

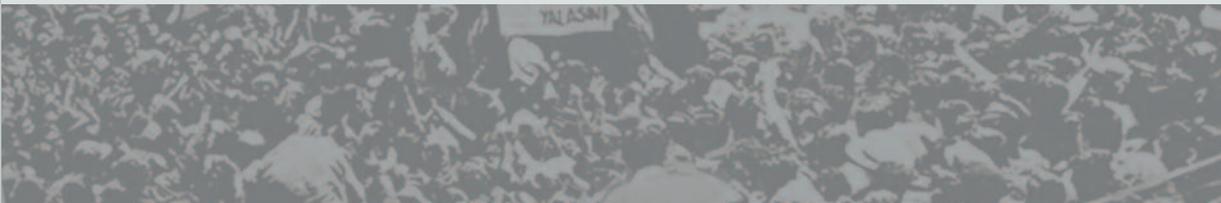
# Turkish Perceptions of Cyprus

1948 to the Present

Rebecca Bryant  
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PCC REPORT 1/2015



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# **TURKISH PERCEPTIONS OF CYPRUS**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**T**his report provides a broad outline of the ways in which Turkish public attitudes towards Cyprus have changed over time, and the policy implications of such attitude changes. Although such opinions are hardly shared by all nor are homogeneous, the prevalence of particular attitudes, expressed in the language of public discourse and the limits of what is acceptable to say, give us some insight into the relationship between public opinion and government policy. The report takes a historical view of public attitudes towards Cyprus in Turkey, examining public discourse and opinion from the late 1940's until today.

Since its establishment in 1923, the Republic of Turkey has exerted influence over the Turkish-speaking community in Cyprus. In the first thirty years of its existence, however, Turkey's influence was primarily social and intellectual, with Turkish Cypriot elites adopting Turkish nationalism and following trends coming from Turkey. As the report shows, the Cyprus Problem had to be brought to the attention of the Turkish public in the middle of the twentieth century by Turkish Cypriot elites in collaboration with pan-Turkist intellectuals in Turkey. Once put on the public agenda and formulated as a "national cause," however, Turkey's role and rights in Cyprus would become unquestionable, defining the limits of what could publicly be said in Turkey about the island. Moreover, Cyprus as national cause would occupy such a central role in public opinion that there were moments, such as in the military intervention/ invasion of 1974, when government policy followed public opinion, which had by then been whipped up by songs, films, and newspaper articles about "ethnic brethren" threatened with "genocide" in the island. For such reasons, it is important to understand prevalent public attitudes, even towards issues considered foreign policy.

The report uses archival and media research, as well as ten semi-structured interviews with journalists and policymakers, to examine the evolution of public attitudes towards Cyprus, the Cyprus Problem, and Turkish Cypriots over approximately seven decades. As we show, these three elements have been linked in various ways over time. While from the mid-1950's to the early 2000's the perception of Cyprus as a "national cause" encompassed both the strategic and the "human" elements of the problem, the post-2002 period has seen a transformation of Cyprus in Turkish public opinion from a "national cause" to a "national burden." Moreover, we show that more recently, because of current conflicts in the region and Turkey's strategic interests, Turkish public discourse has begun to frame a potential resolution of the Cyprus Problem as a "national opportunity." Examining the evolution of public attitudes towards Cyprus also enables us to consider the current conjuncture and where the relationship between north Cyprus and Turkey, and between Turkish Cypriots and Turkish nationals, may be heading in the future.

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## INTRODUCTION:

# VIEWING CYPRUS FROM TURKEY

In standard histories of Cyprus, the Turkish relationship with the island begins in the late sixteenth century, when Sultan Selim II's advisors persuaded him that the Ottoman Empire needed the island, most likely for its strategic position. Schoolbooks teach that the battle between the Ottomans and the Venetians, who then ruled the island, was hard fought, while Turkish and some foreign texts assert that the island's Orthodox population was glad to come under Ottoman suzerainty, as it guaranteed them a freedom of worship that they had not enjoyed under Catholic reign.<sup>1</sup> Records indicate that the Ottoman soldiers and bureaucrats, as well as certain groups of people who were sent to Cyprus from Anatolia in their wake, formed the core of what we would later come to know as a Turkish Cypriot community.<sup>2</sup>

The connection, however, between the centers of Ottoman and later Turkish power in the "mainland" and their southern island province were always attenuated. Records indicate that during the Ottoman period Muslim elites in the island often studied in Istanbul and other Ottoman capitals, such as Cairo.<sup>3</sup> Not only bureaucrats but also religious heads were assigned to the island from other parts of the empire, as was the case with any other Ottoman province. Even after the bureaucrats became English under British administration, religious leaders and other elites continued to receive their education in other parts of the Ottoman realm, while the Kadi and certain clergy were appointed from Istanbul.<sup>4</sup> We also know that seasonal laborers, especially from the Paphos District of the island, often travelled to southern Anatolia

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1 See, e.g., Hüseyin Metin, *Kıbrıs Tarihine Toplu Bir Bakış* (Lefkoşa: Halkın Sesi Basımevi, 1959), pp. 140-141.

2 In addition, there were some conversions of the local Christians to Islam. According to Ottoman historian Roland C. Jennings, who carried out a detailed study of Ottoman court documents from Cyprus, there were indeed some cases of conversion to Islam on the island during Ottoman rule, but "the level of conversion cannot be measured precisely." He highlights, instead, the large number of records concerning settlers arriving in Cyprus from other provinces of the Ottoman Empire, and notes that he never encountered evidence that might confirm instances of conversion *en masse*. Ronald C. Jennings, *Christians and Muslims in Ottoman Cyprus and the Mediterranean World 1571-1640* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), pp.137-138. See also Costas P. Kyriss, "Symbiotic Elements in the History of the two Communities of Cyprus," in *Proceedings: International Symposium on Political Geography* (Nicosia: Cyprus Geographical Association, 1976).

3 Ahmet An, *Kıbrıs'ın Yetiştirdiği Değerler 1788-1899* (Istanbul: Akdağ Yayınları, 2002).

4 Altay Nevzat, *Nationalism amongst the Turks of Cyprus: The First Wave* (Oulu: Oulu University Press, 2005).

in search of work.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, the island remained peripheral enough to be a place of exile for Ottoman unwanted, and in the early British period became a place of refuge for dissident Ottoman intellectuals.<sup>6</sup> While there are indications that Muslims in the island associated themselves with the Ottoman center—something that we see especially in the emotions expressed regarding the demise of Ottoman power in the island—British administrators often observed that something we might call “identity” was predominantly shaped by the economies and socialities of everyday life in the island.<sup>7</sup>

The dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and creation of the Turkish Republic in the wake of the post-World War I Greek invasion of Anatolia severed the political and legal ties with Turkish-speakers in Cyprus. At the same time, however, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, founder of the new Turkey, embraced the ideas of ethnic nationalism so prevalent in the period and established the new state as the home of the Turks. “Turk” was a category that had not been used for self-description, instead having been a popular term used in Western Europe to refer broadly to any Muslim. In the hands of Atatürk and his cadres, the word underwent a transformation to describe the Turkish-speaking, Muslim nation that was to be the foundation for a new state in Anatolia.<sup>8</sup> Atatürk embraced the new boundaries around that state as the *Mısak-ı Milli*, the National Pact, defining the “homeland of the Turks” and the limits of Turkish intervention. His slogan, “Peace at Home, Peace in the World” (*Yurtta Sulh, Cihanda Sulh*), is today visible on public buildings throughout Turkey and refers to an inward-looking, non-interventionist policy that absolved the new Turkey of any responsibility for those people they called “outside Turks” (*dış Türkler*). These were persons of Turkish origin who were either indigenous to other regions, such as the Caucasus and Central Asia, or who had been “left behind” in former Ottoman territories, such as in the Balkans, Greece, and Cyprus.<sup>9</sup>

This policy meant that for decades the Turkish government was reluctant to have anything to do with the Cyprus dispute. As we show in Chapter 1, it was through the strenuous efforts of Turkish Cypriot political leaders, as well as student groups in Turkey and pan-Turkist intellectuals and writers, that the dispute was transformed into a central concern of the

5 Rebecca Bryant, *Imagining the Modern: The Cultures of Nationalism in Cyprus* (London: I.B Tauris 2004), p. 21.

6 Mete Hatay, “Mağusa Sürgünleri: Suphi Ezel ve Miskin Qalam,” *Poli-Havadis Gazetesi* (12 June 2016).

7 Bryant, *Imagining the Modern*. Of course, this oft-repeated British observation had an element of self-interest, in that British administrators persistently attempted to find and cultivate a local, Cypriot identity in opposition to, first, Greek nationalism, and later Turkish nationalism. See also Michael Given, “Architectural styles and ethnic identity in medieval to modern Cyprus,” in J. Clarke (ed.) *Archaeological Perspectives on the Transmission and Transformation of Culture in the Eastern Mediterranean* (Oxbow Books: 2005); and Nevzat, *Nationalism amongst the Turks of Cyprus*.

8 Selim Deringil, “From Ottoman to Turk: Self-Image and Social Engineering in Turkey,” in Dru C. Gladney (ed.), *Making Majorities: Constituting the Nation in Japan, Korea, China, Malaysia, Fiji, Turkey, and the United States* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 217–226; and Bora Ali İsyar, *The Invention of the Turk: A Genealogy of the Nation*, Doctoral Thesis, Sociology Department, York University (2007).

9 Füsün Üstel, *Türk Ocakları (1912-1931)* (İletişim Yayınları, 1997), pp. 15–42; and Meşkure Yılmaz, *Tarihi, Siyasi ve Kültürel Yönleriyle, Türklerin Dünyası ve Türkiye'nin Dış Türkler Politikası* (İstanbul: Kripto 2010).

Turkish government. Indeed, as we explain below, by the time the government became involved in that dispute there was already a groundswell of public sentiment in large sections of Turkish society supporting the Turkish position on what had by the early 1950's become a "national cause." The "national cause" rhetoric only built up further during the Cyprus inter-communal strife of the 1960's, when attacks on Turkish Cypriots and their resistance received extensive coverage in Turkish media, as well as expression in songs, films, and even comic books. Moreover, in the Cold War period, when Turkey shared a border with the Soviet Union, Turkish foreign policy experts interpreted a non-aligned country at its southern border as a potential danger.<sup>10</sup>

For all of these reasons, the 1974 Turkish military response to the Greek-backed coup d'état in Cyprus was met with considerable joy and fanfare throughout Turkey, as well as in the Turkish Cypriot community, which had been isolated in enclaves under economic and military stress for a decade. The subsequent ethnic cleansing of the island's north and the establishment there of a de facto state proceeded on the assumption that negotiations would achieve a federation between two ethnically based states. However, over the following decades not only was such a federation not achievable, but the island's north was increasingly isolated by U.N. security council resolutions against it and the embargoes that followed. While those Turkish Cypriots who had lived through the tensions of the 1950's and violence of the 1960's appeared less troubled by this isolation, their children and grandchildren began to yearn to "open to the world," as protests in the early 2000's would express those longings.<sup>11</sup> Because for three decades the only country with which they had official interactions was Turkey, that country became their "patron state," a term used in the international relations literature to refer to a larger or stronger country protecting a weaker and often unrecognized "client."<sup>12</sup>

Over more than four decades, that patron-client relationship has turned from joyous to acrimonious, with relations particularly souring during the AK Party period.<sup>13</sup> While the AK

<sup>10</sup> Nasuh Uslu, *The Cyprus Question as an Issue of Turkish Foreign Policy and Turkish-American Relations, 1959-2003* (New York: Nova Publishers 2003).

<sup>11</sup> Erol Kaymak and H. E., Lacher, "Transforming Identities: Beyond the Politics of Non-Settlement in North Cyprus," *Mediterranean Politics* 10:2 (2005), pp. 147-166; Mete Hatay and Rebecca Bryant, "The Jasmine Scent of Nicosia: Of Returns, Revolutions, and the Longing for Forbidden Pasts," *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 26:2 (2008), pp. 423-449.

<sup>12</sup> Nina Caspersen summarizes the relationship thusly: "Due to their lack of international recognition, unrecognized states are not spoilt for choice when it comes to attracting external support, and patron states therefore fill an important gap. Based on ethnic links or strategic interests, these states choose to support unrecognized states with diplomatic, economic, and military assistance. Such external support helps compensate for the lack of international recognition and significantly assists the process of state-building" (Nina Caspersen, *Unrecognized States* [Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012], pp. 54-55). See also Pal Kolsto, "The Sustainability and future of unrecognized Quasi-States," *Journal of Peace Research* 43:6 (1996), pp. 723-740; Pal Kolsto and Helge Blakkisrud, "Living with non-recognition: State- and nation-building in South Caucasian Quasi-States," *Europe-Asia Studies* 60:3 (2008), pp. 483-509; and Dov Lynch, *Engaging Eurasia's Separatist States: Unresolved Conflicts and De Facto States* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2004). See also Rebecca Bryant and Christalla Yakinthou, *Cypriot Perceptions of Turkey* (Istanbul: TESEV, 2012).

<sup>13</sup> See Bryant and Yakinthou, *Cypriot Perceptions of Turkey*.

Party has consistently supported the reunification of Cyprus under a federal umbrella, the failure of a reunification plan in 2004 resulted in the implementation of Turkish plans to “develop” the island’s north. The AK Party succeeded in breaking down the unquestionable myth of Cyprus as a “national cause” by showing that it was a “national burden.” However, in doing so it also made clear that any interests it retains in the island are strategic rather than ideological. This change of attitude has, in turn, put relations with Turkish Cypriots on a different footing, while the media in Turkey now portrays them not as ethnic brothers who need protection but rather as ungrateful recipients of Turkish handouts.

This report is the counterpart to a co-authored report, undertaken by Rebecca Bryant and Christalla Yakinthou in 2012, on Cypriot perceptions of Turkey. However, while that report attempted primarily to measure current attitudes on both sides of the island towards a Turkey that at that moment appeared to be in a fairly stable period of positive growth, the present report appears at a moment of high uncertainty and instability in the country. That instability began with the Gezi protests of summer 2013 and has increased with a large influx of Syrian refugees into the country in the same year as a result of the rise of ISIL; the renewal of the conflict with Kurdish forces in the country’s southeast; and most recently with an attempted coup d’état that has resulted in a full-scale government purge. As a result, Cyprus is currently rather low on Turkey’s policy agenda.

Because of the prevailing explosive atmosphere in Turkey today, we chose to take a historical approach to the subject, examining the way in which public attitudes towards Cyprus have changed over time. This report uses archival and media research, as well as ten semi-structured interviews with journalists and policymakers, to examine the evolution of public attitudes towards Cyprus, the Cyprus Problem, and Turkish Cypriots. As we show, these three elements have been linked in various ways over time. While from the mid-1950’s to the early 2000’s the perception of Cyprus as a “national cause” encompassed both the strategic and the “human” elements of the problem, the post-2002 period has seen a transformation of Cyprus in Turkish public opinion from a “national cause” to a “national burden.” Paradoxically, as we show, the period in which Cyprus was constructed in the media and public opinion as a “national cause” was also a period of more limited Turkish intervention in the island, when part of the “national cause” also included Turkey’s unwavering post-1974 support for north Cyprus as an autonomous state. As we show, it is actually in the period in which Cyprus has come to be cast in public discourse as a “national burden” that commentators have begun to express Turkey’s choices as either completely detaching itself from the island or annexing it.

