National identity and consciousness in everyday life: towards a sociology of knowledge of Greek-Cypriot nationalism

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ABSTRACT. The concomitants of nationalism and ethnic separation upon Greek-Cypriot consciousness are examined from the perspective of the sociology of knowledge and phenomenological analysis. The focus is upon the perception of Self and the social construction of Greek-Cypriot identity. The issue is examined in light of the ideological contest between Greek nationalism and Cyprioticism. Whereas Greek nationalism sets the parameters of ideological orthodoxy and is the dominant force on the level of political consciousness, Cyprioticism predominates on the level of everyday consciousness. One key consequence of the ideological class between Greek-Cypriot nationalism and Cyprioticism is a structural ambivalence that characterises Greek-Cypriot perceptions of Self and Other. This ambivalence has been one of the main obstacles to the legitimation of an independent Cypriot polity and continues to impede the functional coexistence of the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot people on the island.

With the advent of British colonial rule in 1878, Greek-Cypriot nationalism, in the form of the demand for union (enosis) with Greece, began to be transformed into a mass movement. In reaction to Greek-Cypriot nationalist agitation, there gradually arose an opposing Turkish-Cypriot nationalism, which in the 1950s called for the partition (taksim) of Cyprus along ethnic lines. The ‘Cyprus problem’, as we understand it today, emerged out of the clash between the two nationalisms and, perhaps more importantly, out of the manipulation of this clash by foreign interests. The independence of 1960, essentially imposed upon the Cypriots by Britain, Greece and Turkey, was certainly an unorthodox solution to the problem and did not meet the genuine aspirations of those who had fought for union with Greece. Notwithstanding that independence became a way of life, with a Cypriot elite in control – and whereas Greek nationalism certainly lost its mass appeal during the military regime in Greece (1967–74) – enosis continued to be the dominant Greek-Cypriot ideological orientation from
1960 to 1974. In conjunction with Turkish-Cypriot nationalist extremism, as well as foreign intervention, Greek-Cypriot nationalism fuelled intercommunal strife, culminating in the Turkish invasion of 1974.\footnote{Caesar V. Mavratsas}

Following the events of the summer of 1974, Cyprus is a divided island, having experienced ‘ethnic cleansing’ long before it became a way of ‘solving’ ethnic differences in the republics of former Yugoslavia. As a result of the disaster of 1974, and until about the mid-1980s, Greek-Cypriot nationalism was suppressed at the expense of Cypriotism, an ideology that pledged support to the political independence of the island.\footnote{Caesar V. Mavratsas} The retreat of nationalism, however, was only temporary and it soon resurfaced as a dominant ideology, albeit in a changed form. What Greek-Cypriot nationalists have aspired to since the mid-1980s is not union with Greece, but the reaffirmation of Greek identity in the context of an independent polity which is organically tied to Greek culture and is politically anchored to the Greek state. The new Greek-Cypriot nationalism, however, does not go unopposed. Whereas the ideological clash between Greek nationalism and Cypriotism is by no means a recent phenomenon – being already evident from the early phases of Greek-Cypriot nationalism and the opposition it engendered – in the post-1974 years it has acquired a greater intensity and constitutes the central locus of Greek-Cypriot politics of identity (Mavratsas 1996, 1997).

The aim of this article is to examine the concomitants of nationalism and ethnic separation upon Greek-Cypriot consciousness. The article must be seen as an exercise in the sociology of knowledge and phenomenological analysis.\footnote{Caesar V. Mavratsas} In what ways is Greek-Cypriot consciousness affected by nationalist ideology and the continued division of the island? The question opens a vast array of empirical and theoretical problems which cannot be examined in the limited scope of the present analysis. The article focuses upon one area: the specific structures of consciousness that are generated in the perception of Self and the social construction of Greek-Cypriot identity in everyday life.\footnote{Caesar V. Mavratsas} In post-Maimheinian sociology of knowledge, the interest lies not upon the generally systematic forms of consciousness generated by intellectuals, but upon the ‘meaning,’ to use the Weberian term, associated with the routines of daily life and ordinary social action.\footnote{Caesar V. Mavratsas} Thus, this analysis revolves around key processes in the ‘consumption’ – as opposed to the ‘production’ and consequent articulation – of nationalist ideology. Social scientists examining nationalism have focused almost exclusively upon the more or less theoretical formulation of the nationalist worldview, ignoring thus the ways in which the latter is perceived by actual social actors who may not always internalise fully the images and axioms of nationalist ideology.\footnote{Caesar V. Mavratsas}

