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De facto states and the everyday paradoxes of non-recognition

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Sovereignty Suspended: Building the So-Called State

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Stef Jansen

Sovereignty Suspended is a treat. Organizing their analysis around concerns with perceptions and (in)visibility, with recognition and (non-)naming, and with agency and modes of getting by, Rebecca Bryant and Mete Hatay have prepared two gifts for us: a riveting historical ethnography of the Turkish Cypriot sovereignty project, now embodied in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), and a sophisticated analytical toolbox to think through questions of sovereignty well beyond this ‘de facto’ state. What is particularly impressive is that those two contributions are developed in close interaction, giving the lie to the stereotypical division of labour between authors whose contribution is said to be ‘theoretical’ or ‘regional’ respectively.

The book is anchored in unusually wide-ranging empirical material. What strikes me beyond that is the way in which Bryant and Hatay’s analysis builds so clearly on what matters to the people they write about. Rather than picking up a theoretical puzzle in some Anglo-American centre and then turning to a peripheral location to empirically explore it, this book brims with the authors’ affective attunement to some central shared concerns emerging from the TRNC itself. It seems to me that in the politics of every place and time, some issues can be identified as central to people’s hopes and fears. They plague them like an itch. Some books, for that matter, suggest that such an itch may be shared by their authors. This does not necessarily imply that they agree with their research subjects, but that these concerns matter to them too. *Sovereignty*

Suspended is the product of rigorous, sophisticated analytical labour about such shared concerns. And I suspect it is precisely because Bryant and Hatay, to some degree at least, share the itch they study, and because they know that they share it, that their analysis manages to be both so deeply compassionate and so deeply critical of their interlocutors.

The itch in the TRNC that this book identifies and disentangles is a shared concern with sovereignty. How does one maximize it on one's own terms in conditions not of one's own making? The approach is resolutely processual. Now, at least in anthropology, a declarative commitment to an understanding of 'the state' as a provisional achievement rather than as a static entity has been common for decades. Yet declaring this is one thing, and letting it drive the analysis is quite another. *Sovereignty Suspended* pulls it off.

I find this becomes particularly clear in the authors' sustained awareness of contingency. It is devilishly difficult to build an acknowledgment of contingency into a historiography of a sovereignty project that has met with some success. The analyst is located at the end of that history (so far): alternatives did *not* happen and today they are so utterly delegitimized that current witnesses usually find them hard to think. Yet Bryant and Hatay maintain a sense of contingency and they even provide a glimpse of awareness about it amongst agents of the TRNC sovereignty project themselves. Reflecting on the ethnic unmixing of the island in the mid-1970s, one interlocutor says,

God forbid, if something had happened and 20,000 out of the 50,000 [Turkish Cypriots in the now Greek-Cypriot controlled South] had said, 'No, we're not going' — — and some did take this attitude. [...] we could have had a very different situation. We would have exploded the whole bizonality thing, we would have dug our own grave.

Such an eye for contingency, for process and contradiction, also marks the authors' insightful analysis of the paradoxes of political subjectivity that later (as a result?) emerge as pressing concerns in the *de facto* state.

In these ways this book offers us tools to think through sovereignty in comparative perspective. For me the authors' emphasis on contradictions, on stalled processes, and on unintended consequences provoked productive questions about the post-Yugoslav region. One route of inquiry concerns the *degree* to which sovereignty projects succeed or fail to consolidate themselves at any point in time. In other words, states-in-the-making can become *more or less de facto*. In the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), the state that is fully recognized as a subject in the international order has little effective sovereignty. It is precisely the degree of that sovereignty that is at stake in the ongoing political conflict. Two alternative sovereignty projects are at work on BiH territory since the disintegration of Yugoslavia, through the 1992–1995 war, until today. Protagonists in the wartime operations of both projects have been found guilty for crimes against humanity. Yet the Serbian nationalist sovereignty project was consolidated in the recognition of *Republika Srpska* as an 'Entity' in BiH's constitutional-territorial set-up as stipulated in the 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement. Its leaders continuously evoke a future of full statehood. The Croatian nationalist project was not rewarded in the same way, but it has also successfully maintained *de facto* sovereignty in the territories it militarily carved out. Here calls for 'Entity' status are common fare. At present, not one government in the world officially recognizes either of those two sovereignty projects as subjects of the international order. Yet the

promise or threat of sovereignty upgrades and downgrades structure political dynamics in the region.