This report provides a broad outline of the ways in which Turkish public attitudes towards Cyprus have changed over time, and the policy implications of such attitude changes. Obviously, such opinions are hardly homogeneous nor are they accepted by everyone, but the prevalence of particular attitudes, expressed in the language of public discourse and the limits of what is acceptable to say, give us some insight into the relationship between public

opinion and government policy. For instance, as other studies have noted,<sup>14</sup> the idea of Cyprus as “national cause” was so hegemonic until the early 2000’s that to question it was equated with treason. Moreover, as we explain below, this was because Cyprus has always stood somewhere between the “domestic” and the “foreign,” having influence in both realms of policy. It was only with the AK Party’s sidelining of the military and bureaucracy—what Metin Heper calls the “state elites”—that this narrative began to break down. As we describe, that narrative has yet to be fully replaced, though its breakdown has been accompanied by increasing tensions between north Cyprus and Turkey, and indeed between Turkish Cypriots and Turkish nationals.

These tensions are, again, reflected in public discourse and commonly encountered attitudes. Moreover, these attitudes are often based in some limited experience of Cyprus, as approximately 40-60,000 Turkish university students and 25,000 conscripted Turkish soldiers find themselves in the island each year.<sup>15</sup> Over the course of forty years, this means that approximately one million conscripts and a similar number of students have had extended experience of the island’s north. If one adds to this large numbers of white-collar employees and professionals, seasonal and temporary workers, and tourists, it is reasonable to estimate that as much as one-tenth of the Turkish population has had some direct experience of the island. That limited but direct experience leads to greater public engagement with the Cyprus issue, as well as to a search for language to explain what they have seen.

One of the standard ways in which Cypriots measure public attitudes towards them in the “motherlands” is through their experiences with taxi drivers when they visit Turkey and Greece. Those experiences with taxi drivers then circulate, helping Cypriots to contextualize information that they otherwise receive filtered through the media and their politicians. As though to confirm the usefulness of this “method,” during our research in Turkey we had several encounters with taxi drivers who, on the basis of accent, asked where we were from. Upon hearing that we had come from Cyprus, the immediate response of these drivers was to ask, “Is it true that Turkish Cypriots don’t like Turks?” or, assuming this to be the case, “Why don’t Turkish Cypriots like Turkey?” In two cases, they asked these questions despite or because of having performed their military service decades earlier in the island. Moreover, the ubiquity with which the question is asked, as well as the sense of betrayal that accompanies it, tells us much about images and discourses around Cyprus that circulate in Turkish media and the Turkish public and influence public policy. As we will see, public attitudes towards Cyprus may be at least as important as government policy in determining how the relationship will develop in the future.

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<sup>14</sup> Alper Kaliber, “Securing the Ground Through Securitized ‘Foreign’ Policy: The Case of Cyprus,” *Security Dialogue* 36:3 (2005), pp. 319-337.

<sup>15</sup> See Mete Hatay, *Is the Turkish Cypriot Population Shrinking? An Overview of the Ethno-Demography of Cyprus in the Light of the Preliminary Results of the 2006 Turkish- Cypriot Census* (Oslo/Nicosia, PRIO Report 2/2007); Mete Hatay, *Beyond Numbers: An Inquiry into the Political Integration of the Turkish ‘Settlers’ in Northern Cyprus* (Oslo/Nicosia: PRIO Report 4/2005).

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## CHAPTER 1:

# CYPRUS AS A NATIONAL CAUSE

In the Cyprus historical imaginary, 20 July has significance as the date when Turkish troops first landed in the island in 1974 in the beginning of a campaign that would result in the island's division. But exactly twenty-six years earlier, on another 20 July, another less momentous event would also leave a lasting mark on Cyprus's history. "On 20 July 1948, a Wednesday, in the Haydarpaşa station, we settle into a wagon carrying post bound for Iskenderun," wrote Hasene İlgaz, a parliamentarian from the district of Çorum who led a group of teachers to the island. "The wheels begin to turn on the tracks, and 51 teachers are sent off with cries to be well and send their greetings."

The book that she later wrote about their journey was dedicated to "our Turkish brothers and sisters left outside our borders," and in the first few pages she observes that "it [Cyprus] is really a piece broken off from Anatolia." Especially when they reached the capital, Nicosia, she found that "with its mosques, its minarets, its large fountains, its bazaar, and its houses, it is a city with an entirely Turkish character." And even though they were still weary from the journey when they arrived at the Victoria Girls' School, where they would stay, she found that there was in fact so much resemblance between Anatolia and Cyprus, or between Turkish Cypriots and themselves, that "we immediately understood and embraced our Turkish Cypriot brothers and sisters who are of the same roots, the same race, the same culture, the same history, and were the same children of the same flag."<sup>16</sup>

We use the visit of a group of Turkish teachers to Cyprus in the late 1940's as an entry point for thinking about the evolution of a particular public perception of Cyprus in Turkey: namely, that Turkish-speaking Cypriots are "brothers," that the island geographically is part of Anatolia, and that defending those brothers in the island is a national cause. In Turkey, the phrase "national cause" (*milli dava*) generally has the meaning of "a cause that everyone discusses, accepts, and agrees on. Saying that everyone agrees on it means that everyone sees clearly

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<sup>16</sup> Hasane İlgaz, *Kıbrıs Notları* (İstanbul: Doğan Kardeş Yayınları, 1949), p. 12.

and understands the roadmap for Cyprus."<sup>17</sup> Although, as we will show below, Cyprus acquired the status of national cause in the 1950's, writers, artists, and intellectuals such as Hasene İlgaz laid the foundation for the public acceptance of such a perspective some years before political events in the island would bring it more centrally to the attention of the Turkish public.

The parliamentarian's account is interesting for us because of the way that it outlines a recurring theme in Turkish perspectives on Cyprus: the question of the "Turkishness" of Turkish-speakers in the island. While İlgaz writes the encounter as a discovery of long-lost sisters and brothers, the rhetoric is one in which the author seems bent on convincing a sceptical public. She describes the road to the girls' school lined with well-wishers, especially children, who greeted them again and again with the phrase, "Welcome, you have brought us the lovely scent of the motherland." The fact that mostly children lined the roads, and that they repeated this phrase, suggests that they were assigned this duty. Nevertheless, İlgaz was certainly convinced of the Turkishness and longing for the motherland that filled every Turkish Cypriot she met:

In our tour we saw and believed that although Turkish Cypriots are separated from the motherland, they followed step-by-step every stage of the war of independence, they made the Turkish revolution their own, and they have kept the leader and chief of the revolution, Atatürk and İnönü, alive in their minds and hearts. . . . Today every Cypriot experiences the pain of being far from the motherland and the sadness of not being able to see them up close. For this reason every Cypriot has decorated their homes, stores, and clubs with lithographic prints of Atatürk and İnönü.

We found our Cypriot brothers, who are thirsty with longing for us, full of these feelings and thoughts. We saw how attached they were to us not just from what they said, but from absolutely everything. We saw. We heard. Our chests filled with the pride of being Turks. This island has not lost a single of our national traditions, and with its green land, its crops, its customs, mosques and minarets, its *kandils*, its Turkish *ezans*, its firing of cannons at *iftar* and *sahur*, it is a part of us. The city [Nicosia] is Turkish from top to bottom.<sup>18</sup>

We quote this at length for the rhetoric it uses, for what it tells us of Turkish nationalism in this period, and for the author's observations regarding the influence of that nationalism in Cyprus.

There are several themes that emerge here that, as we will see, continue to recur until the present. First, the author seems keenly aware that in Turkey questions have often been raised about the "Turkishness" of Cypriots in an island dominated by Christians. Her narrative, then, emphasizes Islamic monuments and Muslim religious practices, such as the celebration of

<sup>17</sup> Hasan Hastürer, "Milli Dava Değil, Kavga Dava," *Kıbrıs Postası*, 23 July 2008, <http://www.kibrispostasi.com/print.php?col=98&art=2761>.

<sup>18</sup> İlgaz, *Kıbrıs Notları*, p. 16.

religious festivals, which make a Turkish presence visible in the island. This also gives us some clues to the use of Islam in the supposedly secular Turkish nationalism of the period, as clearly the parliamentarian felt a need to convince her public that Turkish-speaking Cypriots were “real” Muslims in order to convince them that they were “real” Turks.

Second, she emphasizes Cypriots’ dedication to and reverence for Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who founded the Turkish Republic on the principles of a secular Turkish nationalism. If this seems to contradict the emphasis on the Muslimness of Turkish Cypriots, it should be remembered that the secularism of the Turkish Republic is actually *laïcité*, i.e., not the separation of church and state but the control of the church by the state.

Third, she makes continuous reference throughout the short book to the emotional attachment that Turkish Cypriots feel to the “mother.” This finds expression in two ways in the tract: through repeated references to Turkish Cypriot expressions of that longing, and through the occasional mention of Cyprus’s geographical connection to Anatolia. The problem that this rhetoric attempted to resolve—whether intentionally or not—was that during the establishment of the Turkish Republic those Turkish-speakers remaining in Cyprus had been cast as “outside Turks” (*dış Türkler*) and so fell outside the boundaries of the National Pact that defined the limits of Turkish non-intervention. The principle was that protecting one’s own sovereignty—as after so many decades of war at the end of empire was clearly desired—meant respecting the sovereignty of others. As a result, any attempt to draw Turkey politically and militarily into the Cyprus fray meant having to establish that the island was an exception to this principle. This was done through the gradual creation of a Motherland-Babyland (*Anavatan-Yavruvatan*) rhetoric that emphasized both the emotional bonds between “mother” and “child” and their physical attachment.

Hence, Ilgaz’s account is filled with descriptions of the teachers’ enthusiastic reception. She seems aware that some readers might suspect that all the excited expressions of Turkish nationalism were simply a show that the Cypriot teachers put on for their visiting counterparts. Hence, she emphasizes, “We saw how attached they were to us not just from what they said, but from absolutely everything.” Indeed, reports from Cyprus suggest that during that period there was a concerted, and largely successful, attempt to instill a longing for the “motherland” in Turkish Cypriot children. In some cases, this was made easier by the visibility of the Taurus Mountains of Turkey across the water from the north coast of Cyprus. For instance, the psychoanalyst Vamik Volkan, who grew up in 1940’s Cyprus and spent part of his childhood on its north coast, reflected on the ways that this sense of connection with Anatolia was instilled in children:

Some of my own childhood memories may shed light on how Cypriot Turkish children symbolized a connection between the island of Cyprus and Turkey. Parents often spoke of Turkey and passed along to their children a sense of identity with the mainland country, which seemed a land of promise. . . . The map of Cyprus made the connection concrete, since on maps the Karpasia peninsula of the island looks like an arm stretched

toward Anatolia's (the mother's) Gulf of Alexandretta. I can still hear what we learned in elementary school on Cyprus: 'Cyprus was once connected with Anatolia, but it sank into the sea. It rose, only to sink again. When it rose for the third time after its third submersion, it was, alas, no longer connected with Anatolia.' This account reflects eons of geological change, and to this day I do not know how close it comes to the truth.<sup>19</sup>

This and other accounts suggest that we should take Hasene İlgaz's report as a fairly accurate description of the state of Turkish nationalism in Cyprus at the time of her visit to the island. By the late 1940's, the intrinsic connection of Cyprus with Anatolia, and the longing of separation (*hasret*) produced by gazing across the waters at the "motherland" became a common part of the way that Turkish Cypriots talked about their own presence in the island.

For instance, when a second group of teachers from Turkey visited the island in 1950, one of the leading newspapers, *Halkın Sesi*, published an article entitled "Welcome, Beloved Brothers and Sisters," in which it claimed,

Today as you set foot in this island you will not feel like foreigners. Because everywhere you will find the familiarity of Anatolia. For all of these years, Cypriot Turks, despite everything, have not lost even the smallest bit of their Turkishness, and by following the Turkish Revolution step by step have proven that they are a conscious community. It is in this spiritual condition that we embrace you as our blood brothers, our brothers in religion, and we salute you as the brave children of heroic Anatolia.<sup>20</sup>

This and many other similar expressions of a Turkish national consciousness, then, gradually became dialogic, not simply unilateral expressions of admiration and love for Atatürk, for instance, but also to gain recognition of their presence in the island as "blood brothers" (*kan kardeşi*) and "brothers in religion" (*din kardeşi*) of the Turks of Anatolia.<sup>21</sup>

Certain popular newspapers of the period, especially *Halkın Sesi* in Cyprus and *Hürriyet* in Turkey consistently emphasized the geographical proximity of Cyprus to Turkey, its resemblance to Anatolia, and the blood ties of Turkish Cypriots to their Anatolian "brothers," as well as that they had not lost their Turkishness or their religion, despite being surrounded and ruled by Christians.<sup>22</sup> Cyprus became a "national cause," however, through the creation of "brothers" in the "Babyland" who were also under threat. This sense of "blood brothers" under threat was created through the Turkish and Cypriot media, as well as through political rhetoric and political movements in Turkey.

<sup>19</sup> Vamık Volkan, *Cyprus: War and Adaptation: A Psychoanalytic History of Two Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (University of Virginia Press, 1979), pp. 12-13.

<sup>20</sup> "Hoş geldiniz aziz kardeşlerimiz," *Halkın Sesi*, 18 August 1950.

<sup>21</sup> Harid Fedai, *Kıbrıs'ta Masum Millet Olayı*, (İstanbul: KKTC Turizm ve Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1986).

<sup>22</sup> For a thorough analysis of these two newspapers for the 1948-1955 period, see Rafet Uçkan, *Emergence of Turkish Nationalism in the Cyprus Conflict: The Breakthrough from 1948 to 1955*, Unpublished MSc Thesis, Middle East Technical University, 2012.

The rhetoric used showed the “Hellene” threat in black-and-white terms, as greedy Greeks threatening to wipe out Turkish brethren in the island. This was the stuff of popular culture, and it was in such a way that what would become known as the “national cause” or the “Cyprus cause” (*Kıbrıs davası*) gradually began to penetrate the Turkish popular consciousness through folk songs, novels, poetry, comic book heroes, and eventually through film. In Cyprus, this primarily consisted of expressions of longing for the “motherland,” as well as the belief that millions of Turks would stand beside them and protect them. Moreover, by the early 1950’s, it was quite common for Turkish citizens to publish in Cyprus, and Cypriots to publish poems, stories, and articles about the “Cyprus cause” in Turkey. The composer, poet, parliamentarian, and ultra-nationalist Behçet Kemal Çağlar wrote one of many such poems in 1954, apparently while in Anamur, across the water from Cyprus, publishing it in the Cypriot *Halkın Sesi*. In the poem, he opines about the proximity of Cyprus to the Turkish shore and threatens Greeks to leave alone the “daughter” that they’ve given as a bride:

The Toros dived into the sea, and its face rose to the surface there,  
Lefke was in smiles, face-to-face with Anamur.  
An anchor ball like a standard we’ve let fall into the water,  
Cyprus says to us, ‘I am here,’ before it sinks.

Greek friend, correct this pompous behavior of yours,  
You’ve suffered much from the Megali Idea plague.  
As you’re conforming to the ambitions of outside Greeks,  
Remember what you lost in the example of Izmir.

