoration of the state of exception”. As Mertoğlu (1983) noted, the way in which the founding parliament was created, and the results it produced from the start, opened up the prospect of substantial questioning of the independence of the Turkish Cypriots. Indeed, the way in which the Turkish Cypriot leader imposed the new founding parliament, with a specific “pro-Denктаşian” composition, soon transformed into a cause for the dissolution of any consensus previously created about the issues of independence and autonomy for the Turkish Cypriots. For the wider part of the opposition, the events that followed the declaration of the “TRNC” brought back to the collective memory the authoritarian period of the enclaves and of that peculiar single-party state of affairs (Süreç 1981). According to Naci Talat (1984), the founding parliament did not, in any way, reflect the will of the Turkish Cypriots and the inclusion of appointed

members helped to serve the interests of non-elected and therefore non-democratic power structures. Eventually, the opposition understood that the background of Denктаş's actions was not the real independence of the community. As Rasih Keskiner (1983b) wrote on 8 December 1983: "The hat was removed and the baldness has been revealed! The true nature of everyone has been revealed, what they represent and who they support".

Such reactions were not at all accidental. The problematic composition of the founding parliament that served as a shield for the protection and consolidation of the new state of affairs was complemented by the content of the new legislation promoted by the nationalist elite, but above all by the provisions of the new constitution. In view of the referendum for the endorsement of the new "TRNC" constitution and the first elections in the new context, UBP undertook initiatives to change the law on the granting of citizenship. The opposition's experiences on how the population of settlers was used as the "electoral dump" of the nationalist elite immediately triggered their defence reflexes. Arif Hasan Tahsin, the only spokesman for the teachers' trade union in the founding parliament, voted against the specific regulation that introduced dual citizenship, among other things, and described this act as an attack on the rights of the Turkish Cypriots. Alpay Durduran submitted a counter-proposal which involved the increase of the parliament's powers and control in conferring new nationalities, which was rejected (*Söz* 1985a). Strong reactions were recorded by Rauf Denктаş, who had already left the National Unity Party, and who stressed that the change of the law on nationality provision would help the government import voters, something that was a repeat of the previous electoral confrontation (KKTCM 1985a, 6–7). The Republican Turkish Party had the same reaction (*Söz* 1985a). Intense debates also broke out due to UBP's attempt to change the electoral law and to abolish the principle of proportional representation in the parliament. Many representatives of the opposition felt that this action aimed at facilitating the reproduction of dictatorial tendencies within the new Parliament (*Söz* 1985b).

The element that completed the alienation of part of the Turkish Cypriot opposition from the new constitution and, more broadly, from the new structure under construction, was the revelation that certain articles of the constitution were imposed on the members of the parliament "from the outside". On 1 March 1985, the founding parliament discussed the authorities and powers of the President of the "TRNC". At some

point in the debate, Arif Hasan Tahsin revealed that an unsigned text of “guidelines” was shared only among specific members of the founding parliament, all known for their connections with Denktaş’s power circle. The text Tahsin read stated among other things: “The approval of the TRNC Constitution and the election of its President are of great importance for the future of the struggle for freedom and the existence of the Turkish Cypriot people. The new constitution should safeguard the possibility of the Turkish Cypriot people to democratically govern themselves in a stable and effective manner. Because the struggle of the Turks of Cyprus has not ended. It must be strong against any other possibility... The struggle still continues, and for this reason it is imperative to have a constitutional structure, open to control and adjusted to democratic principles, but at the same time one that will allow for an effective continuation of the struggle in every field. Internal weaknesses should not harm our cause” (KKTCM 1985b, 46–7). The text concluded by clarifying that under no circumstances could the decrees issued by the President of the “TRNC” undergo parliamentary scrutiny and limitations (KKTCM 1985b, 47). The vital importance of this text was revealed through the indirect dilemma of a confrontation between democracy and stability. Democracy cultivated “internal weaknesses” that would be damaging to “continuing the struggle”. In this way, the text passed the message of the reproduction of the state of exception in the new context and by consequence of the “self-evident” need to restrain freedoms for the sake of the stability of an undisputed authority.

The function of the “TRNC” as a new level of a state of exception was made official on 8 March 1985 by the majority approval of the provisional Article 10 of the new constitution (KKTCM 1985c, 93). According to this article, the Turkish army could continue to operate, assuming total responsibility for the internal and external security of the community “for as long as the defence, the internal security of the Turkish Cypriots and the international situation so required” (KKTC Anayasası, n.d., 78). A side effect of Article 10 was that both the army and the police of the northern regions of Cyprus fell directly under the control of the Turkish armed forces in Ankara. This meant that the Turkish army gained autonomous power and influence within the Turkish Cypriot community and its political system, while, at the same time, it ensured the introduction of Turkey’s post-coup phenomena in Cyprus. The privileged position of the Turkish army in the political life of the Turkish Cypriots highlighted the systematic nature of the state of exception, as well as the arbitrary

reproduction of exceptions on the ground (Constantinou 2008, 158). For part of the opposition, the Provisional Article 10 symbolized, at the level of the constitution, the lifting or the questioning of the autonomy that Turkish Cypriots claimed from Ankara. Echoing the views of the organized teachers, Söz (1985c) ran this text on the newspaper's front page: "With the new constitution we have renounced our independence and have now declared our dependency. The Turkish army is an interested party in our internal affairs".