Sovereignty Suspended presents a sustained argument against interpretations that emphasize the political and military predominance of the Republic of Turkey in the TRNC. In contrast to portrayals of Turkish Cypriot actors as ‘puppets’, Bryant and Hatay argue, we should take seriously their own political agency. This never becomes a simple narrative of resistance. In fact, the authors offer an incisive analysis of the paradoxical dynamics by which Turkish Cypriots sought to be become (political) actors but ended up as ‘extras’ instead. What’s more, their unflinching analysis of the *uses* of that status as ‘extras’ for those actors themselves is, to me, one of the most brilliant contributions of the book, and, in its brutal honesty, perhaps the most intimately painful for those who share the itch of the shared concern with sovereignty in the TRNC. Yet this book does not only consist of a hermeneutical effort to trace and contextualize people’s *understandings* of sovereignty. Beyond that, its ambitions extend to an *explanation* of historical processes. And here I wonder if perhaps, ultimately, the role of non-local players deserves a little more (explanatory) weight. I’ll briefly touch on two related points here.

First, the book’s conclusion shows that in the 2000s Turkish Cypriot political actors suddenly revised some of their modes of operation in reaction to unprecedented moves by external actors. If ‘outside’ shifts resulted in such quick, comprehensive changes, does this not suggest that the entire mode of ‘local’ political engagement that had been consolidated over decades was rather more conditioned from ‘outside’ in the first place? Comparatively, even if ‘locals’ certainly do have their own agendas, support from the governments of Croatia and Serbia seems to be a necessary condition for the two alternative sovereignty projects in BiH to persist over time in the form of de facto polities. What’s more, even the greatest BiH patriots accept (and worry) that the fate of the recognized but ineffective sovereignty project of BiH itself is dependent much more on geopolitical factors than on ‘local’ political action. Acknowledging this does not render ‘local’ actors irrelevant, but it may put them (even) more in perspective.

A second, related, point concerns the question of recognition. Only the government of Turkey has ever recognized the TRNC as a subject in the international order. Inspired by Bryant and Hatay’s excellent analysis of the resulting paradoxes I wonder about the importance of who does, or would do, the *recognizing*. Reflecting the everyday geopolitical discourse of their interlocutors, the authors mostly refer to the addressees for appeals for recognition as ‘the world’ or ‘the international community’. Here a comparative perspective compels me to think of the Kosovan sovereignty project, recognized by many governments and not recognized by many others. For different actors in Kosovo and beyond it matters greatly who is and who is not recognizing it at any given point in time. I suspect that recognition by the US government weighs more than that by the Belgian one, and that non-recognition by the Russian government weighs more than that by the one of the Republic of Cyprus (or indeed of the non-recognized TRNC). Blurring established geopolitical divisions, the ongoing saga of Kosovo also shows that recognition once granted can be withdrawn. Now, none of this attention to the (would-be) recognizers should lead us to dismiss ‘local’ agency. It is precisely Bryant and Hatay’s magisterial analysis of the political manoeuvres *within* the TRNC that opens interesting questions of how differentiation

between them may matter to the degree to which ‘locals’ can make and maintain de facto states.

My final point is simple: read *Sovereignty Suspended*. This is a big book: big on empirical insight, big on conceptualization. I also found it very big on inspiration. It’s big on volume too, and worth every page of it.

Nina Caspersen

Ever since Rebecca Bryant and Mete Hatay first told me about their book *Sovereignty Suspended*, which they were then still working on, I have been looking forward to reading it. And it did not disappoint. As I wrote in my endorsements, this is ‘easily one of the best books written on de facto states’. *Sovereignty Suspended* is an extremely rich, well-documented, and personal book. It is also an excellent read. Based on more than two decades of research, it examines the process of constructing a state in Northern Cyprus. Although what has been constructed very much looks like a state, and acts like a state, it is not recognized as such by the outside world. Recognized statehood is not realizable and the state-builders know this, even as they are creating their ‘state’; the state is an ‘impossible possibility’. It is this gap between what is real and what is realizable, and what it means to live with this contradiction, that is at the centre of this fascinating book. The emphasis is on the agency of the state-builders – they are described as sovereign agents who are insisting on their presence – but this book is not simply about how statehood and sovereignty is performed; it stresses the social nature of sovereignty and how it shapes everyday lives and possibilities. It is about the creation of an entity that must find ways to manage or get around the international order.