Your shore approaches our shore wave by wave,  
Be patient, our girl who’s a bride in their hands,  
Either they’ll leave you alone, or we’ll take you back,  
You have twenty million brothers, our Cyprus.<sup>23</sup>

This was not the only time that Cyprus would be portrayed as a maiden or virginal “bride,” evoking a presumed innocence reflected in later parlance in the more common term “Babyland” (*Yavruvatan*). In other words, the success of the campaign to draw Turkey into the Cyprus problem entailed arousing a masculinist heroic nationalism and making the “Cyprus cause” into a matter of national pride.<sup>24</sup>

Turning the Cyprus problem into a “national cause” was made much easier by the presence of large numbers of Turkish Cypriots in Turkey. In the late 1940’s, they began to form associations and join together with ultra-nationalists in Turkey, many of whom were sympathetic to

<sup>23</sup> Behçet Kemal Çağlar, “Kıbrıs’a ve Palikaryalara Sesleniş,” *Halkın Sesi*, 24 April 1954.

<sup>24</sup> For an overview of the masculinity of nationalism in Turkey, see Ayşe Gül Altınay, *The Myth of the Military-Nation: Militarism, Education, and Gender in Turkey* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005).

Turanism, the idea of the unification of all Turkish-speaking peoples in one homeland. These were nationalists who often fell afoul of the official Kemalist ideology because of their appeal beyond the borders of the National Pact. In 1947, Britain had begun negotiations to offer some form of autonomy to Cyprus, and Turkish Cypriot leaders viewed this as a danger, as any form of autonomy for the island that did not guarantee their own status could lead to union of the island with Greece. Moreover, in the same year the Dodecanese Islands had joined with Greece, after a brief post-war period as a British military protectorate that ended when Britain signed a peace treaty with Italy. This increased the fear amongst Turkish Cypriots that the same was likely to happen in Cyprus.

In 1948, a group of Turkish Cypriot and Turkish writers, academics, and politicians founded *Yeşilada Mecmuası* (*Green Island Magazine*), which served for more than three years as the main publishing vehicle for a pan-Turkist agenda that showed Turkish Cypriots as blood brothers and Cyprus as an extension of Anatolia. The magazine featured Turkish Cypriot academics and writers, such as Fikret Alasya, Derviş Manizade, and Nevzat Karagil, as well as Turkish nationalist writers and poets such as Nihat Atsız and Behçet Kemal Çağlar. The magazine set out to prove not only the identity of Turkish Cypriots and their “brothers” in Turkey, but also that Turkish Cypriots were as Kemalist as, if not more Kemalist than, their counterparts in Anatolia.<sup>25</sup>

These cultural efforts were given institutional and political substance through organizations of Turkish Cypriots in Turkey, such as the Cypriot Turk Cultural Association (*Kıbrıs Türk Kültür Derneği*) and the Cyprus Protection Association (*Kıbrıs'ı Koruma Derneği*), but even more when the main associations of nationalist students took up Cyprus as a cause. This included the Turkish National Student Federation (*Türk Milli Talebe Federasyonu*), and later the Turkish National Youth Organization (*Türkiye Milli Gençlik Teşkilatı*). Both of these were responsible for organizing large-scale protests around the issue of Cyprus in both Ankara and Istanbul.<sup>26</sup>

By the early 1950's, the problem of the Turks who “remained” in Cyprus had penetrated Turkish popular culture, while demonstrations kept the matter in the news. The early 1950's were also a time of martial pride in Turkey, when the Turkish military showed its mettle in Korea, Turkey's first involvement in a foreign war. At the same time, almost paradoxically, however, regional interests required the Turkish government to take the stand, expressed by then Foreign Minister Fuat Köprülü in 1950, that “for us there is no problem called the Cyprus Problem.” Retired Turkish ambassador Tugay Uluçevik notes that in the context of the early Cold War period, Turkey watched Cyprus from the sidelines, partly because it did not want to ruin the good relations it then had with its neighbor, Greece.

<sup>25</sup> Behlül Özkan, “Making Cyprus a National Cause in Turkey's Foreign Policy, 1948-1965,” *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 15(4), p. 544.

<sup>26</sup> Fahir H. Armaoğlu, *Kıbrıs Meselesi 1954-59: Türk Hükümeti ve Kamuoyunun Davranışları* (İstanbul: Sevinç Matbaası 1963), pp. 557-559; p. 441.

In response to this, however, the Turkish media and youth organizations worked to whip up popular opinion in a way that would ultimately change foreign policy:

In the conditions in which Turkey found itself, Turkish Cypriot elites led by Dr. Fazıl Küçük and the then 24-year-old lawyer Rauf Denktaş used the newspaper that they published, the protests they organized in the Island, the messages that 'Cyprus must not become Crete' that they sent to the Turkish Government, and visits to Ankara to inform and warn not only Turkish official circles but the entire Turkish People of the real ambitions and intentions of Greek Cypriots and Greeks regarding Cyprus. Turkish youth echoed these warning voices that rose from Cyprus and passed over the Taurus Mountains to reach Ankara, while the Turkish press spread these voices throughout Anatolia. As a result, the Anatolian folk were locked and integrated with the Cypriot Turkish people around the National Cause. In this way the embracing and integration of the Motherland and Babyland came about as a result of the example-setting role played by the Turkish Youth and Turkish Media.<sup>27</sup>

This combination of nationalist symbolism and political agitation can be seen in the naïve, spontaneous enthusiasm of one of Turkey's well-known folksingers of the period, Aşık Dursun Cevlâni, who accidentally attended a Cyprus demonstration in Ankara and decided at that moment to go to the island to give morale to his Turkish brothers there:

In 1951 I found myself at a demonstration in Ankara. I happened to cross through Ulus Square. There was a demonstration going on. I asked why they were demonstrating. They said, "It's about Cyprus." I looked, and the youth were getting onto the bandstand and crying while they roared out speeches, and the loudspeakers were blaring. An excitement awakened inside me. I had grown up in Kars when it was under Russian occupation and Armenian oppression. When I thought of those days, a fire lit in my heart for our Turkish brothers in Cyprus. I could only express my anger with my saz and my voice.<sup>28</sup>

In a short book that he later published, the bard describes how he and his friend Ali İzzet made their way to Cyprus, where they presented themselves at the Turkish consulate and then to Dr. Fazıl Küçük, who made arrangements for them to tour the island. Cevlani reports that once news of their presence in the island spread, every village wanted them to visit.

<sup>27</sup> Tugay Uluçevik, 'Milli Kıbrıs Davamız Nereye,' 21. Yüzyıl Türkiye Enstitüsü, 22 June 2016, <http://www.21yyte.org/tr/arastirma/kibris/2016/06/22/8454/milli-kibris-davamiz-nereye>.

<sup>28</sup> Mete Hatay, "İki Saz Üstadı ve Kıbrıs" (*Havadis-Poli*: 1 May 2016); Dursun Cevlani, *Kıbrıs Dönüşü* (Ankara: Sanat Basımevi, 1952).

We gave each of them a day. At last we went to Antroligo village. Almost a kilometer from the village the people were already waiting for us. Everyone young and old came to meet us, embraced us, and smelled us and sighed with longing, saying they've come from our motherland and the smell of Turkey is on them. . . . That evening we gave a concert in the village square that was crowded with all the village people, male and female. The next morning we went to the village school, and the teachers had the children sing. They sang folksongs from the motherland, and we also became excited and joined the children. We sang different folk ballads, about the country, about the Turkish flag, about the Turkish bayonet.<sup>29</sup>

He tells about how they traveled the island on donkeys or in others' cars, sleeping in the houses of villagers and listening to their problems. On leaving one such village, a young girl came and kissed their hands, asking them to take her greetings to Turkey and to her elders there. The bard comments, "It was clear that her mother and father were people who constantly kept the love of Turks and their ties to the Motherland in their hearts, so that their children would be filled with that dream."<sup>30</sup>

The Turkishness of Cyprus, then, penetrated popular consciousness in Turkey through newspaper reports, poems, stories, and folksongs of the sort that were written about Cyprus by Dursun Cevlâni during his trip to the island and after. Showing Cyprus's Turkishness was also accompanied by scholarly and popular denial of the Greekness of the island, as historians and other writers attempted to show the essential hybrid nature of Greek Cypriots and that the island had in fact never been Greek. One of the most well-known Turkish Cypriot historians of the period, who made an academic career for himself in Turkey, made this argument very clearly in his book, *The History of Cyprus and Its Antiquities*, and in popular articles that he wrote to undermine Greek Cypriot claims:

When we examine the history of Cyprus it can be seen without doubt that Cyprus was at no time a part of Greece. States that ruled in Anatolia, in Syria, and in Egypt also ruled Cyprus, but Greece never did. The Rum people that inhabit Cyprus today have no racial relationship with Greekness. They are a hybrid race made up of the various races that have ruled the mass of this Island, and they only came to have a linguistic relationship with Greeks when Cypriot Greek began to be spoken during the Byzantine period. In any case, this language is not the same as the language spoken in Greece.<sup>31</sup>

This argument was especially important in the early 1950's, when the "Cyprus is Turkish" party, movement, and slogan gained force in both Cyprus and Turkey.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>31</sup> H. Fikret Alasya, "Kıbrıs hiç bir zaman Yunanistan'ın olmamıştır," *Halkın Sesi*, 4 December 1951.



*Image 1: Turkish newspaper headline from 9 June 1958 with photo of a Cyprus demonstration in Beyazıt Square, Istanbul.*

Indeed, it seems that the more the Turkish government resisted becoming involved in Cyprus's affairs, the more these various mechanisms acted to whip up public opinion. Moreover, these mechanisms played on historical references to Crete, to the Greek invasion of Anatolia in the 1920's, even to the "betrayal" of Greek revolutionary forces at the beginning of the nineteenth century. They portrayed Greeks as bloodthirsty and untrustworthy, and they warned that the Turks should be on their guard.

All of these symbols and historical references whirled together when on 1 April 1955 the National Organization of Cypriot Fighters (EOKA, *Ethniki Organosis Kyprion Agoniston*), a Greek Cypriot underground organization, announced the beginning of the resistance fight intended to unite Cyprus with Greece. While Turkish Cypriots first hoped that the British military would crush the rebellion, it soon became clear that it was to be a brutal fight. Moreover, although EOKA explicitly stated that its fight was with the British, Turkish Cypriots and nationalists in Turkey engaged in a flurry of historical referents and incitement based on speculation that anticipated violence against Turkish Cypriots to such a degree that it may have become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The anticipation of violence that emerged out of this confused whirl of history, fear, and prejudice reached its high point with the attacks on the Greek community of Istanbul in early September 1955. There is no doubt that the Cyprus is Turkish Association and student committees were largely responsible for that tragedy, and they used the anticipation of violence

against Turkish Cypriots as the spark to light an inferno.<sup>32</sup> On 16 August, Dr. Fazıl Küçük wrote a letter to Hikmet Bil, editor of *Hürriyet* newspaper in Turkey, claiming that Greek Cypriots were preparing for a massacre of their defenseless Turkish neighbors on 28 August. Although Turkish journalists went to the island on that date expecting something to happen, they found nothing. Supposedly, the massacre had been prevented by a speech by Prime Minister Adnan Menderes in that period and by the threat of Turkish intervention.<sup>33</sup>

Immediately after the massacre that did not happen, however, a small pamphlet appeared in Istanbul that expresses the mindset of the period, even if we have no way of knowing its influence on the tragic events that followed a few days later.<sup>34</sup> Entitled *The Inner Face of the 28 August 1955 Cyprus Massacre*, the pamphlet's authors reiterated the claim that on that date a slaughter of Turkish Cypriots had been planned and barely averted. Hastily put together, the pamphlet is a compendium of the various arguments used for many years by Turkish Cypriot and Turkish nationalists:

Today there is a crowd of people in the island that is not Turkish and constitutes the majority. This crowd says, "We're Hellenes." We say instead, "You're Rums." The truth is that apart from some members of this crowd who immigrated from Greece for various purposes, they are made up of persons who have no relation to Greece, including the fact that they speak Rumca. While it is known that historically Greece never controlled Cyprus, insisting on union with Greece is nothing but turning one's back on the facts. The 100,000 Turks who are the real owners of this island know that autonomy is not the way to solve the Cyprus issue, and they reject it.<sup>35</sup>

Using a jumble of historical referents and appeals to race, the authors claim that the threat of massacre was intended to make Turkish Cypriots flee the island:

They used the same tactics in Crete, becoming owners of the island by frightening the people with threats of death. Now they're moving to use the same tactic in Cyprus. ... Are we just going to sit back and watch as our racebrothers (*ırkdaşlarımız*) in Cyprus are subjected to Greek atrocities?

The pamphlet repeatedly uses the language of race to argue both for the need to protect their "racebrothers" and to claim that "the Greek character has an unquenchable appetite for massacre."<sup>36</sup>

<sup>32</sup> For example, Dilek Güven notes that while there were only three branches of the Cyprus is Turkey Association in Istanbul in the middle of August 1955, by 6 September that number had exploded to ten. See Dilek Güven, *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Azınlık Politikaları ve Stratejileri Bağlamında 6-7 Eylül Olayları* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2005), p. 10.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 80-82.

<sup>34</sup> The pamphlet was clearly hastily prepared and printed, but today the fact that almost any used bookstore in Istanbul has several copies of it suggests that it was widely distributed.

<sup>35</sup> İzzet Akyol (ed.), *28 Ağustos 1955 Kıbrıs Katliamı'nın İç Yüzü* (Istanbul: And Yayınları, 1955), p. 80.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

Moreover, the pamphlet refers to the “Great Offensive,” the beginning of Mustafa Kemal’s military campaign against Greek invading forces, which began on 22 August 1922, in other words in the same month. At that time, the pamphlet declares, the world turned its eyes to the offenses the Greek forces committed against the unarmed population. “But in this day and age it’s not acceptable to cut down innocent people whose only fault is that they have settled in that land.”<sup>37</sup>



*Image 2: Cover of pamphlet published immediately before the events of 6-7 September 1955.*

This short book was clearly part of the anti-Greek campaign leading up to the events of 6-7 September, when tens of thousands of Greek businesses and homes were looted and destroyed. Those tragic events began with reports that Atatürk’s birthplace in Thessaloniki had been bombed, but they were whipped up by *İstanbul Ekpres* and *Hürriyet* newspapers, and persons attached to the Turkish National Youth Organization, which had been one of the strongest supporters of Turkish Cypriots in Turkey. The catastrophic chaos of those two days would lead to the flight of tens of thousands of Turkish citizens of Greek origin, the overthrow of the Turkish government a few years later, and the disbanding of the student and youth organizations that had given momentum to the frenzy.

