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CENTER for DIPLOMATIC AFFAIRS and POLITICAL STUDIES

TRNC 2020 ELECTIONS AND EFFECT ON THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN

Prof.Dr. Uğur ÖZGÖKER

Prof.Dr. Ahmet SÖZEN

Dr. Emete GÖZÜGÜZELLİ

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Panel Notes

On 28.09.2020 at 7:30 pm “TRNC 2020 Elections and Effect on the Eastern Mediterranean” panel held online by DIPAM. Panel moderated by Chairman of

DIPAM Tolga SAKMAN; Istanbul Arel University Faculty Member Prof. Dr. Uğur ÖZGÖKER, Head of the Department of Political Science and International Relations in the Eastern Mediterranean

University Prof. Dr. Ahmet SÖZEN and Ankara Social Sciences University TRNC Academic Unit Faculty Member Dr. Emete GÖZÜGÜZELLİ participated as speaker.

Tolga SAKMAN who opening the panel and addressing the topics to be discussed in panel also stated that the TRNC Presidential elections were held every 5 years and there would be 11 candidates in the elections on October 11, and that the last election in the TRNC was held with a non-negligible 62% voter turnout. Sakman asked the speakers for their opinions on determining maritime jurisdiction borders with the Greek Cypriot Administration, and how the negotiations in Cyprus would continue after the election and the effect of this election on what the TRNC wanted to achieve. Future of Turkey - TRNC relations and how relations will be transform post-election period also asked to speakers.

Uğur ÖZGÖKER emphasized that the authority in the political system in the TRNC belongs to the Prime Minister and underlined that the President generally holds the negotiation authority and representation authority, but that he does not have much power in the system. Özgöker said that Ersin TATAR, one of the presidential candidates, should remain in the Prime Ministry for the future and development of the TRNC. The speaker, who was more curious about the outcome of the 2023 general elections in the TRNC, stated that who will take the Prime Ministry is the main issue for him. Pointing out that the Cyprus negotiations process is not functioning and that no negotiations are being held at the moment, the speaker evaluated the negotiations as a waste of time on behalf of the TRNC and described the negotiation process as unnecessary, stating that the TRNC was subject to

sanctions. Expressing that the Greek Cypriot Administration has locked her on this issue, Özgöker pointed out that she has been in the same place for 55 years and stated that there is no situation to be negotiated.

Dr.Emete GÖZÜGÜZELLİ, who stated that the solution of the Federation will not be a solution, but that two state solution should be discussed, Özgöker agreed with her opinion and stated that he is against the solution of the Federation. Özgöker supports sovereign, independent and unitary state in North Cyprus. Özgöker, also mentioned that he supports the idea of establishing confederation structure between Cyprus and the Republic of Turkey. He also said, such a structure is pave the way for Cyprus and the Republic of Turkey.

Regarding the elements of statehood, Özgöker stated that the TRNC has these elements and stated that the event of recognition by the states is political. Evaluating the USA's lifting of the arms embargo on the Greek Cypriot Administration, Özgöker stated that this is dangerous for the future and security of the Cyprus Island and will not have a good effect.

Afterwards, panelists continued to talk about the policies of global powers in the region and their reflection.

Prof. Dr. Ahmet SÖZEN expressed the party voting rates of the previous general elections in the TRNC. Drawing a general picture, Sözen noted that the so-called left parties received 30-40% support, while those to the right of the center were around 60%. He stated that the presidential election was different from the general elections and stated that most

of the citizens did not vote in party lines. The reason is that the Presidency is symbolic, not the head of the executive and has limited authority. He underlined that the President represents the TRNC in the international arena and that he is the legal and legitimate leader of the country, and that he is the Chief Negotiator. Speaking about the Cyprus issue, Sözen stated that he thinks there are half of the people who will say yes to the federal solution. Sözen firstly evaluated past TRNC elections and elected leaders until today, As the leader of the Turkish Cypriot community presidents in history stating that work the way coordinated with the President of the Republic of Turkey and President to be elected would not act very differently on this matter. Speaking about the importance of the Cyprus issue in the Eastern Mediterranean, the speaker stated that the solution to the Cyprus issue will solve many deadlocks in the region. Sözen said that the tension in the region is not only related to the energy and Cyprus issue. Then, he mentioned that a new balance of power was manifested in the global and regional sense. Trying to look at events globally, the speaker stated that liberal democracy has failed in many places in interstate relations in recent years. He pointed out that the world has evolved into a multipolar situation again and that the situation in the Eastern Mediterranean was affected by showing the policies and effects of the UK, France, Germany, China, Russia and the USA. Especially French President Macron's discourses stating that the speaker was not coincidental discourse on Turkey and the region, has been cited as an example of this situation. Especially French President Macron's speech was not coincidental discourse on Turkey and the region, this speech has been cited as an example of this situation by the speaker

Speaker said that "Blue Homeland" rhetoric becomes doctrine for Turkey, also mentioned that this rhetoric raises awareness about marine areas of Turkey. Sözen stated that he believes that the Cyprus issue will not be resolved in the near future. Drawing attention to the very few people who have been trained in international law matters, Sözen considered that the creation of such awareness is the good side of the situation. He stated that it is possible to solve the border determination issue in maritime jurisdictions fairly only through diplomacy and negotiation within the framework of law and fairness. He stated that the roads in the form of a show of force increase the tension in the region rather than a solution.