When examining the formation of Greek-Cypriot identity and the structures of consciousness generated therein from the standpoint of the sociology of knowledge, three key analytical distinctions must be kept in mind. In the first place, the analyst must differentiate between political and
everyday consciousness. The former manifests itself in how the social actor views his or her self in the context of political activity, be it on the part of the state or the political parties and other organised interest groups. Such activity may have an official character – as, for instance, in state policy and ideology – or an unofficial character, expressed, for example, in political debates or even discussions in a coffee-house. By everyday consciousness, I mean non-political consciousness, rooted mostly in the routines of everyday life – the ‘typifications’, to put it differently, through which ordinary people go about and understand their daily lives. The differentiation between political and everyday consciousness is, of course, analytical, and there can be no doubt that the two realms interact with and influence each other.

The second distinction that the analyst must keep in mind is that between ‘theoretical’ and ‘pre-theoretical’ consciousness. The former is the body of knowledge produced by intellectuals whereas the latter refers to ‘everything that passes for “knowledge” in society’. Further, one must not forget that ‘only a very limited group of people in any society engages in theorizing’ (Berger and Luckmann 1967: 15). However, politics is naturally one of the domains of social life which is more influenced by theoretical rather than pre-theoretical consciousness. This is certainly one of the reasons why theorists of nationalism have generally neglected the effects of nationalist ideology upon pre-theoretical consciousness. The particular theoretical and empirical lacuna is, of course, also related to the general philosophical biases and methodological orientations that dominate mainstream social science. For the latter, what matters are the structural and institutional dynamics of social reality; consciousness and, more generally, culture are considered mere epiphenomena with little, if any, sociological significance.7

The third distinction that the analyst must bear in mind is that between cognitive and normative aspects of consciousness – between, to use Peter Berger’s terms, cognitive and normative ‘definitions of reality’ (1963). Perceptions and attitudes about how a certain reality is must be differentiated from perceptions and attitudes about how a certain reality ought to be. Again, it must be stressed, the distinction is analytical, with the cognitive and normative realms engaged in a dialectical relation with each other. Whereas my analysis concerns elements from both everyday and political consciousness, in their theoretical, pre-theoretical, cognitive and normative aspects, the focus of the article is upon everyday and unofficial political consciousness. In comparison to official political definitions of reality, the realms of consciousness upon which the article focuses are relatively unsystematic and fluid. The analyst, thus, might even talk about ‘mentalities’, ‘ideational orientations’, or ‘provinces of meaning’, to use Berger and Luckmann’s (1967: 25) term, rather than about internally coherent and structured sets of definitions of reality. Such provinces of meaning are usually not shared by every group in Greek-Cypriot society which appears to be highly polarised – between a Greek nationalist and a Cypriotist frame
of reference – concerning issues of identity. Even within the same interpretive code, moreover, the intensity and content of mentalities and orientations may vary considerably. It should be clear, thus, that any notion of a Greek-Cypriot ‘collective self’ or ‘collective identity’ would be highly problematic. That concepts of collective identity are in general inherently problematic is, of course, one of the basic axioms of the sociology of knowledge. As Berger and Luckmann (1967: 208) put it, ‘it is inadvisable to speak of “collective identity” because of the danger of false (and reifying) hypostatisation’. Such a reifying hypostatisation is usually characteristic of nationalist discourse which assumes that the essence of the nation lies precisely in that its members are of ‘one soul’ and ‘one mind’. Rather than talk about ‘collective identities’, Berger and Luckmann suggest, ‘the researcher must try to isolate “identity types” which are “observable” and “verifiable” in pre-theoretical . . . experience’ (1967: 174). Identity types are not thought of as universal and the degree to which they are present in a specific context is always an issue of empirical investigation.