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

Even in that tumult of provocation and violence, however, a certain logic emerged regarding Cyprus, reflected first in the speech by Turkish Prime Minister Adnan Menderes that supposedly prevented the Cyprus massacre. Menderes would later be accused of having ordered what came to be known as the Istanbul Pogrom. There he remarked,

According to the instigators [in Cyprus], the island has this much Turkish population, and this much Greek population, as though all the world's geographical borders are drawn according to such a principle. According to them, Cyprus' future should be determined according to this principle. . . . However, a homeland is not a piece of cloth that a tailor can cut however he chooses. A homeland is a piece of geography whose borders are drawn not only according to ethnicity, but also under the influence of other factors, including geographic, political, economic, and military.<sup>38</sup>

The authors of the pamphlet comment on this remark, saying, "It is a truth that population cannot play the only role in determining the fate of a piece of territory. Population is only a matter of quantity. In this problem, the most important elements are historical rights and geopolitical claims."<sup>39</sup>

In other words, even in the midst of a confusion of jumbled history and violence both anticipated and realized there was an argument at work, undermining Greek Cypriots' historical claims to the island and reducing them to a matter of numbers. It was also an argument that emphasized the contingent and accidental nature of borders, which were drawn not according to fixed, higher principles but according to political, military, and even economic interests. It was in this atmosphere and at this moment that the partition project would emerge, an option that had already been circulating in Cyprus but that became the official slogan and project after 1956, when Britain decided to bring Turkey into the dispute. Britain did so with the dual argument that Turkey had an historical interest in the island and that it had a present interest in its "co-ethnics," the Turkish Cypriot community.<sup>40</sup>

Turkey thus officially became the "protector" of Turkish Cypriots and their interests because of its historical claims on the island and because Turkish Cypriots were an oppressed minority community. We can see the public interest in the issue, as well, in a burst of book publication during the late 1950's and early 1960's. During the period 1957-1963 alone, thirty books on Cyprus were published in Turkey with titles such as *Turkish Cyprus (Türk Kıbrıs)*, *Don't Touch Turkish Cyprus (Türk Kıbrıs'a Dokunma)*, *The National Island Cyprus (Milli Ada Kıbrıs)*, *Cyprus, Where 50,000 Turkish Martyrs Lie (50 bin Türk şehidinin yatağı Kıbrıs)*, *Cyprus is Ours (Kıbrıs bizimdir)*, *Green Cyprus is Ours and Will Remain Turkish Forever (Yeşil Kıbrıs Bizimdir ve Ebedi Türk Kalacaktır)*, and *Cyprus is Turkish and Will Remain Turkish (Kıbrıs Türktür ve Türk Kalacaktır)*.<sup>41</sup>

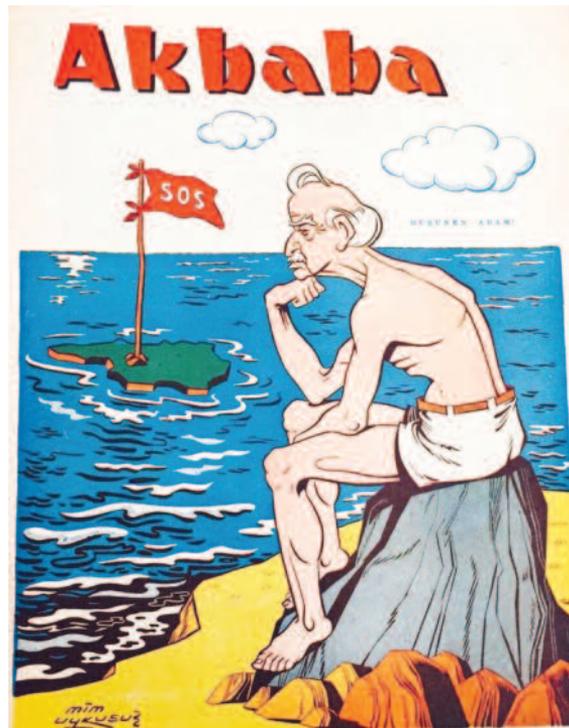
<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>40</sup> Eftal İrkıçatal, "İngiliz Belgelerine Göre Kıbrıs Meselesinde 'Taksim' Fikrinin Ortaya Çıkması ve İngiltere'nin 'Çifte Self Determinasyon' Teklifi," *History Studies*, Prof. Dr. Enver Konukçu Armağanı /2012.

<sup>41</sup> Kıbrıs Bibliyografyası, *Türk Kültürü*, February 1964, pp. 68-96.

With the establishment of the bicomunal Republic of Cyprus in 1960, the Turkish government adopted a policy of strong support for the fledgling state, a support that often ran counter to the wishes of Turkish Cypriot leaders in the island.<sup>42</sup> The Turkish government's position temporarily dampened the enthusiasm that had been aroused by the media and agitation of the 1950's, particularly because the Treaty of Guarantee of the new republic formally acknowledged Turkey's role as protector of the Turkish Cypriot community and gave Turkey, along with Greece and the United Kingdom, the right to intervene to restore constitutional order. It furthermore secured that right with 600 Turkish troops stationed in the island. Public enthusiasm was aroused again, however, when intercommunal fighting began in 1963, with Turkish Cypriots retreating to enclaves that were afterwards put under military siege by Cyprus government forces.



**Image 3:** Cover of the Turkish humor magazine, *Akbaba*, dated 19 March 1964, showing Turkish Prime Minister İsmet İnönü contemplating what to do about Cyprus.

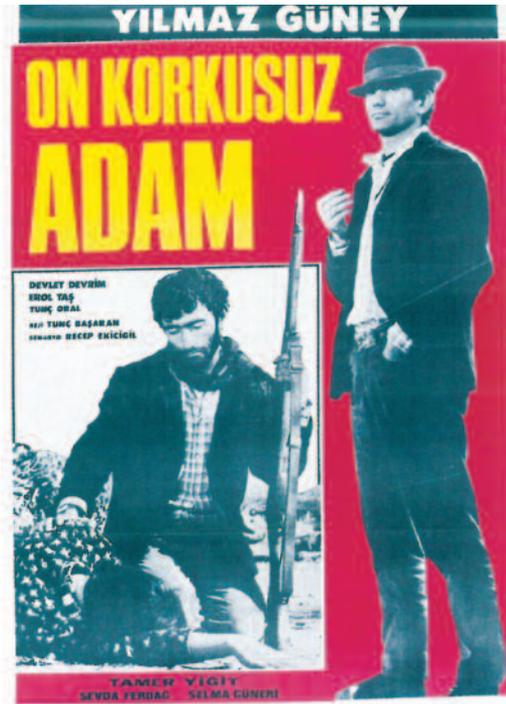
<sup>42</sup> Rauf Denktaş, *Hatıraları I. Cilt* (Istanbul: Boğaziçi Yayınları, 1996), pp. 367-368.



**Image 4:** Cover of the Turkish humor magazine *Akbaba*, dated 12 November 1964, showing Cyprus President Makarios putting a wreath on a memorial to Atatürk with the caption, "Rest in light, my pasha. . . . If you had been alive I never would have been able to make such a fuss!"

During that period, the "national cause" acquired even more urgency, as media reports showed Turkish villages under attack and reported on numbers of the dead and missing. Moreover, a flurry of films based on the Cyprus conflict began to appear after 1964, with titles such as *Ten Fearless Men* (*On Korkusuz Adam*), *Cyprus the Volcano* (*Kıbrıs Volkan*), *The Legend of the Rising Fighters* (*Şahlanan Mücahitlerin Destanı*), *The Female Enemy* (*Dişi Düşman*), and *The Commandoes are Coming* (*Komandolar Geliyor*).<sup>43</sup> In the parts of Anatolia not reached by these films, other methods, such as circulating tapes, produced the same result. One woman originally from Kayseri whose son fought in Cyprus in 1974 and who eventually settled in the island explained to us how she first heard of Cyprus from such a circulating tape, in which a Turkish Cypriot woman described an attack on her village. Although she still arrived in 1974 knowing little about the island, she says that she had in mind "brothers" who were under attack and needed the protection of their "mother."

<sup>43</sup> Bülent Fevziöğlü and Bilgi Fevziöğlü, *Sinema, Plak ve Bildirilerde Kıbrıs Türklerinin Direniş Yılları (1)* (Lefkoşa: Ajans Yay, 2009).



*Image 5: Poster for the film "Ten Fearless Men" (1964).*

Apart from one intervention in 1964 to relieve the siege of the Tillyria village of Erenköy, Turkey limited its protection throughout the 1960's to military and economic aid to the Turkish Cypriot enclaves and fighting force. This included providing salaries for those who had been unemployed by their isolation, as well as food aid, weapons, and military training. However, a coup attempt against President Makarios, backed by the Greek junta government, triggered Turkey's military intervention in July 1974. The invasion that began on 20 July of that year was followed by a second wave on 13 August for what Turkey argued were security reasons. Although we do not know the exact number of Turkish forces that participated in the intervention, official reports show that 498 Turkish soldiers were killed in the fighting.<sup>44</sup> Given that in Turkey's last major military operation during the Korean War approximately 700 soldiers had been killed over the course of three years, this was a substantial loss of life that was reflected in popular culture and public rhetoric regarding the intervention.

<sup>44</sup> Mesud Günsev, *20 Temmuz 1974: Şafak Vakti Kıbrıs* (İstanbul: Alfa 2004).



Image 6: Album from 1974, "The Legend of the Conquest of Cyprus."



Image 7: Album from 1974, "One for Girne, Two for Lefkoşe, I'm going to Cyprus."

Although the rhetoric of Turkish nationalism in Cyprus had always emphasized blood shed in the island, especially during the Ottoman conquest,<sup>45</sup> after 1974 that emphasis turned to the more recent Turkish “martyrs” who had died to save their island “brothers.” It was in this period that the “national cause” of Cyprus acquired a more personal aspect, as many conscripted soldiers from throughout Turkey had participated in the military invasion of the island. For instance, in a popular film from 2001 set in the remote eastern province of Hakkari, the most striking scene is the arrival of the town’s first television, the first news broadcast on which announces the death of one of the town’s sons in Cyprus.<sup>46</sup>

The more personal aspect of the “national cause,” however, also made the “oppression” of Turkish Cypriots at the hands of their Greek neighbors into part of a longer history of Greek irredentism. Indeed, while the “national cause” depended on the intrinsic connection of Cyprus to Turkey and therefore Turkey’s role as “protector” of Turkish Cypriots, the enthusiasm around it was whipped up through repeated references to the irredentist aspirations of their neighbors. Süleyman Demirel, later prime minister of Turkey, expressed this in the parliament on 20 July 1974, the day that Turkey invoked its guarantor powers in the island and militarily intervened, ultimately partitioning it:

The Cyprus cause for Turkey is more than a matter of land, and even more than the safety of our 150,000 ethnic brothers who live in Cyprus. The Cyprus cause is a cause intended to say “stop” to Hellenic idealism and the Megali Idea that started from the Mora peninsula and grew, always against the Ottoman Empire. . . . The sensitivity shown by the Turkish People when faced with the Cyprus cause is the result of a historical consciousness.<sup>47</sup>

The future Turkish prime minister, then, acknowledges that the “national cause” is also a matter of “national pride,” of regaining an honor that appeared to have been lost through the loss of Ottoman territories beginning with the Greek War of Independence.

In an echo of this at the personal level, Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktaş recounted in his memoirs the day of the Turkish invasion, when he visited the Turkish camp in the Boğaz area between Nicosia and Kyrenia, the site of much of the intervention’s coordination. There, he encountered a young officer who had been part of the parachute team that floated into the Mesaoria plane that same morning. When he asked the officer if he had not been afraid, “The young officer examined me for a few moments, then said, ‘We weren’t afraid. . . I’m going to tell you something and you won’t believe it.’ Then he continued, ‘When I jumped into that

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<sup>45</sup> For examples from the 1950’s, see Bryant, *Imagining the Modern*, chapter 7.

<sup>46</sup> Yılmaz Erdoğan and Ömer Faruk Sorak (directors), *Vizontele* (Istanbul: BKM, 2001).

<sup>47</sup> Uluçevik, page number unavailable.

emptiness, there were the soldiers of 1571 on their white horses, with their unsheathed swords. I descended from the heights with them."<sup>48</sup> The historical consciousness of which Demirel spoke, then, emerged in this soldier's telling in the form of Ottoman soldiers on their horses conquering the island.

As we explore in the next chapter, the idea that maintaining the "national cause" was also a matter of "national pride" would, moreover, continue unabated for several decades, fuelled both by the predominance of the Turkish military in Turkish domestic politics and by the Turkish nationalist rhetoric of Turkish Cypriot leaders, especially long-time president Rauf Denktaş. Only in the early 2000's, with a change in the Turkish government that brought a party with a religious base to power and ultimately sidelined the military, would there be a change in Turkey's policy toward the island. At the moment the Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power, Turkey's EU accession was still on the agenda, and indeed there was hope that a new United Nations reunification plan for Cyprus could clear that stumbling block from Turkey's accession path. At the time, self-described nationalists accused pro-EU politicians of trying to "sell out" Cyprus, a way of phrasing the problem that also revealed the importance of this national cause to national pride. Writing ironically of this attitude, one columnist observed,

The idea that we brought peace, that we brought security, that's all a ruse. . . For the first time in three hundred years, we, the grandchildren of the Ottomans, loved "having taken territory". . . We didn't look at it as though we had saved it, we always looked at it as though we "took" it. (*Kurtardık gözüyle bakmadık, "aldık" gözüyle baktık hep.*) Cyprus enabled us to suppress the inferiority complex that is always racing head-to-head with our superiority complex. The walk of the man in the street changed.<sup>49</sup>

By the time the importance of the Cyprus cause to national pride became clear, Turkish Cypriots had already begun to realize the disadvantages of their own position as persons who had been "saved." Indeed, while Turkish media and histories portrayed 1974 as a heroic victory, the pretext for that victory depended on Turkish Cypriots being an oppressed community that needed to be saved. As we will see in later chapters, the rhetoric of having "saved" Turkish Cypriots would ultimately create frictions that have yet to be resolved.

<sup>48</sup> R. R. Denktaş (2000), *Hatıralar Toplayış: Kıbrıs: Elli Yılın Hikayesi*, 10. Cilt (İstanbul: Boğaziçi Yayınları), p. 392.

<sup>49</sup> Ergin Ardic, 'Kıbrıs'tan çekilmemizin zamanı geliyor', *Sabah*, 6 February 2011, [http://www.sabah.com.tr/yazarlar/ardic/2011/02/06/kibristan\\_cekilmemizin\\_zamani\\_geliyor](http://www.sabah.com.tr/yazarlar/ardic/2011/02/06/kibristan_cekilmemizin_zamani_geliyor). See also the same author's article, <http://www.timeturk.com/tr/makale/engin-ardic/somurgemiz-kibris.html>). A similar perspective was reflected earlier in the memoirs of Rauf Denktaş, who remarked, "History is written with blood, or rather this land that was watered with the blood of innocent people for eleven years has now been transferred to its real owner because of the holy blood of the Mehmetçik [Turkish soldier]. Everyone, even everyone's walk had changed. Heads were held high, and there was joy and pride in the eyes. The pride of being Turkish and being saved by the motherland! The delight and pride of being worthy of being saved by the motherland! It was as though we had been born again that morning!" (Denktaş, *Hatıralar Toplayış*, p. 390).

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## CHAPTER 2:

# THE SECURITIZATION OF CYPRUS

Starting from the mid-1950's and continuing until the beginning of 2003, in Turkey, despite occasionally being faced with very difficult internal and external conditions, there was a "national excitement" that covered all of the state institutions, the parliament, and all of the people young and old and was reflected without exception in our press. What made this excitement possible was the idea of the "national cause." This idea came about because of becoming aware of the importance and value for Turkey of the island of Cyprus. Adopting this "national cause" entailed demonstrating an unwavering "national stance." There was no thought, in either the government or the press, of taking a step back or making a concession on the question of Cyprus in order to achieve some other foreign policy goal.<sup>50</sup>

As we described in the previous chapter, Cyprus emerged in the 1950's as a Turkish national cause, and after the 1974 Turkish military intervention in the island also became a subject of national pride, or what former Turkish ambassador Tugay Uluçevik describes in the quotation above as "national excitement." He describes how this became, in turn, what he calls a "national stance" (*milli duruş*) and thereby a policy principle. Within the context of that "national stance," it was, he asserts, impossible either to question that principle or to think of sacrificing it for other interests.

