

Giorgos Charalambous and Christophoros Christophorou (Eds.) (2016). *Party–society relations in the Republic of Cyprus: Political and societal strategies*. 240pp. London: Routledge. ISBN: 978-1-13-893632-4. Hbk: GBP£120.

In contemporary representative democracies, political parties play an important role: this may be why, since the end of the Second World War, they have increasingly attracted the attention of political scientists. Parties mobilise the public debate, form governments alone or in coalition after elections, articulate and channel voters' demands to the highest platforms of the national political debate, and occupy a generous segment of the public space. However, they also tend to exclude citizens from direct participation in the democratic decision-making process, and trans-party collusion may threaten fundamental democratic values. The argument on the role of political parties is complex, but an understanding of a country's foreign and domestic politics – which, over the years, have increasingly overlapped – is impossible without a sound knowledge of parties and their relations with society and the organisations of civil society (CSOs).

Although 'partitocracy' is associated with the Tartarus of politics, it has its brighter side if it is used positively as a prism of analysis of parties and party systems. This is what Giorgos Charalambous and Christophoros Christophorou achieve in their jointly edited work *Party–society relations in the Republic of Cyprus: Political and societal strategies*. They have assembled a collection of ten chapters (apart from the introduction) written by a group of mainly Cypriot scholars who provide a cross-sectional analysis of their country's political parties and their relations to society and CSOs. They also explored the 'linkage' that parties are meant to promote between citizens and the political process. The editors' positive outlook on 'partitocracy' did not prevent the book's contributors from being critical, thus ensuring a balanced assessment of the Cypriot party system.

The book edited by Charalambous and Christophorou takes a different (albeit complementary) tack from leading publications on Cyprus of the last decade, thanks to its specific *focus* on one important aspect of the Cypriot political system: its parties and their links to society. The chapters cover the dynamic relationships between business, trade unions and youth with political parties. It covers both organisations which have been set up or encouraged by the political parties aiming to tap new forms of association among groups of voters (e.g. trade unions, women's and youth organisations) as well as independent CSOs. The Cyprus conflict still features; but it is discussed from the perspective of its impact on the various political parties (and vice-versa). It is not allowed to monopolise the book. Other crosscutting issues analysed include migration and 'sexual politics', including gender and LGBTI rights.

Political parties and party-society relations in small countries have not received sufficient attention in past research and this study is a welcome departure from this trend. In general, small state studies have covered pre- and mostly post-colonial history, political institutions and constitutional development, economic risks, development and transformation, security and international relations and at times social, cultural and anthropological issues. But the study of partitocracy is a new front which could, if pursued further, help us unlock several unknowns about the politics of small states

In the first chapter, following the introduction, Charalambous and Christophorou apply aspects of cartel party theory to analyse how the Cypriot communist party AKEL has transformed itself since the 1940s, from a reforming party into an establishment party, employing state resources to pursue its objectives. Unlike most cartel parties, AKEL managed to hold on to its societal or 'environmental' roots which it had acquired before becoming an

establishment party, as well as its centralised internal power structure, while manipulating the resources of the state to its advantage.

Yiannos Katsourides covers the right-wing Democratic Rally (DISY) which adapted itself to the changing social environment by mellowing its conservative agenda and reaching out to CSOs, in short by embracing society's new concerns. DISY tries to compensate for citizens' lack of trust in political parties by strengthening its relations with CSOs. The pressure to do so is not only internal but also external, particularly from the EU. Vassilis Protopapas assesses the Democratic (DIKO) and Socialist (EDEK) parties and shows the two-way relationship between parties and CSOs and how 'linkage' impacts parties, nudging them to adapt their internal structures and policies in order to maintain electoral support.

The second group of contributions consists of three chapters showing how certain CSOs strategize their relationship with political parties. Andreas Panayiotou presents a historic account of the emergence of the Cypriot bourgeoisie during colonial times and its perennial struggle with the Left which, together with developments in the political sphere, have led to the emergence of a pluralistic and polyarchic model. Gregoris Ioannou traces the connections between trade unions and political parties and provides a succinct account of the development of trade unionism in Cyprus. He analyses their bureaucratic structures, the manner in which they have adapted to changing times, relations with their members and the electoral power that membership provides the unions with since union members are also voters. Ioannou also briefly explains trade unions' political alignments. Nayia Kamenou dwells on some of the impacts of the rise of sexual politics, or the rise of CSOs struggling for women's and LGBTI freedoms, the newest civil rights frontier in many southern European states. The writer reviews the struggle that these organisations have had to face, particularly AKOK (the Cypriot Gay Liberation Movement) due to the hostile political, institutional and social environment, stigmatisation and the retrograde position of the established religion.