As mentioned above, the final text of the new constitution was formed by a majority in the founding parliament on 12 March 1985. One important outcome of the discussions was the crystallization of the opposition forces that would support the vote against the new constitution on 9 May 1985 in the referendum. CTP and KTÖS took on the leading role on the "no" front as a follow-up to their representatives' speeches in the debate in the founding parliament. According to CTP, the new constitution would have to be rejected because it was not a product of social consensus, nor did it express the concerns and demands of the wider strata of society. The party stressed that the new constitution was the result of an almost artificial right-wing majority, following orders from non-parliamentary, undemocratic power centres that focused more on protecting the privileges of the capital (*Yeni Düzen* 1985a). Apart from the class dimension in CTP's criticism, the party highlighted the wider undemocratic nature of the new constitution that limited people's freedoms and rights, strengthening the executive over the legislative and judiciary power, as well as the general authoritative environment introduced in the Turkish Cypriot community as a result of the coup d'état of 12 September 1980 in Turkey (*Yeni Düzen* 1985a). As Özker Özgür (1988) used to emphasize, it was as a "constitution, an imported product". Arif Hasan Tahsin, echoing the main concerns of the organized teachers, clarified that democracy in the new constitution was a show-case, it secured the military administration, and protected the power circles of the previous era that had played a leading role in the looting of Greek Cypriot properties (Söz 1985f). The teachers' trade union decided to organize a campaign against the new constitution because it increased the prospects of perpetuating the repression of the Turkish Cypriots and questioned any chances of community independence (Söz 1985d). Söz (1985e) reported that the text that came from the founding parliament was not a constitution "but a document of insult to the people and a trap".

Finally, on 5 May, the new constitution of the “TRNC” was approved by 70.1% in favour and 29.8% against (Aydoğdu 2005, 71). On 9 June, the presidential elections followed and Denktaş prevailed with 70%. On 23 June, the parliamentary elections were conducted—UBP secured 36.7% and 24 seats, CTP 21.4% and 12 seats, TKP 15.8% and 10 seats, while the newly established Renaissance Party (*Yeni Doğuş Partisi*—YDP) secured 8.8% and four seats (Aydoğdu 2005, 96–7). The parliamentary election results were clearly influenced by the wider referendum environment and by UBP’s successful efforts to change the electoral law. Based on the new law, the electoral threshold for entering the parliament was set at 8%, which favoured the first party that took the majority of the seats from parties or combinations that stayed out of the parliament (Çağda 2015, 77). It is estimated that 17% of the votes were not represented in the new parliament (Mehmetçik 2008, 182–3), creating an environment that perpetuated the artificial support for the continuation of UBP’s governance, even in the form of a government alliance. Immediately after the elections, the UBP leader, Derviş Eroğlu, hastened to clarify that the only unfeasible alliance was between his party and CTP (*Yeni Düzen* 1985b). Consequently, both the TKP and the YDP, in theory, fitted in the nationalist elite’s plans for an alliance government. However, developments proved that Eroğlu eventually preferred more substantive discussions with TKP, with which he formed the new government (Dodd 1993b, 136–7). The participation of TKP in this government proved to be more important for the party’s internal processes. From that point on, its left wing became weaker and TKP adopted a more centre-wing character (Mehmetçik 2008, 182).

Upon the completion of the three electoral processes in less than two months, new political and economic structures emerged in the community, new legal and economic regulations were formed, and Turkey’s presence gained new qualitative features. At the same time, however, three important elements emerged which, in combination with the above, seem to have influenced the development of the Turkish Cypriot community, especially the forces of the opposition, at least until the end of the 1990s. The first element was the transformation of CTP into the main party of the opposition, with higher percentages than those of the second largest centre-left party, TKP. The second element was the parliamentary presence of YDP—a formation that emerged under the guidance of the Turkish embassy and which managed, to some extent, to gather the votes of the settlers. The importance of this development lies in the operation

of this party as a key component of the imported transformation, through its support of the consolidation of the new political and social environment, at least until the end of the 1980s. The third important element was the effort by UBP to change the electoral law in a way that allowed it to reproduce its power. This scheming opened up the “pouch of Aeolus” and, as described in a following chapter, similar scheming in the early 1990s led to strong political restructuring that favoured the opposition.

NOTE

1. Well-known Turkish Cypriot columnist who later joined the far right.

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