In this chapter we briefly explore the implications of "securitizing" Cyprus, or making the Cyprus Problem into a matter not only of Turkish foreign policy but of national security, thereby creating a "national stance" on the issue that was unquestionable. As should have been clear from the previous chapter, the transformation of the Cyprus Problem into a Turkish national cause also blurred the lines between domestic and foreign policy in Turkey; as the Cyprus question became "securitized," it made what would otherwise appear to be foreign policy a matter of domestic concern.<sup>51</sup> While in the three decades after the establishment of the Turkish Republic that country's stance on Cyprus had been a distant one, the intense

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<sup>50</sup> Uluçevik, *op. cit.*

<sup>51</sup> Alper Kaliber, "Securing the Ground Through Securitized 'Foreign' Policy: The Case of Cyprus," *Security Dialogue* 36:3 (2005), pp. 319-337.

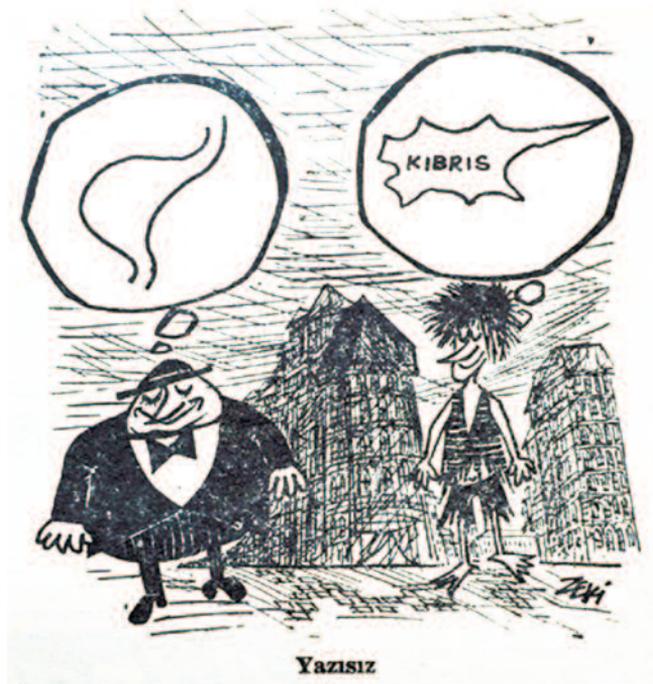
mobilization by Turkish and Turkish Cypriot elites and youth, as well as Turkish media, ultimately convinced a large portion of the Turkish public that Turkish Cypriots were “blood brothers” who were under threat, and moreover that geographically the island was in any case part of Anatolia. As we will describe in this chapter, that sense of threat to a “national cause” that had also become part of Turkey’s national interest was also maintained in the post-1974 period, primarily through the collusion of Denktaş and other Turkish Cypriot nationalist politicians with the military-bureaucratic establishment in Turkey.

An emerging literature on “securitization” has shown the ways in which particular events or subjects are transformed into issues of national security through the intervention of state actors and/or the media. “Securitizing” an issue in turn enables state actors to take extreme or otherwise unacceptable steps to counter the subject that has been securitized. An example would be the United States immediately after 11 September 2001, when the government used U.S. “security” to open Guantanamo, justify the torture of terrorism suspects, and begin large-scale surveillance of its own population. More recently, the flood of refugees into Europe produced a securitizing response that made it seem as though the way to stem the tide was through policing borders and erecting border fences.

Over the course of several decades, the Cyprus Problem was securitized in Turkey through the portrayal of Greece and Greek Cypriots as eternal antagonists who continued to seek the union of Cyprus with Greece. In this discourse, Cyprus became tied to Turkey’s maritime dispute with Greece on its western shores, as well as to the condition of Turkish citizens of Greece in Thrace. Much of this discourse was encouraged and reproduced by Turkish Cypriot nationalist politicians, especially long-time President Denktaş, who wrote voluminously on the issue for the Turkish public and lectured tirelessly throughout Turkey. Moreover, Denktaş had a decades-long collaboration with the Turkish military, starting from the 1950’s and the emergence of TMT, as well as a presumed cooperation with the Special Warfare Department (*Özel Harp Dairesi*), a Cold War contraguerrilla arm of NATO. What we do know is that Denktaş was on close terms with what Metin Heper calls the “state elites” in Turkey, in other words those military-bureaucratic cadres who saw themselves as the protectors of the secular Turkish state against the “political elites,” or those politicians—particularly opposition politicians—who might seek to change it.<sup>52</sup> The alignment of Denktaş and Turkish Cypriot nationalist politicians with the state elites in Turkey, then, secured the Cyprus cause as a “national stance” by removing it from the realm of politics.

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<sup>52</sup> Metin Heper, “The Strong State as a Problem for the Consolidation of Democracy: Turkey and Germany Compared,” *Comparative Political Studies* 25:2 (1992): 169-194. Alper Kaliber remarks on this, noting, “These state elites, perceiving themselves as the ‘ultimate guardian’ of the state, nurtured deep mistrust and suspicion of the political elites, particularly if the latter claimed to represent peripheral social groups disenchanted with the state’s project of radical modernization” (“Securing the Ground,” p. 327).



*Image 8: A caricature from the Turkish humor magazine Akbaba from 1964 shows the Cyprus Problem being manipulated to distract poor Turks from thinking about economic issues.*

Historian Behlül Özkan notes, “Cyprus was used to construct a national consensus as well as an authoritarian system which silenced opposition.”<sup>53</sup> In an important article, political scientist Alper Kaliber argues that the process by which the “national stance” became unquestionable and opposition silenced was through the bureaucratic normalization of the issue. Returning to our example above, we may see through various forms of anti-terror legislation the way that increased surveillance of populations has become bureaucratized and normalized. As an issue becomes bureaucratized, it becomes increasingly unquestionable, even as it may increase the power of the bureaucracy. In the case of the Turkish securitization of Cyprus, Kaliber notes,

It has forced the government as the political authority to pursue predetermined policies by remaining loyal to the “red lines” drawn up by the “foreign” policy and security establishment. Second, the consistent efforts of the bureaucratic elite to hold

<sup>53</sup> Behlül Özkan, “Making Cyprus a National Cause in Turkey’s Foreign Policy, 1948-1965,” *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 15(4), p. 544.

the Cyprus question within the sphere of “the existential” and “the imminent” thwarted the occurrence of widespread social debate within an autonomous public sphere, and thus led to the depoliticization and fixation of the issue as an area of bureaucratic specialty and competence.<sup>54</sup>

In other words, once Cyprus became a national cause and a matter of national pride, it was no longer debatable. As Kaliber notes, “The conventional state rhetoric on the Cyprus question substantially contributed to the institutionalization of a regime fetishizing such concepts as security, stability and ‘national sensitivities’ in Turkey.”<sup>55</sup> So while the securitization of the Cyprus Problem served to bolster the state elites in Turkey through “fetishization” of national security, often against political elites, it simultaneously bolstered the position of nationalist politicians in Cyprus, especially Rauf Denktaş, who was greatly admired by the Turkish public.

The admiration that the Turkish public showed for Denktaş made him a legendary figure there and often more popular than in the island itself. Indeed, in a mirroring of the honorific name Atatürk, or “Father of the Turks,” that had been granted to Mustafa Kemal, as the acknowledged founder of the Turkish Republic, Denktaş was often known in Turkey as “Babatürk,” “Father Turk.” In Turkey, the portly Turkish Cypriot president was known as a “fighting man” (*dava adamı*) and was credited both for his unrelenting resistance to Greek Cypriot aggression and for his unwavering Turkish nationalism. Indeed, one Turkish ambassador remarked in later years, “We always divided Turkish Cypriots into two categories: Mr. Denktaş and everyone else.”<sup>56</sup>

As a result, the securitization of the Cyprus Problem was largely achieved through Denktaş’s close ties to and collaboration with the state elites of Turkey, particularly in the Turkish military. In an interview with a former high-level Cypriot bureaucrat conducted in 2012, that administrator observed,

From 1978 to 2008 I was a bureaucrat, and in the last years was a high level bureaucrat. For that reason, I am someone who knows up close the economic policies and financial discussions with Turkey. Prior to the AKP, I can say that the military shaped the TRNC-Turkey relationship. It was the military that always approved the requests for economic and financial aid coming from Cyprus. That is, there would be certain agreements made with Turkey, Turkey would put certain conditions on its aid, but when the military stepped in the conditions were always softened. In other words, it was when the military stepped in that we always got the aid we wanted.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Op. cit., 320.

<sup>55</sup> Kaliber, p. 333.

<sup>56</sup> Gül İnanc, *Türk diplomasisinde Kıbrıs, 1970-1991: Büyükelçiler anlatıyor* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları 2007), p. 147.

<sup>57</sup> Author interview, 12 March 2012.

That collaboration with the military, in turn, was secured through the great reverence in which Denктаş was held in Turkey as a “fighting man.” The phrase in Turkish, *dava adamı*, also makes reference to the main *dava*, or cause. In other words, for several decades the media and state elites in Turkey portrayed Denктаş as the staunchest defender of the national cause, and his popularity in that country ensured that he was able to keep the presumed threats to the island on the agenda. As one academic and journalist commented to us,

For years, whenever there was any progress [in reforming] Cyprus, Denктаş would come to Ankara and see certain circles there and implement an operation by saying, “It’s being sold out.” It was a psychological operation. And it was successful. And at the end of it there was a price. Those in power in Turkey, whether nationalist or conservative, would always end up continuing to pay money in order not to be confronted with accusations that they were selling out Cyprus.

All of this would change only in late 2002, with the election of the AKP and the threat that it presented to the military-bureaucratic elites. This election coincided with the presentation of a new United Nations reunification plan for Cyprus, a plan that Denктаş rejected. Because the AKP came to power with promises of reform intended to secure EU membership, Denктаş and his cohorts appeared to be a stumbling block on their road to EU accession. Moreover, a banking crisis in north Cyprus and financial crisis in Turkey brought Turkish Cypriots into the streets of north Nicosia in support of the U.N. plan, which would have guaranteed their own admission to the Union. As one political scientist close to the AK Party government commented to us,

Whenever one talked about the Cyprus Problem, it was always seen as a security issue, in other words, it was always in the military domain. This changed with the Annan Plan, and of course lately with the breakdown of military hegemony in Turkey.

While there were vociferous voices decrying the state’s “selling out” of Cyprus, these were soon drowned by the AKP’s EU-oriented agenda and sidelining of the military. It was only in the de-securitizing of the Cyprus Problem, then, that a new Turkish policy towards the island could be born.

## CHAPTER 3:

# A STRATEGIC ISLAND

In 2003, when the Turkish government changed course and actively began to support a U.N.-backed reunification plan for the island, some of the most fervent voices decrying that new policy came from Turkey's security community. While Cyprus's transformation into a "national cause" in the 1950's kept the island on the national agenda for decades and could be used to sway and mobilize public opinion, there had always existed a parallel, geopolitical view of the island that until 2003 was firmly aligned with the "national cause" rhetoric. This was a view that held that Cyprus was of the utmost strategic importance for Turkey, and that, as former Turkish Foreign Minister and then Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu wrote in his 2001 book *Strategic Depth*, "Even if there had been not a single Muslim Turk there, it would have been necessary for Turkey to have a Cyprus Problem. No country can remain quiet regarding a place that lies at the very heart of its own *Lebensraum*."<sup>58</sup>

While Davutoğlu, following other analysts, acknowledged the historical responsibility of Turkey to protect the island's "Muslim Turkish" community as the "axis [of Turkey's interest] with a human quality" (*beşeri nitelikli eksenidir*),<sup>59</sup> the strategic axis "is one that is in and of itself of vital importance, even independently of the human element."<sup>60</sup> Davutoğlu's assessment, as part of a larger foreign policy vision, asserts and affirms Turkey's moral duty as protector of Turkish Cypriots, hence aligning this vision with the "national cause." However, he qualifies this statement with the assertion that even without that "human element" Turkey would have no choice but to be concerned with Cyprus.

This section examines the Turkish policy community's expressions of Cyprus's strategic importance, how these intersect with the discourse of a national cause, and how such geostrategic assessments have or have not been affected by the 2002 change of government in Turkey and its subsequent change of course with regard to Cyprus. What will become clear is that while the period in which the Turkish public generally viewed Cyprus as a national

<sup>58</sup> Ahmet Davutoğlu (2001), *Stratejik Derinlik: Türkiye'nin Uluslararası Konumu* (İstanbul: Küre Yayınları) p. 179.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 178.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179.

cause also allowed the rhetoric of “saving” Turkish Cypriots to overshadow a rhetoric of national interests, the post-2003 change of policy has undermined the previously perceived “kinship” between persons from Turkey and from Cyprus, creating contradictions in that relationship.

If we return to the teacher and parliamentarian with whom we began this report, we notice that she, also, viewed Cyprus as “geographically, part of Anatolia.” Indeed, the thesis that Cyprus had, in what was usually called the “geological age” (*jeolojik devir*), been a part of Anatolia but had broken off from it, became an intrinsic part of the argument that “Cyprus is an indivisible part of Anatolia.” This became part of Turkey’s geopolitical mythology in the late 1940’s, and the idea that the island was geographically and geologically part of Anatolia became an essential, accepted element of any argument for Turkey’s claims on it.

One can see the emphasis on Cyprus’s geographical position, as well as its geological formation, from the 1950’s at least through the 1970’s. For instance, in 1957 Turkish journalist Osman Yüksel Serdengeçti argued in one of his publications,

According to geologists, Cyprus is a piece that has separated from Anatolia. This knowledge is a truth. One should look at a map: Cyprus in fact indicates the Iskenderun Bay with its tip, with its finger. In this way, it is as though the green island is saying, “I separated from there. I want that place.”<sup>61</sup>

In a similar tone, a schoolbook on Cyprus’s history written by an author from Turkey and published in 1959 observes,

The island is, in every sense, in the mouth of the Iskenderun Bay between Turkey and Syria. This shows us that at one time the island was connected to Anatolia. While Anamur on the south coast of Turkey is 70 kilometers away and Syria is 100 kilometers, Greece is 600 kilometers.<sup>62</sup>

In 1969, the first International Congress of Cypriot Studies, held in Ankara, included three papers discussing this thesis in various ways. The first is entitled “The Relationship of the Island of Cyprus with the Mountains of Southern Anatolia,” while another offers “A Geographical Introduction to Cyprus History.”<sup>63</sup> All took for granted the importance of the geographical connection for claims to the island. Indeed, the geographical connection appears so self-evident that it continues today as the central description of the island of Cyprus provided by one of the main Turkish information portals, [www.turkcebilgi.com](http://www.turkcebilgi.com):

<sup>61</sup> Osman Yüksel Serdengeçti (1957 [1986]), *Bu Millet Neden Ağlar* (Konya: Milli Ülkü Yayınevi), p. 82, quoted in Bora.

<sup>62</sup> Hüseyin Metin (1959), *Kıbrıs Tarihine Toplu Bir Bakış* (Lefkoşa: Halkın Sesi Yayınevi), p. 11.

<sup>63</sup> *Milletlerarası Birinci Kıbrıs Tetkikleri Kongresi (14-19 Nisan 1969): Türk Heyeti Tebliğleri* (Ankara: Türk Kültürünü Araştırma Enstitüsü, 1971).