During the period of analysis, the Northern Cypriot state became increasingly real and a sense of separateness emerged, yet this did not result in normalization of the status quo, as is often feared by so-called parent states (the Republic of Cyprus, in this case). Instead, Bryant and Hatay convincingly argue, and demonstrate, how the development of the state only made its international invisibility and its contradictions clearer. The statebuilders were ‘performing a state that everyone says is only faking it’ (Bryant and Hatay 2020, 24). The agency of the de facto state-builders is clearly constrained. Moreover, insisting on their agency can have negative consequences. The book aptly sets out the puppet/pirate dilemma experienced by many de facto states: the state-builders could choose between being viewed as Turkey’s puppets (attribution of ‘no will’) or as pirates (attribution of ‘too much will or the wrong kind of will’) (108). The latter points to how life in de facto states is not only marked by uncertainty, contradictions, and paradoxes but also by deliberate silences. In particular, the book makes clear how the founding of the state on violence and dispossession of Greek Cypriots became ‘disguised, masked and forgotten’.

These uncertainties, contradictions, paradoxes, and silences analysed in *Suspended Sovereignty* are certainly something I recognize from other de facto states, such as Abkhazia (Georgia) and Nagorno Karabakh (Azerbaijan) and historical cases such as Republika Srpska Krajina (Croatia). Although I have been researching these entities for nearly two decades, this book made me understand their processes of state-building in new ways. However, it also made me wonder about the significance of some of the differences between the cases.

When Northern Cyprus is included in an analysis of de facto states, it is often argued that this case differs significantly from the others, since the end goal is not independence. Even the state-builders themselves claimed that they were not building a state, but a 'state' that was a steppingstone on the way to a federation. The question is if this fundamentally changes the dynamics of state-building and the lived experiences of de facto statehood. It is certainly true that in other de facto states, the leadership tends to more clearly and more unanimously embrace and pursue independent statehood; they very pointedly refuse putting quotation marks around their statehood and take great offence if used by others, and persist in portraying sovereignty as a realizable future. However, even in these cases we do find significant ambiguities when it comes to statehood, even if it more typically relates to the patron state (are they seeking independence or unification; to what extent does patron state involvement undermine their claim to de facto independence?). Moreover, what we have seen in some of these cases, over the last decade or so, is a reduced emphasis on international recognition, based on a non-spoken realization of the unlikelihood of this outcome. Instead there is an increasing emphasis on international engagement, of improving the status quo and living better with non-recognition.

This may help explain why the dynamics identified in *Sovereignty Suspended* appear to be so general, despite this difference in the stated goal of these entities. Interestingly, the leaders of these entities often argue that they have overcome their non-recognition complex and that they can therefore thrive without (widespread) international recognition. But this portrayal of normalization may be more apparent than real. Bryant and Hatay demonstrate that the non-recognition complex has not declined in importance over the years, quite the opposite, and Turkish Cypriots perceive their contradictory lives as exceptional and *abnormal*. Contrary to what may be expected, these contradictions do not therefore appear to become less noticeable, more normalized, over time – even though fewer people will have memories of living in a recognized state. The tensions and contradictions of de facto statehood may, in fact, be easier to paper over in the earlier phases of state-building. When we discussed the book, Rebecca Bryant pointedly observed that when she visited Abkhazia, she got the impression that they are where Northern Cyprus was a few decades ago.

However, one difference does seem of potential significance. In a number of de facto states, the lack of recognized statehood is seen as an existential threat. For example, during the recent Armenian-Azerbaijani war over Nagorno Karabakh, which resulted in significant territorial losses and displacement, independent statehood was increasingly portrayed by the de facto state as an issue of protection, as a necessity for the very survival of its population. Although the security threat is clearly less severe in the case of Abkhazia, due to the Russian security guarantee, we do find similar rhetoric. 'Sovereign anxieties' in these cases is not just about being invisible to the world. In the context of significant security threats, the desire for sovereignty may not primarily be about being present in the world, but rather about being safe. I would like to ask the authors if they think this would make a significant difference to the process of de facto state-building and to life in these de facto states. Does it perhaps suggest the limits of viewing sovereignty as capacity, which I otherwise agree is very useful?