The ambivalence of Self: ideology and theoretical consciousness

From the early stages in the development of Greek nationalism in Cyprus in the latter half of the nineteenth century, the basic dilemma in Greek-Cypriot identity has revolved around one key question: Greek or Cypriot? (Attalides 1979; Mavratsas 1996). As is the case with the identity of most hyphenated collectivities, the answer to the question is rarely fully exclusive of either of the two terms; and there can be no doubt that the ideal-typical category ‘Greek-Cypriotness’ includes both nationalist and Cypriotist elements. It can be conceptualised as a continuum bounded by two antithetical poles, the Greek nationalist and the Cypriotist, with the former generally being less tolerant of the Turkish-Cypriot community and less conciliatory in its approach to the Cyprus problem than the latter (Mavratsas 1996, 1997). Depending on the particular circumstances, concerning a number of other factors – internal Greek-Cypriot politics, international and regional geopolitics, and relations with Greece, the Turkish-Cypriot community and Turkey – Greek Cypriots have gravitated either towards the Greek or the Cypriot frame of reference. Whereas there can be little doubt that nationalism has been the dominant political force in the modern history of the island, with Cypriotism generally assuming a defensive position, the ambivalence or dilemma – i.e. Greek or Cypriot – appears to be forever present. It is an ambivalence that becomes manifest especially when Greek Cypriots are in a position to differentiate themselves from mainland Greeks.

The category that Greek Cypriots use to refer to mainland Greeks, ‘καλαμαράς’, denotes the distance or boundary that separates the two groups. Mainland Greeks (καλαμαράδες) are sometimes even viewed as dishonest, deceitful, unreliable, φαλιατάδες (people who talk too much and
say very little of substance); they are not to be trusted and they are certainly ‘not like us’. The boundary separating Greek Cypriots and Greeks is thought to be multidimensional, and concerns language, culture, economic development, history and basic social institutions (Attalides 1979; Mavratsas 1995). It can be asserted, thus, that, notwithstanding the force of Greek-Cypriot nationalism— and notwithstanding that it has firmly tied Cyprus to the Greek nation— a ‘Cypriot remainder’ or ‘residue’ (κυπριακόν υπόλοιπον), to use a term coined by A. Panayiotou (1996), is undeniably part of Greek-Cypriot consciousness and self-perception. The empirical question at any given time concerns the extent or size of this κυπριακόν υπόλοιπον.