Cyprus is the Mediterranean's third largest island after Sicily and Sardinia; its location between the Çukurova region, surrounded by the Taurus Mountains, and the Hatay region, surrounded by the Amanos Mountains, demonstrates its unity with these shores. At the same time, because of its dominant position in the Iskenderun Bay, composed of Hatay and the Anatolia coastline, it is in a position to control these territories.<sup>64</sup>



*Image 9: Image from a news item dated 28 March 2016, announcing a research project between the TRNC Ministry of Tourism and Gazi University in Turkey intended to demonstrate “both the cultural connection and the territorial movements between Turkey and the TRNC.”<sup>65</sup>*

Even today, then, the presumed geographical and geological connection of Cyprus with Anatolia and the region pervades common descriptions of Cyprus and common understandings of its significance for Turkey. In almost all of this literature, the idea that Cyprus was geologically part of Anatolia appears to provide a self-evident argument for Turkey's claims on the island. If that claim does not appear self-evident to others, its presumed significance becomes clearer in three further propositions that authors of this strategic thesis often attempt to deduce from the geographical assumption. The first two of these proposals relate to the claims of Greece and Greek Cypriots over the island and tie the geographical thesis together with arguments for the national cause. The third of these proposals focuses solely on the strategic significance of the island and its importance for the protection of Turkey's interests. As we will see, while the first two arguments were emphasized in the pre-2003 period, the last has become predominant post-2003.

<sup>64</sup> <http://www.turkcebilgi.com/kibris>

<sup>65</sup> İsmail Hakkı Demir, “Türkiye ile Kıbrıs'ın karasal bağı: Türkiye ile KKTC'nin hem kültürel bağlantısı hem de kara hareketlerini ortaya çıkarmak için çalışılıyor,” Anadolu Ajansı, 28 March 2016, <http://www.mistikalem.com/turkiye-ile-kibris-in-karasal-bagi-45223-haberi/>

(1) *Cyprus is an intrinsic part of the Motherland and never belonged to Greece.* The first argument that appears to flow from these geographical/geological “facts” is that Cyprus is actually an intrinsic part of the *Vatan*, the Motherland. As a result, being concerned with it does not violate the *Mısak-ı Milli*, the National Pact that defines its borders. For instance, as early as 1955, Osman Bölükbaşı, at that time head of the opposition Republican Nation Party (*Cumhuriyetçi Millet Partisi*), remarked at a party meeting:

Cyprus concerns us from two aspects. The first aspect is that of the lives of the hundred thousand Turks living there. The second aspect is Cyprus being a part of the Motherland (*Vatan*).<sup>66</sup>

Although the Turkish state’s position regarding the island between 1960 and 1963 was respect for the newly established Republic of Cyprus, the confusion over where Turkey’s borders actually lie would reappear in the post-1974 period. As Bryant and Yakinthou (2012) discuss at length, Turkey’s position regarding the island has been contradictory, both recognizing the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus after 1983 and intervening in the TRNC’s internal affairs. While this contradictory attitude of a “patron state” to its client is common for many such unrecognized entities,<sup>67</sup> that attitude is complicated by the decades-long attempt to draw Turkey into the Cyprus dispute by demonstrating that the island is “really” part of Anatolia.

The rhetoric of Motherland and Babyland (*Anavatan* and *Yavruvatan*) that until around 2003 retained emotional power emerges in part from the dilemma of describing Cyprus as both a part of “oneself”—both the people and the territory—and separate. In this rhetoric, not only do Turkish Cypriots become “ethnic brothers” (*soydaşlar*), but the territory of Cyprus itself is described as having a kinship with the “mother.” Although Turkish Cypriots today balk at this rhetoric, it retains its power in Turkey. As recently as June 2016, Turkish Economy Minister Nihat Zeybekci, in a visit to the island, declared, “Cyprus is life, Cyprus is a part of Turkey. For Turkey, Cyprus has the same meaning as the Marmara or Ege or Thrace regions of Anatolia.”<sup>68</sup>

At the same time, the geological argument is intended to show that Cyprus never belonged to Greece but has a natural connection to Turkey. This argument pervades the literature on the geographical connection and is one of the main justifications for it, countering aeons of geology with the short-term connection of conquest:

<sup>66</sup> C.M.P. Genel Başkanı Bölükbaşı (24 Ağustos 1955) [Edirne’de CMP II Kongresi’nde], *Cumhuriyet*, 26 August 1955, p. 7, quoted in Uluçevik.

<sup>67</sup> See, for instance, Caspersen, *Unrecognized States*.

<sup>68</sup> “40. Uluslararası Kıbrıs fuarı,” 11 June 2016, <http://www.haberler.com/40-uluslararası-kktc-fuari-8518521-haber/>

Given the sailing and trading skills of the [ancient] Greeks, there is no doubt that in Prehistory they had colonies in Cyprus just as they had them in the Black Sea and on the shores of the Mediterranean. But I asked to what extent the Greeks today make claims on Syracuse in Sicily, Monaco and Marseille in south France, or Alexandria in Egypt, where certain works we've uncovered show that there were ancient Greek colonies.<sup>69</sup>

The peculiarity of the geographical argument has often been pointed out, even to the purveyors of it. For instance, one of the presenters at the first International Cypriot Studies Conference styled his remarks to address such a query:

The other day, at a congress meeting, our colleague M. Makalopoulos asked in a presentation, "What is the significance of proclaiming that the Island belongs to Anatolia from the perspective of physical geography?" . . . . A country or an island, either directly or indirectly, is more or less under the geographical influence of its surroundings. This influence shows itself in human communities, in what they eat, drink and wear, in their agricultural materials and methods, in their handicrafts and nutrition (in Cyprus, like in Anatolia, including pekmez, sucuk with walnuts, yoghurt, cheese, etc.), in their sayings, their thoughts and feelings, their folk dances and poems, their folk music. . . We learn to which land's culture Cyprus belongs and which civilizational traces it carries through traveling around the island.<sup>70</sup>

Along, then, with the argument that Cyprus was never part of Greece and is "naturally" part of Turkey, there is also an argument that links geography and climate to culture. Under the continuing influence of early physical anthropology and the race concept as it had infiltrated the history of the nation-state, especially in Turkey,<sup>71</sup> these authors argue at least into the 1970's that geography and climate are determinative of "race" and culture.

(2) *The "brute facts" or "realities" of geography and geology are used to counter the "myths" and "delusions" of Greek nationalism, i.e., to show that Greek Cypriots in fact are not Greeks at all but instead are mongrels.* One of the earliest conclusions that Turkish authors attempt to draw from the geography argument is that Greek Cypriots *cannot* be Greek by blood and can only imagine themselves to be Greek. Even as early as 1938, Turkish Cypriot historian and teacher İsmet Konur, by then settled in Turkey, wrote a book called simply *Cypriot Turks*, a book published in Turkey but banned by British authorities in Cyprus. There he articulates an argument that would pervade the literature on Cyprus's historico-geographic position:

<sup>69</sup> Prof. Cemak Arif Alagöz, "Kıbrıs Tarihine Coğrafi Giriş," *Milletlerarası Birinci Kıbrıs Tetkikleri Kongresi*, p. 16.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>71</sup> On the role of physical anthropology in constructing a Turkish nation, see Zafer Toprak (2012), *Darwin'den Dersim'e: Cumhuriyet ve Antropoloji* (Istanbul: Doğan Kitap).

It's quite clear that in the Byzantine period, the fact that Greek was the official language of the Eastern Roman Empire meant that Cypriots, even though they were not Greeks, began to speak Greek and with time declared themselves Greek, forgetting their true identity, and these constitute the Greeks of Cyprus today.<sup>72</sup>

This argument would later be echoed by Turkish nationalist authors as they attempted to draw supporters for the Cypriot "national cause" in Turkey. One such author, Peyami Safa, was a columnist for the widely read *Milliyet* newspaper. Along with his magazine, *Turkish Thought* (*Türk Düşünce*), which sponsored several special issues on Cyprus, Safa often used his columns in the newspaper or invitations as a public speaker to propound the "cause" and argue for the invalidity of Greek claims:

Cyprus is in Turkish waters and far from Greece. There is not a single Greek on the island. There are a bunch of Rums who are not Greek and are mongrel members of the Orthodox community from various races. For this reason, before Cyprus passed into the hands of the English, Greece had absolutely no claim on the island.<sup>73</sup>

Only a few months later, at a students' association meeting in Istanbul, Safa roused students and their parents around the cause:

The delusion of being the heirs of the ancient Hellenic peoples and their civilization and of snatching all the former Byzantine territories from the Turks is one that seems to have put a spell on this crudely noisy and obstreperous people, from its Kings to its waiters. History, Ethnography, and Raceology all put the lie to these fantasies. Although we have always been victorious in the struggle between Greek fantasies and Turkish realities, the Greeks' English, French and Russian uncles have enabled them to take possession of Turkish territories as far as Western Thrace, turning military defeats into political victories. One cannot show another instance in world history of delusion and delirium defeating right and reality.<sup>74</sup>

The theme of Greek nationalism and irrendentism in Cyprus as a delusion and of Turkish "realities" based on geography, history, ethnography, and "raceology" was one that would be repeated even into the 1990's. This was a large part of the justification for what one author had referred to earlier as the "national stance"—a "stance" supposedly based on fact rather than fiction, on reality rather than delusion. However, that "national stance" would run up

<sup>72</sup> İsmet Konur (1938), *Kıbrıs Türkleri* (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi), p. 13.

<sup>73</sup> Peyami Safa, "Objektif: Kıbrıs Onlara Benzemez," *Milliyet*, 13 February 1958.

<sup>74</sup> Peyami Safa, Eminönü Öğrenci Lokalinde yapılan 'Kıbrıs Toplantısı', 'Kıbrıs Toplantısında Yeniden And İçildi,' *Milliyet*, 28 June 1958.

against other realities in late 2002, when Turkey's internal politics for the first time permitted questioning of the way that Turkey had, until that time, shown an unwavering support of the national cause, even when it was not in Turkey's interests.

(3) *Because of its location, Cyprus is necessary for Turkey's security.* Another argument that is often taken to be self-evident in the Turkish literature is that Cyprus is necessary for Turkey's security. The argument itself is a simple one, summarized, for instance, by retired Major General Armağan Kuloğlu, in a working paper for Beykent University:

The island of Cyprus is, for Turkey, an area that provides a safe entry point into the Mediterranean, that allows for control of the region's seaways, for control of its territorial waters, its continental shelf, its exclusive economic zone, its relations and interests with the sea, and its airspace, and for depth of Turkey's strategic defense.<sup>75</sup>

The strategic importance of Cyprus, moreover, has consistently been an operating assumption of Turkey's political elites, as well as state elites, from the 1950's to the present. As early as 1955, for instance, then Prime Minister Adnan Menderes explained in parliament,

The greater part of Turkey's coastline is today surrounded with the surveillance and threat of blocks belonging to another state. Only the Cyprus area seems safe. In this respect Cyprus is constituted by a continuation of Anatolia and is one of the points essential for its safety.<sup>76</sup>

In 1997, the respected former prime minister who had ordered the invasion of Cyprus in 1974, Bülent Ecevit, made a similar proclamation, despite the apparent contradiction with the pretext used for that invasion, namely, the protection of the Turkish Cypriot community:

Mr. Denktaş always generously expressed the feelings of gratitude of Turkish Cypriots towards Turkey; but actually, it's not only that Turkey is a security for Cyprus; the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is a great security for Turkey. One doesn't need to be a strategy expert in order to perceive and comprehend how great a security North Cyprus provides Turkey. Anyone who opens a middle school map and looks at it can see with their own eyes how important a strategic role Cyprus plays for Turkey. From the perspective of the safety of our southern shores, of the harbors in Iskenderun and Mersin, and of the oil pipelines that exist and the oil and gas pipelines that may be

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<sup>75</sup> Armağan Kuloğlu, "KKTC'nin Stratejik Önemi ve Türk Cumhuriyetleri ile Dayanışma," Beykent University working paper, N.D., p. 1.

<sup>76</sup> *Cumhuriyet*, 25 August 1955, pp. 1-7, quoted in Uluçevik.

built in the future, it is a requirement—for Turkey’s security above all else—that the presence of Turkish troops continue in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, and that first of all that republic continue to exist—and hopefully it will exist forever—and that Turkish troops remain there in perpetuity.<sup>77</sup>

Similar expressions of the unquestionable strategic importance of the island can be found, moreover, in the first paragraphs of almost any international relations paper on Cyprus emerging from Turkey today.

However, the change of Turkish government and presentation of the U.N. reunification plan for Cyprus in late 2002, coinciding with the imminent entry of the Republic of Cyprus into the European Union, meant a change in the way Cyprus’s strategic importance was discussed. In an article from January 2003, former diplomat İler Türkmen noted that the threat that had constituted the justification for earlier assertions of Cyprus’s strategic importance had been considerably lessened by Cyprus’s EU candidacy. In any case, he remarked, existing forces in the island only consisted of army troops:

These forces are not of the sort that could take on a strategic mission. Their mission is to defend the status quo. Perhaps it was originally foreseen that in the event of a conflict with Greece the army would march south. But the military balance that has emerged in recent years between Greece and us, as well as South Cyprus’s being an EU member, mean that this is no longer an option. For the island to be used as a regional strategic platform we would need also to base the air force and navy there. Can we do that? I don’t think so, because in that case Greece would do the same.<sup>78</sup>

This review of the strategic approach seemed necessary at the time, when Turkish Cypriots were agitating in favor of a reunification plan that would have allowed north Cyprus also to enter the EU. While Turkey’s presence in the island had previously been justified as protection for their “ethnic brethren,” the desire of those ethnic brethren for a solution that would have demilitarized the island left the strategic approach bare. As Türkmen notes in this article, not only is the strategic argument now weak because of the entry of the EU into the formula, but “a purely strategic approach holds Turkey’s presumed strategic interests to be more important than the political and economic interests of Turkish Cypriots.”

<sup>77</sup> Istanbul MP Bülent Ecevit, TBMM Tutanak Dergisi, 21 January 1997, Tuesday, Dönem 2, Cilt 19, Yasama Yılı 2, 48. Birleşim, quoted in Uluçevik 2016.

<sup>78</sup> İler Türkmen, “Kıbrıs’ın Stratejik Önemi,” *Hürriyet*, 4 January 2003.

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## CHAPTER 4:

# CYPRUS AS BURDEN: A PRAGMATIC VIEW

In January 2001, Turkey experienced one of the worst economic crises in the history of the country. Following a row between then Prime Minister Ecevit and President Ahmet Necdet Sezer on Turkey's EU course, the Turkish lira plummeted overnight, sending financial markets into turmoil. Within a matter of a couple of months, businesses began closing and unemployment rose. In Cyprus, the drop in the lira's value followed a local banking crisis the previous year, in which several local banks had gone bankrupt, thereby sinking the investments of many. By late 2002, when the AK Party came to power, the extremes of uncertainty produced by these unexpected crises meant that many Turkish Cypriots were prepared to take a pragmatic approach to their future—what hard-core nationalists would soon call “selling out Cyprus”—that manifested itself in a rising public preparedness in Cyprus to sacrifice the “national cause” for a more stable future.

It was at this same time that details of the U.N.'s new reunification plan began to surface. The U.N. had not taken such an active role in Cyprus negotiations in the past, but there was growing concern in that institution that a divided island could join the European Union in May 2004, the date given for the Republic of Cyprus's accession. At the behest of U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan, U.N. experts sat down and distilled around forty years of negotiations into what became popularly known as the Annan Plan.

The presentation of the plan to leaders in Cyprus happened to coincide with a change of the Turkish government and a new foreign policy strategy masterminded by Prof. Ahmet Davutoğlu, who would later become Foreign Minister and then Prime Minister. That new strategy was one of “zero problems with neighbors,” coupled, in Cyprus, with the principle of “always being one step ahead.” What this meant was that whereas Turkey's Cyprus strategy in the past had been primarily passive, protecting the status quo, it suddenly became proactive, with Turkish diplomats participating more actively in creating proposals that could reasonably become negotiating positions.