I have a few other questions, along similar lines. The focus of the book is on the state-builders who use quotation marks when describing their state and view it as a

steppingstone to a federation. However, nationalist or conservative forces who view recognized statehood for Northern Cyprus as a more realizable objective are also mentioned. What has made the former the dominant state-builders, and will they remain so? Related to this, is a federation still seen as a realistic solution, following two failed settlement process. And if not, what does that mean for the state-building project? Finally, it is argued that the presence of stateness provides a buffer against patron state control, 'a flimsy but surprisingly resilient buffer' (26). A friend of the authors is quoted as saying, 'Turkey may gnash its teeth but it can't bite us' (25). I wonder if this flimsy buffer has been equally resilient throughout the period analysed in the book, and what factors or developments could make it less resilient?

Alice Wilson

Sovereignty Suspended will be a landmark for all those interested in contested statemaking, and especially the everyday actions and agencies – what the authors call 'sovereign agency' – through which people call on the state, and make the state meaningful in their own lives.

Sovereignty Suspended advances a growing corpus of investigations into state power through the lens of anomaly, including cases of de facto states. The book's central notion of aporia – the impossible possibility – sums up the paradoxes that inhabit de facto states. People in these states live in the knowledge that their state is just such an 'impossible possibility'. We might say that their state is 'only real up to a point'.

The authors rigorously interrogate the theoretical and ethnographic dimensions of de facto state making. The profiles that the authors bring to this research combine long-standing anthropological, journalistic and research connections to Cyprus and North Cypriots, making this an outstanding endeavour. The authors were able to use their personal networks to interview high level politicians, and poll 5,000 Facebook friends to find out what Turkish Cypriots missed about the erstwhile Turkish Cypriot airline. The authors are uniquely positioned to bring together theoretical sophistication and memorable portrayals of the diverse experiences of Turkish Cypriots over time, and across different walks of life. In doing so, the book addresses and advances key questions in the field of understanding de facto states.

First, rather than taking for granted that we know what it means to try and build a de facto state, the authors ask: what do people think that they are doing when they are building a form of state power that must exist in a suspended or curtailed form for the foreseeable future? The book shows that people may think that they are doing many things, yet work around, or purposefully overlook, shortcomings within their attempts to achieve those goals. Those who thought that they were building a community united around Turkish identity spanning Anatolia and the island in fact encounter through these very efforts many differences amongst members of that projected community. By trying to bring into being a united Turkish community, the very impossibility of that project emerges.

Another paradox is that leftists who desired to build a utopian redistributive economy were so focused on that goal that they overlooked the originary violence underpinning that redistribution, namely an economy based on the redistribution of spoils taken from displaced former owners of property.

The authors also skilfully bring out how Turkish Cypriots look back on the enclave years, before the formal separation of the north and south, as exceptional times when an egalitarian community of suffering evolved. Yet once Turkish Cypriots left the enclaves and relocated as displaced persons to the north, people eventually began to 'compete' in their very claims of suffering and victimhood in order to make claims on the state. Ultimately, then, this polity of suffering – a 'thymapolitical state' as the authors call it – contributes to the reformulation of economic and other inequalities that undermine cherished egalitarian ideals.

These are some of the paradoxes that help define the condition of the de facto state. One of the great contributions of this book is to show how those paradoxes evolve over time in different historical iterations of the condition of being de facto.

A second key question that the book addresses is: how do people 'get by' in a situation of a de facto state? When people know that their documents and identity cards both bestow and fail to bestow (or will one day fail to bestow) rights or recognition, and when they know that they are excluded from international forums for trade, financial investment, and cultural and political exchange, how do people get by? Bryant and Hatay show how people 'manage', finding ways to deploy agency even within the constraints that they face. For instance, people live 'as if' they would do better if their hands were not tied. Crucially, the study brings out the instability and contingency of the opportunities to get by: exclusion from the international community could bring opportunities for avoiding international legislation around gambling or the environment, leading some in the 1990s to experience their isolation as an opportunity for enjoyment and 'abandon'. But as the political and economic situation changed in the early 2000s following Turkey's financial crisis and the Republic of Cyprus' accession to the EU, it becomes more common for Turkish Cypriots to speak of Northern Cyprus as an 'open air prison'. They shift from a situation of 'abandon' to greater awareness of 'abandonment'.