Identity is always context-dependent (Berger and Luckmann 1967) and this becomes abundantly clear in the Greek-Cypriot case. A Greek Cypriot may have a diversified perception of his self depending on whether he differentiates himself from mainland Greeks, other Greek Cypriots, Turkish Cypriots, Turks or foreigners. A crucial issue concerns who the ‘recipient’ of the Greek Cypriot’s self-categorisations is, and it makes a significant difference whether the context in which a Greek Cypriot is called upon to categorise himself involves mainland Greeks, Greek Cypriots, Turkish Cypriots or foreigners. A few examples are in order here. In a friendly encounter with a mainland Greek, a Greek Cypriot is bound to feel more Greek and to perceive the relation between Greek Cypriots and mainland Greeks as a ‘brotherly’ one. If, on the other hand, the association with a mainland Greek is antagonistic or otherwise negative, the Greek Cypriot is likely to feel more Cypriot and to distance himself from mainland Greeks. This is especially the case when he relates the particular experience to other Greek Cypriots. In a friendly encounter with a Turkish Cypriot – in the context, for instance, of the conflict resolution seminars or other bicomunal activities that take place on the island – a Greek Cypriot is likely to feel more Cypriot and to perceive Turkish Cypriots as ‘compatriots’ or ‘fellow Cypriots’. When arguing with a Greek-Cypriot Cypriotist, a Greek-Cypriot nationalist is bound to feel more Greek and to have a very negative attitude towards the very idea of Cypriothood. On the other hand, the Greek-Cypriot Cypriotist in the same scenario is bound to feel more Cypriot and more willing to assert the sociocultural autonomy of Cyprus. Many Greek Cypriots who attend university in the United States often identify themselves as Greek and note Cyprus merely as a geographical category. Greek Cypriots who have emigrated to the United States and live in areas with a sizable Greek community tend to be fully assimilated into the latter and to perceive themselves as Greek. On the other hand, Greek Cypriots who live in London, where there is a sizable Greek-Cypriot community which maintains relatively good relations with the Turkish Cypriots who live there, tend to feel more Cypriot. The context-dependency of Greek-Cypriot self-categorisations is evident not only on the level of everyday discourse but also on that of political discourse. Whereas, for instance, when speaking, as representatives of the Republic of Cyprus, to
foreign delegates, Greek-Cypriot politicians use a Cypriotist discourse, when they address a Greek-Cypriot audience the same politicians may easily revert to a Greek nationalist rhetoric.

What often appears as a διέλευσις (in this context, the deceitful use of two contradictory languages), be it on the part of political organisations, including the state, or on the level of individual consciousness, must rather be seen as a ‘problem’ arising out of the fundamental dilemma of Greek-Cypriot identity. In as far as both Greekness and Cypriotness are firmly embedded in Greek-Cypriot modern life and history, the dilemma is very real, and by no means a pseudo-dilemma, as is claimed by some. A Greek Cypriot who feels Cypriot in one context and Greek in another is usually neither a hypocrite nor a liar – in particular circumstances, of course, he may very well be either or both. The dilemma of Greek-Cypriot identity is structural and the apparent inconsistencies that emerge out of it signify an inherent tension in the social construction of Greek Cypriotness. It is significant to realise that this tension is manifested both on the level of collective life and organised political activity, and on the level of individual consciousness. Greek-Cypriot society, thus, is, to repeat, intensely polarised between what may be loosely called a Greek nationalist and a Cypriotist camp or coalition of interest groups. However, this polarisation and the tension that it creates are also evident in how individuals, be it of a nationalist or a Cypriotist orientation, perceive and define themselves in everyday life. Stated simply, even the most ardent Greek-Cypriot nationalist may at times feel Cypriot; and, conversely, even the most ardent Cypriotist may at times feel Greek.

This internal or theoretical inconsistency becomes problematic when it manifests itself in politics. Whereas identity is often segmented or compartmentalised, there can be no doubt that a Cypriot polity ipso facto requires a Cypriot political identity – to put it differently, it needs citizens who feel loyalty towards it. Such loyalty was certainly absent in the period from 1960 to 1974, and, moreover, cannot be seen as a taken for granted reality even in the period following the Turkish invasion of 1974. This year clearly marks a turning point, and the first few years following the summer of 1974 may be characterised as the golden age of Cypriotism, with a Cypriot political identity and a sense of loyalty to the independent Republic of Cyprus being systematically cultivated for the first time in modern Cypriot history (Mavratsas 1996, 1997; Papadakis 1993; Peristianis 1995; Stamatakis 1991). By the mid-1980s, however, Greek-Cypriot nationalism regained its ideological dominance, indicating thus that the brief turn of the Greek-Cypriot political mainstream to Cypriotism might have been nothing more than a calculated political move to convince the Turkish Cypriots and, more importantly, the international community, that the Greek Cypriots are willing to cooperate for the solution of the Cyprus problem – a solution which would reunify the island and restore the unity of Greek-Cypriot historical and geographic space. This, of course, is not to deny the sincerity