At the same time that this was happening, the Turkish public was befuddled by a series of pro-reunification protests in Cyprus that simultaneously appeared to be anti-Turkish. The roots of those protests were various, including not only economic crises but also the negative influence of Denktaş's collaboration with Turkey's military and “deep state.” The late 1990's saw the assassination of journalist Kutlu Adalı, presumably at the hands of the “deep state”; the

arrest of journalist Şener Levent, editor of the newspaper *Avrupa*; and bombs or bomb threats at *Avrupa* and other opposition newspapers. Rather than silencing Turkish Cypriots, these actions ultimately provoked them to protest.

In Turkey, however, Turkish Cypriot protests tended to be interpreted as “anti-Turkish,” largely because opposition to the Turkish government was often expressed through opposition to Turkish migrants in the island. The previous few years had seen a rising anti-immigrant sentiment in the island, as at the time almost all the migrant laborers in Cyprus’s north working in factories, hotels, and construction were Turkish nationals, often Kurds escaping conflict in the country’s southeast or persons of Arab origin from the impoverished Hatay region. In public rhetoric, these temporary migrants were confused with Turkish settlers who had arrived in the island in the late 1970’s and had been given houses and citizenship. Although those settlers and their children constituted only around 25% of the citizen population, left-wing parties had begun, in the late 1990’s, to claim that it was persons from Turkey who provided support for right-wing leader Denктаş and who, in the rhetoric of the Left, “impeded Cypriots’ political will.” Not only this, but the large numbers of immigrant workers then housed in Nicosia’s walled city resulted in complaints by Turkish Cypriots that the island was changing.<sup>79</sup> And it was because of the inaccurate perception that persons of Turkish origin who were voters outnumbered Turkish Cypriots and therefore were taking away their “political will” that opposition to them might be perceived as opposition to Turkey.

The protests that began in Cyprus in late 2002 and grew in early 2003 ultimately resulted in the opening of the checkpoints dividing the island in April of that year. For Turkish audiences, the perceived anti-Turkish rhetoric of the protests was puzzling, as Turkish Cypriots created the Jasmine Movement (*Yasemin Hareketi*), the This Country is Ours Platform (*Bu Memleket Bizim Platformu*), and the Common Vision (*Ortak Vizyon*), the latter a platform composed of businesspeople and NGOs from across the political spectrum, headed by the Chamber of Commerce. What the names of the former two movements, as well as the writings of many persons involved in these movements, suggested was that the only way to be rid of Turkish influence was to reunite with their Greek Cypriot neighbors.

This period would ultimately result in a transformation of the emotional tie that for so long had worked to bind the various strands of thinking on the Cyprus problem together. What a commentator above called the “national excitement” around the Cyprus issue had for so long been understood through the “kinship” relationship between Turkish Cypriots and Turkey, or between the “Motherland” and the “Babyland.” It was only in the period of the early 2000’s, with the conjuncture of an AK Party victory in national politics, an ongoing economic

<sup>79</sup> For more on this, see Mete Hatay and Rebecca Bryant, “The Jasmine Scent of Nicosia: On Returns, Revolutions, and the Longing for Forbidden Pasts,” *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 26:2 (2008), pp. 423-449.

crisis, and the leakage of the Annan Plan, spurred by the Republic of Cyprus's immanent EU entry, that it was finally possible to take a critical look at the emotional "kinship" rhetoric that had dominated Turkish politics with regard to Cyprus for so long. This rethinking was given further impetus when it seemed possible that solving the Cyprus Problem would clear Turkey's own path for entry into the EU.

Several years later, one Turkish journalist who was known for such a pragmatic approach to Cyprus would write:

I'm going to say something that no one else dares to say: In reality, we're not so crazy about each other. The day I realized the same was true for Greeks and Greek Cypriots, I almost fainted. One day in the 1980's in Athens, Greek Cypriots had gathered in front of our embassy and were protesting. I was passing by there with my Greek girlfriend . . . and she said to me, "It's for them that we're going to kill each other, even though in fact no one here loves them!" . . . We didn't love our Cypriot ethnic brothers, we loved "taking possession" over there. We brought peace, we brought security, all that—it's just a pretence. As the grandchildren of the Ottomans, we loved that for the first time in three hundred years we had "taken territory."

Although he wrote this in early 2011, in the midst of a diplomatic crisis that we discuss in the next chapter, this article was a summation of similar opinions that this and other journalists and policymakers had expressed for some years. In 2008, for example, while Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat was in negotiations with Greek Cypriot leader Dimitris Christofias, this same journalist commented on the contradictory nationalist rhetoric of "selling out" the island:

Recently the media has been saying, "Cyprus is being taken from us." Ensuring a solution in Cyprus is "against Atatürk's principles." Cyprus, which is outside the boundaries of the National Pact and which . . . Atatürk never even thought of "taking back," that Cyprus that the Ottomans turned their backs on 130 years ago without ever looking back, the Cyprus that Ismet Pasha was not even interested in at Lausanne, all of a sudden became "ours." Because we always looked at it as a place we had "taken." If you look at it that way, approaching a solution and hopefully beginning to get rid of this weight on our backs seems like "giving it up"! It's as though Edirne or Ardahan are being taken away!<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Engin Ardic, "Sömürgememiz Kıbrıs," *Timeturk*, 21 July 2008, <http://www.timeturk.com/tr/makale/engin-ardic/somurgemiz-kibris.html>.

For journalists and policymakers such as this, the nationalist rhetoric of a national cause was internally contradictory, on the one hand not accepting the colonizing attitude that the Turkish state and public had taken towards the island, and on the other hand taking approaches towards Cyprus that contradicted and even undermined other parts of Turkey's foreign policy, especially with regards to Europe. In that rhetoric, Greece and the Republic of Cyprus, by that time both EU-member states, were the staunch and unchanging enemy, despite having vetoes in the Union that Turkey wished to join:

You're both going to wear down the European Union's doors trying to get in, and you're going to say "it may be necessary in the future for us to go to war with one of the union's members"—I've never seen such a geostrategy!<sup>81</sup>

It was, then, in the beginning of the 2000's, when Turkey was in the process of EU-oriented changes intended to lead it closer to the Union, that Turkey's position on Cyprus began to change. Then EU Coordinator Egemen Bağış called Turkey's new position on Cyprus a "win-win" (*kazan-kazan*) strategy, echoing the rhetoric of conflict resolution experts who had sought to intervene in the conflict. As a result of this "win-win" strategy, Turkey actively participated in the negotiations of the Annan Plan V, the version that would ultimately be put to twin referenda on both sides of Cyprus in April 2004.

Even after Greek Cypriots defeated that plan at referendum, the AKP-led Turkish government insisted on a policy towards Cyprus in which they would be "one step ahead." This meant a departure from Denktaş's previous insistence on certain "red lines," especially the idea that the unrecognized TRNC would first have to be recognized "if only for a minute," as the former Turkish Cypriot president used to say. This had given Denktaş, and perforce the Turkish Cypriot side, the reputation of intransigence. Instead, the new "one step ahead" policy built on Turkish Cypriots' support for the Annan Plan in a bid to "show the world" that the actually intransigent side was in the island's south.

This more pragmatic view of the Cyprus problem caused it to fall from the agenda of the Turkish public, though as one academic and journalist with a long-time familiarity with the island remarked to us, a "precarious balance" was created. Although in the post-Annan period Cyprus was no longer on the public's agenda, the public could still be manipulated through the rhetoric of "selling out" the island:

You can measure things easily with TV ratings. Whenever there's something about Cyprus, the ratings fall. People aren't interested. The man on the street thinks, "Fifty years ago the Greek Cypriots screwed things up, our heroic army went and beat them up and taught them a lesson. And it's finished." That's the way they look at it. That

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

there's an embargo in Cyprus, whether it's in the customs union or not—these are all non-problems. But if you start a psychological operation saying, "Ah, Cyprus is being sold out," this could turn things sensitive. We reach this point with the discourse that says, "We spilled blood there, our martyrs' blood." There's a precarious balance. Denktaş died but his spirit lives on. Someone could still disturb that balance.

In addition, the defeat of the Annan Plan at referendum led to a new Turkish policy of "developing" north Cyprus through both state and private investment. This has included, for instance, the development of large hotel complexes in the Kyrenia and Bafra regions of the island, building new roads, and most recently the construction of a massive water pipeline bringing fresh water undersea to Cyprus from the south Turkish coast. All of this infrastructural and economic investment in order to "develop" the north has been called by some Turkish diplomats a "Plan B," i.e., a plan for north Cyprus's future in the event that there will never be a settlement. However, as we will see in the final chapter, that development has also created further rifts, as many Turkish Cypriots interpret it as a use of Cypriot resources without direct benefit for Cypriots. Because many of the projects employ workers from Turkey and funnel profits back to Turkey, Turkish Cypriot unions have objected that this is a form of exploitation and colonization. Indeed, in the post-Annan period, even as incomes have risen in Cyprus's north, the discourse of Turkish colonization has also gained considerable ground.

In the previous report that discussed Turkish Cypriot perceptions of Turkey, Bryant observed that the relationship with Turkey may be described as a "paternal protectorate," a type of protectorate that is justified and explained by both Turkish Cypriots and Turkish nationals in the idiom of kinship. Bryant remarked there, "This perceived kinship relationship, then, makes it 'natural' that Turkey would protect Turkish Cypriots and intervene in their affairs." However, it is also the familial nature of this relationship that "creates ambiguity in this particular relation of domination and authority," as that familiarity "often slides between the *paternal* and the *paternalistic*." Paternalism, or interference against someone's will in the interests of their own good, was also a feature of European colonialism in the 19th and 20th centuries, especially the belief in a European "civilizing mission." Bryant observed,

And so like a good father, Turkey has for so long "taken care of" north Cyprus, protecting it, advising it, giving it allowance, and intervening to chastise. Like other parent-child relationships, Turkish Cypriots must struggle to have their autonomy recognized, and there is therefore often resentment that the child is never allowed to "grow up."

In the post-Annan period, the Turkish state's protectorate relationship with its client in Cyprus's north moved from the paternal to the paternalistic, including not only north Cyprus's "development" but also the imposition of austerity measures associated with Turkish aid packages. As we will see, the response of the Turkish public to Turkish Cypriot protests of an increasingly colonizing relationship has increased tensions and led to periods of stand-off between Turkish leaders and their counterparts in the island.

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## CHAPTER 5:

# “WHY DO CYPRIOTS NOT LOVE TURKS?”: THE POST-ANNAN RELATIONSHIP

The view from Turkey of the island, and especially what comes out of the mouths of citizens who live in Turkey and look at the TRNC from Turkey, is a complete disaster. According to Turkey, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is a complete “blood-sucker” and a state that’s like a hump on Turkey’s back. The investments that Turkey sends to the island annoy the Turkish person, and the fact that despite this help Cypriots “make noise” draws reactions from those living in Turkey.<sup>82</sup>

In early 2011, the streets of north Nicosia filled with by some estimates upwards of 20,000 angry Turkish Cypriots who gathered to protest Turkey’s demands that the island’s north go on an economic diet. Since the 1960’s, Turkey has sent millions of dollars each year to support a community whose economy has been hampered, and at times crippled, by various forms of isolation. The current figure is around \$650 million. A large part of that money goes to pay the salaries of civil servants, and Turkey had demanded the imposition of austerity measures, including downsizing the bloated bureaucracy, increasing working hours, and eliminating privileges such as the thirteenth salary, a remnant of British rule in the island. The trade union and civil society leaders who organized the protest proclaimed that it was part of a *Toplumsal Varoluş Mücadelesi* (Struggle for Communal Existence). In Turkey, however, the protests tended to be interpreted as “ingratitude” and as asking for handouts with no strings attached.

In the post-Annan period, even as Turkey used diplomacy and soft power to improve relations with its neighbors and renew its influence in the region, relations with Turkish Cypriots grew worse from day to day. Around the time of the Arab Spring, in early 2011, Turkish Cypriot relations with Turkey also entered a new period, following the protests described above and the paternalistic and even bullying reaction of then Prime Minister Erdoğan, who remarked in a press conference,

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<sup>82</sup> A. Buğra Tokmakoğlu, ‘Kuzey Kıbrıslılar Ne İstiyor?’, *Milliyet Blog*, 11 February 2011, <http://blog.milliyet.com.tr/kuzey-kibrislilar-ne-istiyor-/Blog/?BlogNo=289414>).

Lately there have been provocative protests in North Cyprus. They're organizing these with the South.... They tell us 'get out'... They have no right to engage in protests like this against Turkey. The very lowest civil servant salary is close to 10,000 TL. . . . The gentleman gets 10,000 lira and shamelessly holds such a protest. . . . They say 'Turkey should get out of here.' Who are you to say something like that? (*Sen kimsin be adam*). I have martyrs, I have wounded veterans, I have strategic interests. Whatever business Greece has in Cyprus, Turkey also has the same business for strategic reasons. . . . It's quite significant for those who are being fed by our country to take this route (*Ülkemizden beslenenlerin bu yola girmesi manidardır*).

Erdogan then claimed that he would order the prime minister of the TRNC to Ankara and call him to account (*çağırıp kendisiyle konuşacağım, soracağız*).

The language used was inflammatory: Turkish Cypriots interpreted Erdoğan's description that they are "being fed" (*besleniyorlar*) by the Turkish state to be a way of calling them *besleme*, a word used to describe the traditional practice of taking poor children into one's home and raising them as a type of servant. The tone with which Erdogan claimed that he would call the TRNC prime minister to his office suggested, again, a master calling his servant, or a father calling his son to account. The immediate reaction in the Turkish Cypriot media was shock and indignation, with the editor of one newspaper ironically commenting, "Erdogan . . . has begun to talk like a colonizer. We have no need of a president in a puppet government. This state that we call the TRNC should be abolished and joined to Turkey. A governor should be sent to Cyprus so that it can be a modern colony."<sup>83</sup>

All of this was a long way from the close cooperation of seven years earlier, when the AK Party had recently come to power and strongly supported a U.N. plan to reunite the island. In 2011, there were numerous Turkish commentators, especially those of the more "pragmatic" school, who warned that Erdoğan's rhetoric, rooted as it was in the idea of Cyprus as a "national cause" and Turkish Cypriots as persons who had been "saved," would ultimately result in north Cyprus appearing to be a colony of Turkey, if Turkish Cypriots' identity and wishes were not respected:

What are you going to do if you don't support [feed] the TRNC? If you have the strength, let's see you solve the problem by annexing the TRNC. It's only then that you'll have the right to treat the President of the TRNC like the "governor of the 82nd province." . . . However, you can't annex the TRNC, because you rightfully don't want to put yourself in the position of accepting a solution that's a step behind the Annan

<sup>83</sup> "Kıbrıs'tan Erdoğan'a: Sen kimsin be adam!" T24, 6 February 2011, <http://t24.com.tr/haber/kibristan-erdogana-sen-kimsin-be-adam,126081>

Plan. So in that case you'll show respect for the law created by the reality of your state recognizing the TRNC as an independent state; you'll play the game by those rules. *Even if for you the TRNC's independence is a lie, you'll behave as though it's not one* [authors' italics].<sup>84</sup>

The final sentence is especially telling, as it acknowledges that for many people in Turkey and Turkish politicians, Cyprus is like an "82nd province," even if it is called by another name. Indeed, one sees this in many aspects of everyday relations between Turkey and north Cyprus, including the ability to enter either using one's identity card, or the way that Turkish travel agents place Cyprus as a destination somewhere between "domestic" and "foreign" tourism.