What the book shows, then, is that those who wish to understand why de facto states often prove longlasting must look beyond geopolitical explanations of the interests of patron states and their geopolitical allies in perpetuating de facto states. It is also citizens' capacity to 'get by' and 'manage' that gives longevity to de facto states.

A third key question that the book addresses is: what are the resources that people draw on to make de facto state power? My own work on the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic – the partially recognized state authority that the liberation front for Western Sahara founded in 1976 – found that Sahrawi refugees and liberation movement leaders drew both explicitly and implicitly on previous 'projects of sovereignty' (Wilson 2016). In the Sahrawi case these older projects of sovereignty were institutions of tribal political and economic governance for managing political decision making, conflict resolution, resource distribution and social (in)equalities. Sahrawi refugees both drew on and transformed the social relations of one project of sovereignty, tribes, to create the social relations of another project of sovereignty, state power. In the Sahrawi refugee case, state power took revolutionary forms that, over time, sought to conform more and more to institutions that would be recognizable to liberal democracies. In this context of displacement, *mobile* resources – the notions of political power and economic relationships that refugees brought with them, refugees' labour, and rations – proved key resources to use and transform in the process of building revolutionary state power.

In contrast, in the Turkish Cypriot case, there were resources available for state building that had been absent or extremely rare in the Sahrawi case. Turkish Cypriots had already worked as administrators for the colonial and independent state, and they could draw on this experience to build a bureaucratic state apparatus relatively quickly. In the north of Cyprus, there were also agricultural and light industry resources, schools and places of worship to recast according to the new political community, and houses – in various conditions – to distribute. But the authors' careful ethnographic gaze picks up on the fact that Turkish Cypriots also had mobile resources at their disposal. In particular, they had the Turkish flags with which some had fled to enclaves, and which they were quick to display once the Turkish army arrived. Turkish Cypriots' political agency of displaying their connection to the Turkish state through the prompt display of these flags nevertheless ultimately led to the invisibilization of Turkish Cypriots' sovereign agency. This agency disappeared behind an impression of Turkish colonization. The authors thus show how the resources on which people draw in de facto state building can have quite contradictory effects to their intentions to enact sovereign agency.

This book extends an invitation to interrogate sovereign agency in a context of de facto state building with all its paradoxes, compromised agendas, strategies of 'managing', and ambiguous resources. The book strengthens the case for the analysis of de facto states to take a central place in debates about the changing politics, practices, resources and affects of state making. This study also shows how essential it is to undertake meticulous, grounded research on de facto states in order to counter the misunderstandings and misinformation that too easily circulate about those on the margins of international society. Greater understanding of life in de facto polities is one of the necessary steps towards the creation of better prospects to address the very real predicaments, impasses and frustrations of the de facto.

Recent months have brought alarming reminders of the inadequacies of the notion of a 'frozen conflict', from the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh to the collapsed ceasefire in Western Sahara. For quite different reasons, *Sovereignty Suspended* shows us that de facto states are far from frozen, as they are incubators of political life and aspiration.

Response to comments

Rebecca Bryant and Mete Hatay

We are fortunate to have as interlocutors authors whose own work was in our minds as we were writing this book. Nina Caspersen's influential comparative work on unrecognized states, Stef Jansen's inspiring writings on everyday geopolitics and the state as perceived provider of 'normal lives', and Alice Wilson's incisive dissection of a state sustaining itself in exile all provided stimulus for our analysis. These authors' generous engagement with our book from the perspective of their own work has provided us with new opportunities to think about our work's comparative potential.

We strongly agree with our three commentators that much more comparative, ethnographic, and historical work is needed to demystify unrecognized states. These are places that are too often wrapped in the mystique of labels: 'states in waiting', 'places that don't exist', and 'pirate states' or 'puppet states', to name a few. And those labels have consequences, as we show in the book, particularly in the ways that they invisibilize agency and

shape what it is possible to desire. States that don't exist cannot be visible, puppets are not actors, and pirates terrify. Moreover, the calls of people living in such places for 'normalization' reveal hegemonic understandings of what a 'normal' state should be.