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with which some groups or intellectuals supported, and still support, the idea of a Cypriot state in which the Greeks and the Turks of the island would be equal partners. However, what is becoming increasingly clear since the mid-1980s is that Cypriotism has lost the appeal that it had among forces of the political mainstream (Mavratsas 1997, 1998). In the now dominant Greek-Cypriot nationalist discourse, Cyprus, even if independent, is Greek, with the Cypriot state essentially perceived as a Greek-Cypriot entity.\(^{12}\)

That nationalism continues to set the basic parameters of ideological orthodoxy in Greek-Cypriot politics is, of course, related to Greek nationalism’s tremendous emotional and symbolic appeal.\(^{13}\) Nationalism is undoubtedly the dominant ideological force in the modern history of Cyprus. The symbolic ammunition of nationalist ideology — building on the ‘glorious past and heritage’ of Cypriot Hellenism — certainly carries more weight than the cultural capital of those who present a Cypriot-centred understanding of the cultural heritage and identity of the Greek Cypriots. The Cypriotist version on the cultural endowment of the Greeks of the island is ‘more mundane, impure and polluted’ (Papadakis 1993: 166). Thus, whereas the nationalists focus on a distinguished legacy, the Cypriotists emphasise popular culture (laiko politeismo), rural customs and everyday practices, which construct a more syncretist, and unquestionably less dignified, view of identity and tradition (Mavratsas 1996, 1997).

Paradoxically, the ideological dominance of Greek nationalism has often been reinforced by the Cypriot state, the independent Republic of Cyprus, which in so doing undermined its very own existence and legitimisation. State-controlled education is a clear example in this regard. Nationalist mythologies — which often consist of ‘superstitions, fears and anxieties of the older generations’ (Education Advisory Committee of the Parliamentary Group for World Government) — are transmitted from generation to generation through primary and secondary education and constitute focal points in the social construction of the Greek-Cypriot worldview and identity.\(^{14}\) Whereas nationalism is the dominant factor on the level of ideology and political consciousness, the picture is different on the level of everyday pre-theoretical consciousness. The latter, I will argue, must be seen as the stronghold of Cypriotness and Cypriot identity.

**Greek nationalism and everyday life: Greek identity in the midst of Cypriot institutions**

In his everyday life, the average Greek Cypriot is generally confronted with ‘indigenous’ Cypriot institutions, which in most cases differ significantly from their counterparts in Greece (Attalides 1979; Mavratsas 1995). The main Cypriot institutions include the Cypriot state and judicial system, the Cypriot economy and financial system, the Cypriot political parties, the
Cypriot mass media, the Cypriot dialect, Cypriot sports, the Cypriot church and the Cypriot educational system. There can be no doubt that most, if not all, of these elements have been affected (and, thus, ‘hellenised’), to a greater or lesser extent, by Greek-Cypriot nationalism. This, of course, is especially so with state-controlled primary and secondary education which has, until recently, been a mere replica of the educational system of the Greek state and continues to be the main mechanism for the construction of a Greek identity in Cyprus. At the same time, however, the analyst cannot miss the fact that Greek-Cypriot institutions have a *sui generis* character, which unavoidably creates a specifically Cypriot lifeworld. Greek-Cypriot institutions function autonomously and may often resist their inclusion into a wider Greek-national frame of reference.

The Greek-Cypriot lifeworld is different from the Greek lifeworld and this is a fact that most Greek Cypriots, be it of a nationalist or a Cypriotist orientation, would readily admit. The most obvious example is the linguistic idiom of the Greek Cypriots. Whereas Greek Cypriots generally have no trouble understanding standard Greek, mainland Greeks may often have difficulties comprehending the Greek-Cypriot linguistic variety. Language, thus, signifies a boundary between Greek Cypriots and mainland Greeks and, as popular reaction to recent attempts to formally hellenise Greek-Cypriot toponyms and to eradicate Ottoman or Turkish influences showed, this is not a boundary that Greek Cypriots would willingly bring down. Greek Cypriots know Αγλαντζία and Λατσία and will not easily start saying Αγλαγγζία and Λακκία.