The third and last group of chapters begins with an analysis of the Cyprus Conflict (note the less partisan appellation) and party-society relations. This chapter focuses mostly on the quest for peace pursued by an intercommunal movement, the main non-state peace actor and the elite-driven political peace process. Birte Vogel shows the different endpoints that the Cypriot political parties stand for and the manner in which they tend to disengage from the grassroots once they are in government. This chapter is the only one that refers to forces on both sides of the steel curtain imposed by Turkey in 1974 and which isolates the Turkish Cypriot community from the rest of the island. Vogel refers to the difficulties that the CSO intercommunal peace movement has faced on both sides of the divide at the hands of established political parties and governing elites. Dimitris Trimithiotis writes about the role of youth organisations focusing his empirical analysis on the 2008 Cypriot presidential and the 2009 European election campaigns. Dimitris explores the extent to which youths contribute to politics and whether their organisations operate in order to consolidate ties between young people and political parties. He ends with a rather disheartening message that, by ditching the model of mass membership, Cypriot political parties discourage young people from joining their ranks, thus severing the umbilical cord of a means of socialisation into politics and a source of political mobilisation. Last but not least, Nicos Trimikliniotis looks at party stands on a hot topic: the politics of migration. Traditionally as a result of its incorporation into the Ottoman Empire, Cyprus has been a multi-ethnic society enjoying a strong level of inter-ethnic tolerance and relatively peaceful cohabitation. This somewhat idealistic existence was crushed by British colonial policies and the 1974 military partition. Up to 2010, Trimikliniotis reminds us, Cyprus did not have an integration policy and third country nationals were considered as temporary 'working hands' who would, presumably, conveniently evaporate once they were

no longer needed. Today, they constitute around a fifth of the population of Cyprus and the Cypriot establishment and political parties have yet to take full cognisance of this fact. Political parties are not in the driver's seat on immigration policy; other forces and institutions are. Rather than lead, parties tend to follow what they perceive as trends in their constituencies.

The concluding reflections of the book are provided by Paschalis Kitromilides who starts with the startling observation that when in 2010, Cyprus marked the 50th anniversary of Independence, great stress was placed on how the republic had managed to survive the 1974 invasion but no mention was made of the history of democracy. On independence there was only one party worthy of the name – AKEL – and the other actor was the Cypriot Church and conservative leaders. During the formative period of the republic, no formal electoral contest occurred. Turkey's threats of invasion threatening the very survival of the republic, forced all political forces, including AKEL, to fall behind Archbishop Makarios. The first step toward the emergence of a Cypriot partitocracy was the 1970 election, but this should not be confused with the emergence of democracy. Kitromilides reflects on the state of democracy in Cyprus today and what else needs to be done to develop it further. He observes that the chapters in the book betray the weakness of CSOs. Partitocracy has led to the atrophy of civil society and blocked the emergence of a modern democratic culture which is still Cyprus's main challenge. The transition from partitocracy to democracy has not taken place, though there are several encouraging signs of underlying forces which could to it.

In conclusion, I believe that Charalambous and Christophorou have produced a book on a rare subject with respect to small state politics and which could open new horizons for researchers in other countries to follow. It is also a text of relevance for a better understanding of southern European politics. As is the case with most research, this book is not the last word on the subject and the authors do not pretend that it is. It is however a book which, through its findings and omissions, can open new avenues of research both in Cyprus and in other small states. This would be a valuable contribution in itself and to comparative studies. This book enriches our knowledge and understanding of small politics. In the current European Union (EU), where most member states are small states – irrespective of definition – an understanding of national politics helps clarify how and why they react in certain ways at EU level.

In a different but related context, it is worth considering this text within the context of a different but path-setting publication: *Democracy in small states* (2018) by Jack Corbett and Wouter Veenendaal. This text tackles democracy in small states from a more holistic standpoint, one aspect of which centres on the link between democratisation and political parties. The main finding in this case was that politics in small states primarily revolves around personalities and personal issues rather than parties. In *Party–society relations in the Republic of Cyprus*, we are reminded of the significance of personal ties, but find little about the impact of personalities. Might a book sequel dwell on democracy in small states, their political parties but also the influence of leading political personalities?

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