We are also glad that our book was able to speak to colleagues in the very different disciplines of anthropology and international relations. Of course, the colleagues who have responded here are also ones whose work has crossed disciplinary boundaries, bringing fieldwork into IR and geopolitics into the study of everyday lives. The questions that they raise regarding our work are challenging and diverse ones, and we found it helpful to group them around key concepts from the book.

The aporetic state

In the book, we develop the concept of the aporetic state to describe an entity that others recognize as real while denying that it can ever be realizable. The aporetic state, we argue, emerges from the paradox of the *de facto*, a concept that already contains the acknowledgment of a reality *and* its simultaneous denial. In Part I, we elaborate on how the statebuilding that proceeded in the face of this paradox encompassed both 'facts on the ground', or undeniable realities such as the settlement of refugees in disputed property, as well as factitious elements, such as the renaming and thereby turkification of the places where they settled. We look at how these factual and factitious elements played out over time, with those factitious elements often emerging as problematic factors in *de facto* statebuilding.

What makes the aporetic state unrealizable, of course, is the repeated decisions of international actors to deny it recognition. And here our commentators point to an ambiguity, because throughout the book we are much more interested in the ways that statebuilders understood from their so-called state's inception the unlikelihood of recognition than we are in their often half-hearted or unconvincing attempts to assert it. Nina Caspersen asks why the type of realism that we describe, which saw recognition as a near impossibility, gained ground over 'conservative forces who view recognised statehood for Northern Cyprus as a more realisable objective'. She also uses the example of the recent war in Nagorno-Karabakh to ask if gaining recognition is not only about visibility but also about ensuring security against an existential threat.

As we discuss in the book but elaborate more elsewhere (esp. Bryant and Hatay 2011), since at least the beginning of the twentieth century there was a drive in the Turkish Cypriot community to gain recognition and political equality *as a community*. This drive to be 'put in the place of men', as Turkish Cypriots call it, leads us to argue that what members of this community across the political spectrum articulated was a desire for sovereign agency, or the capacity to act agentively as sovereign actors. For much of the twentieth century, we show, Turkish Cypriots saw that in order to 'be put in the place of men' they needed institutions that would make them recognizable to the world as a community. As Stef Jansen notes, much of the form that this institutionalization took was contingent, taking various shapes over time that looked increasingly state-like. This institutionalization included attempts to create community organizations in the 1940s; a federation of those organizations in the 1950s that very much resembled a proto-state; and a state-within-a-state that emerged in the ghettos of the 1960s. Finally, by dint of circumstance, this community acquired a separate territory upon

which those institutions could coalesce, though even then almost a decade would pass before statebuilders attempted to declare it a sovereign state.

This leads us to the conclusion that Turkish Cypriots' driving concern to become sovereign agents does not or did not have to take a state-like form. That form itself, we note, is one that resulted from contingencies that were not entirely of their own making. For this reason, the idea of having a recognized state of their own, as appealing as it might be to certain groups in the community, tended to have the aura of a utopian ideal, one that was desirable while seeming unrealistic. This was what Turkish Cypriots would call 'the lion in our hearts', the desire for sovereign agency in the form of a recognized state that needed to be caged in order to realize the more realizable desire of self-determination.

So, while there were always statebuilders who would 'very pointedly refuse putting quotation marks around their statehood and take great offence if used by others, and persist in portraying sovereignty as a realisable future', in our case even such actors knew that there was no way out of the negotiations with their Greek Cypriot partners whose stated goal was federation. Of course, an entirely separate book could be written on the dialogic relationship between the geopolitics of a 'frozen conflict' and the micro-political strategies and tactics that shape that conflict on the ground. We could only indicate this through our analysis of the 'international community', that spectral body that many people in places such as Cyprus understand to have a disproportionate control over their lives. In this work, what we were more concerned to show was how and why the tactics of nationalist separatists who appeared to believe in the possibility of recognition nevertheless always appeared unrealistic, usually even to themselves.

Hegemonic realism

This brings us to Stef Jansen's stimulating comments regarding the relationship between the quite local forms of statebuilding that we describe in the book and 'the world' or 'the international community' – that undefined body of actors who do the recognizing or withholding of recognition. Stef suggests that swift local changes in the 2000s that resulted from moves by external actors show that local statebuilding was always 'rather more conditioned from "outside" in the first place'.

