



**PELEUS**  
STUDIEN ZUR ARCHÄOLOGIE UND  
GESCHICHTE GRIECHENLANDS UND ZYPERNS  
BAND 18

**Michael A. Attalides**

# **Cyprus**

**Nationalism and International Politics**

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## INTRODUCTION

Most literate people in the world know that the problem of Cyprus is "a problem of Greeks and Turks". In other words it is a problem of opposing nationalisms. Journalists have often treated the problem as one deriving from a traditional hatred between Greek and Turk. Social scientists have often treated it as a problem of psychological or social adaptation of two culturally distinct groups to each other. Nationalism however is a more complex phenomenon than that. The appearance of nationalist movements clearly depends on internal changes in societies, but in many cases nationalist movements attempt to modify state boundaries or areas of sovereignty.

Nationalism is a kind of social movement which can spring up purely from internal transformations in a society. But frequently it interacts with the interests and pursuits of other states. This provides endless scope for complication in human affairs. The intensity and non-rationality of nationalist feelings do not adapt easily to international accords, balances of power and understandings. They are also vulnerable to manipulation or aggravation.

Though nationalism can be an extremely important force in internal and international politics, it is not clear that one explains very much by attributing a certain course of events to "nationalism". In fact the danger of explaining complex courses of events in these terms is evident if one examines some of the possible varieties of "nationalism". It encompasses many varieties of group identification and types of political action. Some nationalist movements advocate changes in state boundaries and some do not. If a nationalist movement does not advocate such changes, it may be the official ideology of an established state. By contrast it may be a movement to subvert the existing state structure. Anti-colonial movements for example are subversive in this way without necessarily advocating any change in the boundaries of the political unit. If the movement advocates new state boundaries, this may mean either separation from the existing state or the unification of a number of smaller states.

These differences of course would have significant effects on the course that nationalist movements take and on their effect on international relations. But there are other important variations in nationalist movements. Their occurrences may have as a necessary precondition certain universally recurrent social changes,<sup>1</sup> and their ideologies generally assert unity and lack of division within the

society.<sup>2</sup> But it would be hard to insist that, unlike other ideologies or patterns of thought, nationalist movements do not mobilize different sections of a society or different classes at different points in time, with varying degrees of intensity. If this is so, it would also be likely that sectional or class interests were relevant to the kind of elective affinity that developed between the adherents of a nationalist movement on the one hand, and its aims and the content of its ideology on the other. Nationalist movements assert such varying bases of unity as language, religion, or class. So they have very different implications for the social arrangements or rearrangements which they advocate. This being so, they are likely to be influenced by class or segmental interests. The fact that nationalist movements identify a great variety of enemies is also related to this point. Social groups which differ between them on whether they define colonialism, communism, or a neighbouring group which speaks a different language as the main opponent, must have other significant differences in their social composition and pursuits.

These sketchy comments on nationalist movements suggest that in their development and in their outcome they are only comprehensible as products of the society in which they develop, the kinds of adherents that they attract and the kinds of aims which they pursue. The interests and power of their opponents, including other states, must also be very important influences on their development. In fact the point has been made that these influences are often more important than any characteristics of the movement itself.<sup>3</sup> A movement which develops within a colonial domain involves the additional consideration that the colonial power influences the internal social structure of the colonial society as well as the international power relations of the movement.

Following this line of thought, it has been found useful to think of "nationalism" in Cyprus, and the course of the "Cyprus conflict" by using three ideal-types of nationalist movement. The first type could be called "European nationalism" because the intellectual origins and content of nationalist movements in nineteenth-century Europe were described so elegantly by Kedourie.<sup>4</sup> Naming it "European nationalism" implies that this is only one variety of the phenomenon.

European nationalism is the type of political and intellectual movement which developed in many European countries in the nineteenth century. The movements were based on the assumption that groups of people with a common language, independently of existing sovereignties and jurisdictions, formed "a Nation". "Freedom" for such people consisted in forming a State of their own.

The process of the formation of the Greek nation-state is distinguished by being perhaps the most protracted in Europe. It lasted for almost a century and a half from 1821 until just after the

Second World War. The Turkish nation, and Turkish nationalism, on the other hand, formed itself during a relatively brief period of the twentieth century. It was defined, by Mustafa Kemal, as complete on its formation.<sup>5</sup> The two nations were formed by a tortuous process of disentanglement of borders, mixed populations and symbolic sites.<sup>6</sup> Some of the people involved were not just 'mixed' in the sense of geographical residence. In some cases they had mixed cultural characteristics. Turkish-speaking Christians and Greek-speaking Muslims were not uncommon.<sup>7</sup> The "Cyprus problem" can in some senses be clearly placed within this process, and this has been done by both Greek and Turkish nationalists and by other observers.<sup>8</sup> But it is central to the interpretation of nationalism that whether this is a valid view or not has become an issue both in internal Cypriot and in international politics.