Greek-Cypriot everyday life inescapably centres upon Cyprus. One, of course, may argue that the same holds true for Crete, or any other peripheral part of Greece, and, thus, that Cypriotness is merely a regional category. The case of Cyprus, however, is fundamentally different from that of any other region of Greece, exhibiting a far greater autonomy and differentiation. This is largely a result of the sociohistorical development of Cyprus. One must not forget that ‘since 1191, when Cyprus was detached from Byzantine Hellenism . . . Cypriot institutions, with the exception of religious and educational ones, have never been identical with Greek ones’ (Papadopoulos in Attalides 1979: 74). As far as modern Greek-Cypriot life is concerned, the critical factor is that Cyprus has not been part of the Greek state. The latter has historically played a paramount role not only in the construction of modern Greek identity, but also – and this is more significant for the purposes of this discussion – in the homogenisation of its population (Kitromilides 1989). Notwithstanding some undeniable influences – via the Greek consulate or embassy, or, even more importantly, the educational system – Cypriot life has developed independently of mainland Greek state mechanisms and control, and it is herein that lies the focal point in the sociological embeddedness of the concept of Cypriotness and Cypriot identity.

Institutionally, the British colonial experience and the creation of the
independent Republic of Cyprus are the two key influences in the making of modern Cyprus. The Greek Cypriots have inherited or borrowed a great deal from their former colonial masters – bureaucratic structures, judicial system, health system, a good command of the English language, etc. – and most Greek Cypriots are willing to admit that this heritage not only differentiates Greek Cypriots from mainland Greeks, but also affords the former a comparative advantage. It is mainly this advantage, Greek Cypriots generally believe, that explains, among other things, why the Greek Cypriots enjoy a higher standard of living than mainland Greeks – and also why Cyprus has more efficient administrative structures than Greece.

Notwithstanding that until 1974 it was internally undermined, be it politically or, more importantly, ideologically, the independent Cypriot state has also left its mark upon Greek-Cypriot life. The Greek Cypriots, even those who reject the very idea of an independent Cypriot state, find themselves in – or, perhaps, are ‘thrown into’ – an independent polity and have no choice but to confront it: they must abide by its constitution and laws, use its currency, serve in its army, utilise its services, pay taxes to it, carry its passports and identification cards. Given the existence of the independent Republic of Cyprus and its administrative authority, Greek Cypriots are officially defined as Cypriot and, following William Thomas’ principle, every sociologist will admit that what is defined as real is, in many instances, real in its consequences. Adapting Estruch’s remarks on the official categorisation of Catalonians as Spanish to the Greek Cypriots, it can be asserted that: ‘However strongly a Greek Cypriot may want to maintain that “Cyprus” is in fact a mere fantasy, a pseudonym rather than a reality, what definitely counts is its definition as real and its perception as such’ (1991: 135). The particular worldview constructed and promulgated by the Cypriot state has a direct influence upon Greek-Cypriot consciousness. There can be no doubt that official administrative policy, discourse and ideology constitute a main source of the categories and typifications through which Greek Cypriots perceive, but also construct, the social reality of their everyday lives. A few examples are in order here: Greek Cypriots count their money in pounds rather than drachmas; they understand authority in terms of a popularly elected president rather than a prime minister; they expect justice from the attorney general rather than the Ἀρείος Πάγος or the Συμβολείο Ἐπικρατείας; and they speak of the provinces of the island as ἐπαρχίες rather than νομοί.