We could not agree more with this point. However, one aspect of the sort of state-like entity that we're describing is its isolation, which tends to create the illusion of living in something of a bubble. We describe at various points throughout the book how this entity was the continuation of a previous decade of enclavement in militarized ghettos, a period that we explore at more length elsewhere (Bryant and Hatay 2011; Hatay and Bryant 2008). The so-called state that emerged after 1974, we suggest, continued many of the qualities of that enclavism, something that we particularly see with the openings of the 2000s. Although they were only militarized ghettos, the enclaves of the 1960s operated as a state-within-a-state, just one that happened to be under a military siege for five years. The political entity that they established in that state of exception did many of the things in daily life that one would expect states to do, such as providing for and protecting the population. Life went on in these enclaves as a world that was apart and self-contained. But when the Republic of Cyprus unilaterally lifted the siege in 1968 and Turkish Cypriots emerged from their ghettos, they suddenly realized that

the place where they lived was not a state but was in fact a camp. In a similar way, the sudden opening of the 2000s and the entry into north Cyprus of transnational or supranational institutions and global capital suddenly broke down the barriers of the de facto state's isolation, making it clear that their state was in fact a 'state'. We were not able to discuss this at length in this book, but it is the subject of a recent article that Rebecca has published (Bryant 2021), as well as a book manuscript that she is revising (Bryant, *in progress*).

Apart from this, however, our concept of hegemonic realism was intended to take into account Stef's further perceptive comment regarding the importance of *who* does the recognizing. As Stef remarks, not all recognizers are equal. Gaining recognition from the U.S. or China, for instance, would open doors and provide possibilities that other recognizers cannot give or promise. Certainly, this unevenness in the international system is an important part of the predominant strain of Realpolitik that so often governs international relations. It is one reason that unrecognized states are not particularly keen to gain the recognition of other de facto entities, and citizens of a de facto state like the TRNC are quite reluctant to associate themselves with or create ties with members of other unrecognized polities. The perception is that this would only underline their exclusion, whereas much of everyday life is aimed at effacing it. This uneven effect is certainly a subject that needs further ethnographic exploration. From our own perspective of a state that has only one recognizer, we show how being 'seen' by and interacting with a powerful giant at one's doorstep may provide some sense of ontological security but also creates its own sense of threat.

Sovereign agency

As we note above, 'sovereign agency' is a term that we use to describe the often unrealized desire to enact one's communal will. Nina Caspersen rightly asks us to what extent this idea can have wider currency, even for unrecognized states, and she suggests that the security threats that so many de facto states face, and the perceived need for recognition deriving from that, may limit the power of sovereignty as a capacity. While we could not agree more with the observation that often gaining the protection that recognition provides may be key to survival, we also suggest in the book's conclusion that much of the resort to state recognition may be due to the constraint of the nation-state form. Our suggestion is simply that it may be helpful to disaggregate what groups are striving to achieve from the political form that their struggles take, which may simply be the form that's available to them.

This brings us, then, to our commentators' invitation for us to ponder some key questions about the future. Nina Caspersen references recent spectacular failures of various internationally supported reunification plans in Cyprus to ask if federation is still a realistic solution. This echoes Alice Wilson's observation that 'frozen conflicts' are not actually frozen but constantly evolving along with events on the ground. Such shifting, on-the-ground realities may conflict with the perception that little happens, as the conflict remains stalled. And indeed, in our particular case, we see today how federation retains its sense of being the most realistic solution, even as many Cypriots have begun to view it as impossible. Indeed, we may see Turkey's increasing intervention in the island – an issue about which Nina Caspersen also asks

– as directly related to waning hopes for a negotiated federal solution. Caught between the Scylla of reliance on Turkey and the Charybdis of negotiating endlessly with seemingly intractable partners, many Turkish Cypriots have begun to see the former as a lesser evil, at least in terms of continuing to provide military and economic security. What is in doubt is the ability of a closer relationship with Turkey to provide *ontological* security. All of these questions are the subject of a further book manuscript that Rebecca is currently completing.

We again wish to thank our three interlocutors for such careful and inspiring readings of our book and for providing us with potential new directions for our further work.

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