Trying to look at the events completely from outside, Sözen said, "If we do not look from the 'we' perspective, we accept that the federation solution has collapsed in the Cyprus Issue, but we cannot impose it on the other side, namely the Greek Cypriot Administration, If we can get them to accept it, there is no problem". Stating that it would be vital to convince the Greek Cypriot Administration first, the speaker stated that the Greek Cypriot Administration would not accept the two-state solution. Stating that the UN is in the region for a goodwill relationship, the speaker said that the UN is not even a mediator. It is striking that the speaker is skeptical about the recognition of a sovereign TRNC in the solution of the Cyprus problem and the international community is negative against the declaration of any new state.

At the end of his speech, Sözen mentioned that Turkey should review its relations with Israel, Egypt and Syria and relations in the Eastern Mediterranean for the sake

of the interests of Turkey should be normalized.

Continuing to speak at the panel, Dr. Emete GÖZÜGÜZELLİ stated that the elections in the TRNC are a critical choice and that internal and external dynamics are effective in the process. Noting that the TRNC Presidency office should not be considered passive, the speaker stated that she did not agree with Mr. Uğur ÖZGÖKER on this issue and stated that this office is in a very important position for the representation and dignity of the country. The speaker said that the situation in geography should be analyzed well. Stating that the Cyprus Negotiations process was concluded negatively, the speaker described it as thought-provoking that the federation solution, which was about the unification process with the Greek Cypriot Administration that has been going on for years, is still on the agenda.

Gözügüzelli stated that the non-recognition of the TRNC by the states is a political, and then stated that the TRNC is a phenomenon and fact and that the TRNC is a state. She emphasized that the TRNC exists as an observer state in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Economic Cooperation Organization. Saying that global powers have an interest in the region, Gözügüzelli claimed that the region contains a mixed asymmetric threat and that there is a hybrid war. Turkey's guarantor of the execution was recorded in Cyprus is very important and necessary needs. The speaker agreed with Uğur ÖZGÖKER's thoughts on the federal solution and described this solution as a defeat. Gözügüzelli, who sees the GASC as the proxy management under the guidance of Greece, stated that the GASC has carried out a legal event since 2004,

the date when it deposited its work on the continental shelf.

Speaker, criticized TRNC President Mustafa AKINCI's discourse on Turkey and the region. She has said that this discourse contradicts the interests of Turkey and the TRNC.

The speaker, who said that international institutions did not keep their word, called this attitude as a crime against humanity. She noted that Mr. Ersin TATAR was a presidential candidate with the promise of change. She stated that Tatar had a promise to open Maraş and to open the International Ercan Airport. Referring to the importance of Cyprus for Turkey in terms of security and logistics, speakers also note that there is no clash in Cyprus thanks to Turkey. So-called individual but not individual attacks in Cyprus do not transform to conflict because of Turkey's presence in the region. She stated that the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus carried the Cyprus issue to the maritime areas with the so-called EEZ agreement with Egypt in 2003 and stated that the Greek Cypriot Administration does not accept the establishment and fair sharing of a joint hydrocarbon committee, she stated that any negotiation or federal solution on the Cyprus issue is now thought-provoking and needs to be questioned.

Gözügüzelli stated that natural gas research activities made by Turkey on behalf of TRNC with defending their rights can change power balance in the region according to possible discoveries. Speaker identified elections will be held in the TRNC as "new expression of mutual solidarity" also emphasized that it is impossible to give struggle for existence without Turkey. She said that France was

interested in the region both as a state and through energy companies. Thanks to Turkey's policies over the region France had to step back. Turkey does not want conflict in the region as a stable state, she has said Turkey wants to share in the framework of maritime law and equity. Gözügüzelli said that the question "how to develop the TRNC economically after the elections" should be focused.



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CENTER for DIPLOMATIC AFFAIRS and POLITICAL STUDIES

+90 216 310 30 40 info@dipam.org
+90 216 310 30 50 www.dipam.org
Murat Reis Mahallesi Gazi Caddesi No:69
Üsküdar/İstanbul

ABOUT DISCUSSANTS

Prof. Dr. Ahmet Sözen is the Vice Rector of Eastern Mediterranean University and a faculty member at the Department of International Relations. Sözen, whose specialty is conflict resolution and negotiation techniques, took part in the delegation of the Turkish Cypriot side in the negotiations that started in 2008. Sözen has authored numerous articles on the Cyprus conflict and negotiations in the last 20 years, as well as *The Cyprus Conflict: Looking Ahead* (Eastern Mediterranean University Publishing, 2008). He is the author of *Reflections on the Cyprus Problem: A Compilation of Recent Academic Contributions* (Eastern Mediterranean University Publishing, 2007).

Dr. Emete GÖZÜGÜZELLİ has successfully completed her undergraduate (honors) and graduate degrees (high honor) in the Department of International Relations at NEU and completed her doctorate in the Department of Politics and International Affairs at GAU with high honor. She served in public institutions such as TRNC Ministry of Foreign Affairs, TBMM IPU, TRNC Ministry of Economy and Energy. She also took part in the Swedish Foreign Affairs Institute as a scholar on Eastern Mediterranean Security, became a working partner with Oxford University on asymmetric cultural relations on Cyprus and worked as a lecturer at universities in TRNC.

Prof. Dr. Uğur ÖZGÖKER was born in Paris in 1963. After studying at Boğaziçi University Physics Department for 2 years, he graduated from Istanbul University, Faculty of Economics, Department of International Relations. He completed his master's degree in the field of Economic Structure of the European Community in 1988, and his doctorate in International Relations in 1994. He became an Associate Professor of Political Life and Institutions in 2012. He became Professor of International Relations in 2017. Özgöker also served as the Rector of the American University of Cyprus.