In the reality of everyday life, thus, Cyprus is the dominant frame of reference for the Greek Cypriots. This, we must not forget, is the ‘paramount’ reality in people’s lives; it is a reality which ‘imposes itself upon consciousness in the most massive, urgent and intense way (and) it is impossible to ignore, difficult even to weaken in its imperative presence’ (Berger and Luckmann 1967: 21). Cypriotness, to put it in stronger terms, dominates the pre-theoretical experience of the Greek Cypriots, most of
whom would readily admit that ‘we have our own society’ and ‘the Cypriots are different from the Greeks’. ‘Cypriotness’ is an identity type which, to paraphrase Berger and Luckmann (1967: 174), ‘can be observed in everyday life ... and can be verified – or refuted – by ordinary men endowed with common sense. The (Greek Cypriot) who doubts that the Greeks are different can go to Greece and find out for himself.’ The interpretation and/or critique of the reality of everyday life, carried out on a theoretical level by nationalist intellectuals, is an epiphenomenon, which, in most cases, cannot dispel the idea that Cyprus is the main, and more or less independent, context in which Greek Cypriots conduct their daily lives.

Even the most ardent Greek-Cypriot nationalist, thus, is situated in a lifeworld which is significantly different from that of Greece. The nationalist camp appears to be perfectly aware of this and focuses its efforts precisely upon bridging the differences. The analyst can isolate a variety of ideological or institutional mechanisms whose explicit purpose is to ‘bring Cyprus closer to Greece’: official visits in which it is always stressed that relations between the governments of Cyprus and Greece are harmonious and that Cyprus can always rely on the ‘motherland’; efforts to hellenise the Greek-Cypriot dialect; ‘didymopoihÂseiq’ (rituals whereby a Cypriot and a Greek town or village assume the status of twins) of Greek and Cypriot towns or villages. On the level of official policy, the most important effort to ‘bring Cyprus and Greece closer’ revolves around the idea of ‘unified dogmas’ concerning not only defence, but also culture, economics, education, administration, etc.

Concluding remarks

Whereas Greek nationalism sets the parameters of ideological orthodoxy and is the dominant force on the level of political and theoretical consciousness, Cypriotism has the upper hand on the level of everyday pre-theoretical consciousness. The tension between the two frames of reference appears as the focal point in the social construction of Greek-Cypriot identity. Greek-Cypriot politics has been greatly influenced by Greek nationalism and there can be little doubt that the overwhelming majority of Greek-Cypriot political leaders in the island’s modern history have been nationalists – with, of course, a variance in the intensity as well as the content of the nationalist worldview that they propagate. Given the Cyprus problem but also the fact that in Cyprus one’s political preferences have a direct influence upon one’s life chances, especially in the economic arena, Greek-Cypriot social life appears to be intensely politicised. Therefore, that nationalism continues to be the most influential factor in Greek-Cypriot social life and consciousness should come as a surprise to anyone. That even the most moderate politicians – those who may at times appear to be willing to escape from populism and what Greek intellectuals and politicians call
the λογική του πολιτικού κόστους (‘the logic of political cost’, i.e. the attitude whereby narrow electoral considerations hinder the solution of substantive problems) and to confront the Cyprus problem in modern and constructive ways – have remained trapped in the myths and superstitions of nationalist ideology constitutes one of the saddest aspects in Cyprus’ modern history.

Notes

1 It must be stressed that the emphasis of the article on Greek-Cypriot nationalism is analytical and by no means implies that the Greek Cypriots bear the greatest responsibility for the current division of the island. Even though the extremities of Greek-Cypriot nationalism certainly contributed to the creation of the Cyprus problem, it would be naive to disregard the role of Britain and the West, the Greek military regime of 1967–74, Turkish-Cypriot nationalism, and, of course, Turkish policy towards Cyprus. For more general accounts of the Cyprus problem, as well as on how external factors influenced Cypriot politics, see Attalides (1979); Coufoudakis (1976); Coulombis (1996); Economides (1993); Kitromilides (1977, 1979, 1983); Kizilyurek (1993); Markides (1977).