The second ideal type of nationalism is "anti-colonial nationalism".<sup>9</sup> In contrast to the first ideal type, it has frequently de-emphasized the significance of linguistic or other cultural divisions. It frequently defined "colonialism" or its post-colonial variant "imperialism" as the common enemy.<sup>10</sup> Also, unlike European nationalism, it pays attention to economic and social issues and the economic divisions in societies, though frequently it argues that they should be set aside temporarily. It has been argued<sup>11</sup> that this kind of nationalism is sometimes indistinguishable from communism. This model was very influential among both Greek and Turkish Cypriots, particularly after the Second World War, but conspicuously failed to become the dominant one.

The third ideal type of nationalism can be defined in terms of two sub-types. Unlike the first and second ideal type they do not aim to create new state boundaries, or to transfer sovereignties, but rather to reallocate power and resources within a state. It is possible of course for these types of nationalist movement to develop into or merge with the previously outlined types. The first, for lack of a more accurate term, could be referred to as "sectarianism". The term refers to jockeying for power and resources between religious, linguistic or other culturally defined groups, in order to distinguish such competition from that which is based on occupational or class groups. A particularly formative phase of the Cyprus conflict can be traced to this kind of competition between Greek and Turkish Cypriots immediately before and after independence. It eliminated crosscutting trade union and cooperative ties and spilled over into nineteenth-century nationalism. This was reinforced by some extraordinary conditions which had been attached to the new state's independence.

The second sub-type may be termed "regionalism". It is the tendency of the elite of a particular region of a state to engage in a "struggle for domain" with the state authorities, if it has distinct,

territorially defined economic or political interests. This form is introduced because in some senses it is a relevant way of describing the relations between the Government of Cyprus and the Government of Greece, particularly during the period of dictatorial rule in Greece. It must be emphasized immediately though, that the sense in which Cyprus was a "region" of Greece was limited. It was primarily related to some degree of control over the means of violence in Cyprus by the Greek Government.

The interests and powers of other states are important in assessing the consequences of nationalist movements. In the case of Cyprus, this naturally implies Greece and Turkey. They have at various times been defined by Cypriot nationalists themselves as having a special relationship to Cyprus. In fact they form part of the field of nationalism which is being interpreted. But beyond these two countries, other large powers had a considerable and relevant influence on the Cyprus conflict. They exercised this influence in the course of pursuing their global interests. These powers, Britain and later the United States and the Soviet Union, are to be referred to as "imperial powers". The use of the term makes it obvious that one's thinking has been influenced by ideas that imply that there are world powers which seek to dominate weaker states to varying degrees, and that they do so in order to satisfy what are defined by the imperial powers' leaders as the interests of their own citizens. But it is best to make it clear at the outset that there is no intention to discuss whether the rulers of societies with free-market or planned economies are more or less prone to act in this way. There is even less intention to enter the controversy about whether such behaviour is an outcome of ways in which the economies of such states function. It is sufficient for present purposes to think in terms of strategic interests and their conflicting aims. Most of this book is concerned with how these aims intersected at various times with indigenous political processes, and the nationalist field which included Greece and Turkey. A formal causal analysis, or even an attribution of relative weight is almost impossible. One of the reasons for this is the complexity of the fact that, while Greece and Turkey are centres of opposed fields of nationalism, they are also both members of NATO, which is a more or less cohesive system of international alliances headed by one of the imperial powers, the United States.

It is possible, however, to point to some relevant factors in the development of the situation which led to the invasion. This, it is hoped, will widen a little the comfortable London journalist's point of view that "The harassment of the Turkish minority by the Greek majority in the 1960's... was the basic cause of last year's explosion."<sup>13</sup> Such a simple attribution of causality is unsophisticated about the way in which groups of people come to define each other as

enemies, and too smug to be held by people whose own society has shaped events to a great extent. This is particularly significant for an ever-present problem. An attribution of causality has hidden assumptions about possible "solutions", which come as secondary consequences of naive attributions of "responsibility".

Chapter I places the Cyprus problem in its international context. It reviews the development of the interests of the imperial powers in relation to Cyprus, and shows how they have intersected since the beginning of British rule with indigenous political movements. Chapter II traces the development of Greek "European nationalism" in Cyprus, and explains the reasons for its intensification and eruption into violence in the nineteen fifties. Its specific characteristics as a nationalist movement are explained by the social characteristics of its leaders and its internal opponents. Chapter III looks at the reasons for the late development of Turkish "European nationalism" on Cyprus. The Fourth Chapter is about the increasing autonomy of Cyprus from Greece, and the development of "regionalist" differences between the Greek Cypriots and Greece, particularly after 1963. Chapter V examines the problems of power sharing between the Greek and Turkish Cypriots and the difficulties in coming to an agreed constitutional settlement after 1968. Chapter VI examines the difficulties of the Greek Cypriot political forces in facing an ideological renunciation of Hellenic nationalism. Chapters VII and VIII look at the coup by the Greek military dictatorship in July 1974 and the succeeding invasion by Turkish forces and the implications of the continuing occupation of a large part of the island by Turkey.