2 On Cypriotism and its rise in the first years following the Turkish invasion of 1974, see Attalides (1979); also Mavratsas (1996, 1997, 1998); Papadakis (1993); Peristianis (1995); Stamataxis (1991). Whereas ‘Cypriotism’ may sound awkward in English, it is a useful umbrella term for the various forces supporting the idea of an independent Cypriot state and opposing, thus, the ideology of Greek nationalism or Hellenism. On a more systematic treatment of the analytic utility of the term, see Mavratsas (1998: 85–97). The analyst may also use the terms ‘Greek-centred’ (ελληνοκεντρικός) and ‘Cypriot-centred’ (κυπροκεντρικός), but they sound more awkward than ‘Cypriotism’ and ‘Hellenism’.

The temporary suppression of nationalist ideology must be placed in the context of the events of the summer of 1974. The author of this article characteristically remembers witnessing, as an 11-year-old boy, the burning of a Greek flag in the square of a village between Larnaca and now-occupied Famagusta from which he was fleeing with the other Greek-Cypriot inhabitants of the town. In the present day, such an action would be unthinkable – it would be considered an utter insult to Greek-Cypriot identity and would certainly cause public outrage.


4 Whereas the present analysis focuses upon the perception of Self, the perception of the Turkish-Cypriot community and more generally of Otherness is also crucial in the social construction of Greek-Cypriot identity. See Papadakis (1993); Mavratsas (1998).

5 This is, of course, how Schutz (1967) revolutionised the sociology of knowledge. Berger and Luckmann’s work (1967) is the most systematic manifesto of this theoretical revolution.

6 To my knowledge (and keeping in mind the vastness of the literature on nationalism), P. Lekkas (1995: 236) is the only theorist of nationalism to systematically raise the issue of the distinction between the ‘production’ and the ‘consumption’ of nationalist ideology. Lekkas stresses that in the study of nationalism the analyst must differentiate between ‘nationalist theory’ (εθνικιστική θεωρία) and ‘national consciousness’ (εθνικό φρόνημα); a concept that also refers, albeit more indirectly, to the pre-theoretical perception of nationalism is M. Billig’s (1995) ‘banal nationalism’.

7 On the neglect of culture and meaning in conventional social science, see Berger (1963), Berger and Kellner (1981). What one may call ‘interpretive’ sociology is, of course, greatly indebted to the work of Max Weber.

8 Nations may often appear to possess this quality (i.e. that their members are of one heart
and one mind) but the analyst must bear in mind that this is a historical characteristic which
developed out of various processes of exclusion, suppression or marginalisation of nationally
'deviant' elements – deviant, i.e. in terms of such factors as race, ethnicity, religion or political
ideology. Notwithstanding that a nation may often function as a Durkheimian 'collective
consciousness' – which is, of course, the result of the tremendous appeal that nationalism has
had in modern history – the analyst cannot miss that even at the highest peak of nationalist
agitation and ideological dominance, dissenting voices are not entirely absent.

9 Αξιοσημείωση has been one of the customary accusations levelled by Greek-Cypriot communists
against the right-wing governments of Glafkos Clerides.
10 See, for example, Tzermias (1996: 159).
11 As Weber establishes, interests may be material but also ideal. See Kalberg (1985).
12 This attitude, of course, places serious obstacles upon any prospects for the functional
coeexistence of the Greek and Turkish Cypriots (Mavratsas 1996, 1997).
13 On the emotional and symbolic appeal of nationalism see Anderson (1991); also Connor
14 For a good – but very short and limited – study of history textbooks in Cyprus see the work
of the Education Advisory Committee of the Parliamentary Group for World Government. It
becomes clear that such textbooks promulgate a glorification of the national self and mostly
negative and totalising images about the other (Greek or Turk). It is not surprising, it must be
noted, that changes in school textbooks has been one of the confidence building measures
proposed by the United Nations. On the ideological dominance of Greek-Cypriot nationalism
development of Greek-Cypriot nationalism during the second half of the nineteenth century see
15 Αγλαντζιά and Λατσία are among the Cypriot towns or villages whose names, nationalist
linguists argue (with the support of Claire Angelidou, the former minister of education and
culture), must be changed, in ways that eradicate alleged Ottoman or Turkish influences.
Αγλαντζιά and Λακκιά are the proposed 'proper' names.

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