Indeed, as early as 1995, Tanıl Bora, a leftist intellectual writing in the magazine *Birikim*, described what he saw as the difficulties created by persons from Turkey equating Turkish Cypriot identity with Turkish identity:

Turkish Cypriot (*KıbrıslıTürk*) identity has been equated with the Turkishness of Turkey. While ethnic kin such as Turks from the Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Balkans are not deemed "worthy" of this same degree of identification, it is approved by official Turkish Cypriot nationalism: Denктаş, in a speech before the Turkish parliament in May 1993, used the phrase, "the Great Turkish Nation of which I am proud to be a member." . . . Turkish Cypriots, in both meaning and rhetoric, are positioned as a branch of Turkey's Turkishness.<sup>85</sup>

Bora here acknowledges that one of the main pillars supporting this assimilation was the Turkish nationalism of Turkish Cypriot leaders of the period. When that support is stripped away, however, it can reveal the way in which the Turkish Cypriot community is perceived as like a lesser branch of Turkish nationalism in the island:

Everyone knows that in the "ontologist" stereotyping of Turkish nationalism Cyprus is coded as the "babyland." The meaning of the motherland-babyland metaphor is obvious: Cyprus is Turkey's protectorate and under its guardianship. And it is precisely at this point that making the Turkish Turk and the Turkish Cypriot's (*KıbrıslıTürk*) identities seem the same is beneficial, because ethnic brothers are not equal. The way in which the status of the Turkish Cypriot is not counted as equal and adult becomes apparent in the protector and guardian relationship that cannot be disguised even by the parody-like image of official protocol exercised toward the Turkish Republic of

<sup>84</sup> Kadri Gürsel, 'Yavrulaştırılmadı, 'besleme' diyor', *Milliyet*, 9 February 2011, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/yavrulastiramadi-besleme-diyor/kadri-gursel/dunya/dunyayazardetay/10.02.2011/1350340/default.htm>

<sup>85</sup> Tanıl Bora, 'Türk Milliyetçiliği ve Kıbrıs: Bir Kimlik İnkarı Olarak Aynılaştırma', *Birikim* 77 (1995), <http://www.birikimdergisi.com/birikim-yazi/2772/turk-milliyetciligi-ve-kibris#.V58aTMcRqYW>

Northern Cyprus, recognized by no other state besides Turkey. The TRNC is supposedly “the 17th Turkish State” according to the rhetoric of nationalist heroism; but everyday rituals like weather reports and national holidays show everyone that it is actually a province with a special status. When journalists on a private Turkish television channel can behave in a way that is “rude, condescending, and almost reprimanding” towards the TRNC Prime Minister Derviş Eroğlu, this reminds us (slaps us in the face) with the parodic quality of such ceremony.<sup>86</sup>

It was the lack of identity or sameness that particularly came to the fore during the *besleme* row. It was at this point that certain writers reminded the Turkish public that north Cyprus was not simply a branch of Turkishness in Cyprus:

Some time ago I wrote in this column, “Cyprus belongs to the Cypriots.” I don’t want to repeat the same thing again, but briefly I want to make clear that Cyprus is not Turkey’s colony. At least that’s not how Cypriots see it. And this problematic perspective is going to create even bigger problems in the future. The day may come when those Turkish Cypriots seeking to be free of Turkey may even establish secessionist groups. Before any solution we need to be clear on the perception of Cyprus in the heads of politicians from all parties in Turkey. Positioning ourselves as “saviors” from 1974 won’t solve the Cyprus Problem and could complicate it even more. The Northern Cypriots, like the Kurds, support an honorable solution. They want their identity to be protected and respected.<sup>87</sup>

In this period, Turkish Cypriot insistence on their distinctiveness, as well as the increasingly antagonistic relationship created by others’ insistence on their “Turkishness,” or seeing north Cyprus as a “branch” of Turkishness in the island, as well as by Turkish Cypriot reactions against large numbers of Turkish nationals arriving in the island as temporary or seasonal labor, led to a general perception amongst the Turkish public that “Cypriots don’t love Turks from Turkey,” or even that “Cypriots don’t love Turkey.” This was and continues to be widely expressed and discussed on social media, where in some cases the question is framed as “Why do Northern Cypriots (*Kuzey Kıbrıslılar*) not love Turkey and/or Turks from Turkey?”

Indeed in one of the most popular crowd-sourced Turkish websites, *Ekşi Sözlük*, the Turkish version of Urban Dictionary, the first entry under “Turkish Cypriots” says:

They are lazy and they don’t love Turks from Turkey. (If there are Cypriot friends on this dictionary please don’t take offence, there may be exceptions but unfortunately it doesn’t alter the rule.)<sup>88</sup>

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Cüneyt Özdemir, ‘KKTG’den Türkiye’ye Has...tir Manşeti’, *Radikal*, 6 March 2012, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/yazarlr/cuneyt-ozdemir/kktcden-turkiyeye-has-tir-manseti-1080853/>.

<sup>88</sup> <https://eksisozluk.com/kibrisli-turkler—199380>

The ubiquity of the assumption that Turkish Cypriots dislike persons from Turkey is reflected in the question, "Why do Northern Cypriots not love Turks?"—a question that started a lengthy discussion on another popular online forum. The person posing the question, apparently a teacher, remarked:

This is a question that everyone with an interest in Cyprus has encountered at some point. It's a known fact that the people of North Cyprus don't particularly love Turkey and Turks. While we expect gratitude from a people that we saved from invasion by sending thousands of our sons to war, whose development we support with billions of dollars every year, whose protection we secure with our soldiers, and for whom we've wrangled with the EU and the entire world, unfortunately we don't see that perception from most of the people there.<sup>89</sup>

Similarly, another entry on the *Ekşi Sözlük* site is entitled, "The dislike of Turkish Cypriots for Turks" (*Kıbrıslı Türklerin Türkiyelileri Sevmemesi*). As *Ekşi Sözlük* is a dictionary, the framing of the entry in this way expresses an understanding that this is a commonly accepted phenomenon. While some used the usual stereotypes of Turkish Cypriots being lazy and dependent to explain it, one commentator attempted to qualify the entry's assumptions:

My understanding, and what I've seen from personal relationships, is that the Turkish characters that Cypriots don't love are generally those who enter the island without a cent in their pockets . . . who are employed in construction, working in terrible conditions, some of whom have gotten involved in unsavory business like theft and robbery. . . . [In addition], it's also a situation that you would contribute to if you were constantly having to deal with idiots who come to your country and tell you "we saved you, be grateful to us."<sup>90</sup>

On other sites, as well, commentators attempt to bring their own experiences in the island to bear on the questions. In response to a blog post on *Milliyet* newspaper's site entitled "Why do Turkish Cypriots not love Turkey?" one commentator wrote of his various visits to the island and concluded:

Cypriots really don't love us and ask what we're doing there. The youth especially have no interest in people from Turkey, and they have lots of reasons. They don't care for us for reasons from the economic to social life. And the truth is that we've made Nicosia's central neighborhoods into Diyarbakır and Hatay. Laundry is hanging in the streets, the streets are filthy. The Turkish-Kurdish mindset is prevalent! The island has logistic

<sup>89</sup> "Kuzey Kıbrıslılar Neden Türkler'i Sevmez?" <http://wowturkey.com/forum/viewtopic.php?t=127222&start=0>

<sup>90</sup> <https://eksisoszluk.com/kibrisli-turklerin-turkiyelileri-sevmemesi—1645223>

value for us, that's why it's valuable. Because otherwise we're not so crazy about them, either. Those guys are true English-lovers. If we were to leave them to their [English] administration, with this mindset they would immediately accept it (60-70%). I left a bit offended by the Cypriots, to tell the truth! It's as though all we do for them is for nothing!<sup>91</sup>

In addition to perceptions of ungrateful Cypriot "brothers," however, is another growing perception of Cyprus as a center for gambling and prostitution, in other words, for "decadent" tourism. One senior researcher at a well-known Turkish research institute commented that even the rhetoric of Cypriots not loving them has begun to be replaced by one that views the island as a place to engage in activities illegal in Turkey:

"Cypriots don't love us." Especially when students would first go to the island, they would say, "We saved their lives and they don't love us." These days it [Cyprus] isn't known at all. It's just known from the paparazzi programs as an island for gambling.

Indeed, while one of the largest economic sectors in the island is higher education, primarily appealing to students from Turkey, in the late 2000's that sector took an economic blow, largely because of the growing image in Turkey that Cyprus was a place of "decadence." As the head of north Cyprus's higher education council Hasan Ali Bıçak expressed it, "In Turkish soap operas they give Cyprus the image of being either a gambling center or a place where 'you can buy a diploma.' These are things that will really affect the people in Turkey."<sup>92</sup>

The political scientist quoted earlier mentioned this as the main current influence on perceptions of Cyprus in Turkey, a perception fed by the manner in which tourism is organized in the island, with large hotel complexes that visitors never need to leave:

The view of Cyprus has changed according to the period. . . . That is, we can't talk about a single way of looking at the island, but I see that these days it's being seen as the place where you can do all sorts of things that are illegal in Turkey. It's very disturbing. The normal citizen sees Cyprus as a place where you can do all sorts of things you can't do here. I find the influence of that type of tourism really damaging. In other words, you go to Cyprus, you gamble until dawn, you watch famous singers, you don't even meet a Cypriot, and the perception in your head is this terrible perception.

<sup>91</sup> Response to blog post by Murat Ertaş, "Kıbrıslı Türkler, Neden Türkiye'yi Sevmez?" *Milliyet Blog*, 28 March 2008, <http://blog.milliyet.com.tr/kibrisli-turkler—turkiye-yi-neden-sevmez-/Blog/?BlogNo=100891>.

<sup>92</sup> Sefa Karahasan, "Üniversiteler çökerse biteriz," *Milliyet*, 30 December 2010, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/universiteler-cokerse-biteriz/guncel/haberdetayarsiv/30.12.2010/1332606/default.htm>; see also Güngör Uras, "Üniversite adası kumar adası oluyor," *Milliyet*, 25 October 2009, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/Yazar.aspx?aType=YazarDetayArsiv&ArticleID=1154230&AuthorID=54&b=Universite%20adası%20kumarhane%20adasi%20oluyor&a=Güngör%20Uras>

While Turkish soap operas and films portray Cyprus as a "gambling island" where university diplomas can be bought, numerous newspaper articles in the past several years have presented readers with exposes of the sex trafficking that goes on in Cyprus's "nightclubs." Indeed, the prostitution sector is also well known in Turkey, with certain websites explaining how it works and comparing prices. Some of the "nightclubs" have even begun to offer package tours on their own webpages.

The current picture of the island, then, is one where activities that are illegal in Turkey take place openly, where higher education is only an economic "sector," and where locals "dislike Turks." For nationalists and religious conservatives in Turkey, this is further accompanied by an impression that the island's universities shelter Kurdish separatists and that Turkish Cypriots are losing their Turkish and Muslim identities. For instance, there are frequent clashes at north Cyprus universities between Kurdish students and members of the Turkish nationalist ultra-right. Although both groups are from Turkey and bring their disagreements from Turkey to the island, the refusal of the north Cyprus government to stamp out Kurdish nationalism has led members of Turkish ultra-right organizations and parties to call Cyprus a "traitor land":

While the blessed island is being run with a mentality that gives credence to traitors and makes it seem not like a Turkish land but like a traitor land, what are our Ambassador and our military commander doing there if they're not raising an objection? . . . This island for which we sacrificed thousands of martyrs and Turkey's future cannot become an island of treason, prostitution, and gambling, this should not be allowed!<sup>93</sup>

The combination of "decadence," tolerance towards Kurdish separatists, and "disliking Turks" in turn often leads to questions about the "Turkishness" of Turkish Cypriots. On one website called "Girls Ask"—in which apparently girls ask questions that are then answered by boys—one girl chose to pose a question about Cyprus:

There's something that I always hear from friends who are doing their military service in Cyprus or studying there. Everyone who goes there says that they don't love the Turkish people and especially the Turkish soldiers, and I wonder what the reason could be. Despite our giving them so much support and taking responsibility for the security of the region.

One respondent attempted a relatively comprehensive answer to the question, with reasons ranging from the high number of soldiers to economic dependency, from the way that "the English seriously imposed their culture on them" to the imposition of Ankara's policies. In response to this attempt at a more "sociological" answer to the question, one respondent commented:

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<sup>93</sup> İsmail Türk, "Kıbrıs'ta Neler Oluyor?" *Habererk*, 7 June 2016, <http://www.habererk.com/guncel/kibrista-neler-oluyor-ismail-turk/22888>

All of those who want to unite with the Greek part and that hate Turkey are actually of Greek Cypriot origin, they were forcibly Turkified.<sup>94</sup>

The latter response reflects, then, another public perception of Turkish Cypriots in Turkey, namely, a widespread belief that they are not “really” Turks. As we saw in the opening chapter, there have always been questions about the Turkishness of Turkish Cypriots, who have often struggled to “prove” their Turkishness in Turkey. One common insult was to call them “Greek seed” (*Rum tohumu*), in reference to past practices of intermingling and coexistence with their Greek Cypriot neighbors. Further doubts flourished in the Annan Plan period, when support for a federal solution was often described in Turkish media and websites as a desire to unite with Greek Cypriots and a denial of Turkishness. This was often portrayed as a willingness to “sell out” the “national cause.”

Moreover, in the AK Party period, what had in the past been simply a need to prove their Turkishness became entwined with that party’s mingling of nationalism and religiosity. Today, in other words, Turkish Cypriots often find both their Turkishness and their Muslimness questioned. The political scientist quoted above explained the current perceptions of religious conservatives in Turkey from a historical perspective:

For the more conservative elements, it seems more like a military area. It’s the place where all the Kemalist fantasies have been realized. What Kemalism wanted to accomplish, it accomplished it there. For instance, education is completely secular. . . . In other words, there’s an unadulterated Kemalism there, with all its faults. Overly Western.

This interviewee, then, argues that for conservative Turks, an “unadulterated Kemalism” is responsible for the lack of religiosity amongst Turkish Cypriots that today calls their identity into doubt. Not only have party officials often pronounced on Turkish Cypriots’ loss of religious identity and the need to revive it, but ordinary authors and intellectuals who affiliate themselves with the party have also remarked upon the lack of religious identity they find in Cyprus’s north. For instance, only a few months after the *besleme* crisis, one religious author who had visited Cyprus briefly pronounced rather definitively on its religious lack:

This weekend, as I was walking around the cities and streets of the TRNC, where I had gone for a conference, and conversing with people, and talking to officials—especially religious officials—for some reason the last gasp of Andalusia appeared before my eyes. My brain was making connections with the Andalusia of Leo Africanus that I had read about years ago. . . . I don’t want to paint a negative picture, but the TRNC has become a country in limbo. Neither religious nor without religion . . . neither Muslim nor Christian. There’s an incredible indifference to religious and national values. . . .

<sup>94</sup> <http://www.kizlarsoruyor.com/kultur-sanat/q525628-kibrislilar-neden-turkleri-hatta-ozellikle-turk>

I assure you, the Cypriot community is melting like snow. Turkey keeps thousands of troops there, it sends billions, but the community is quickly melting. If a plebiscite were to happen now, the percentage of those wanting to join with the South Greek Republic would be at least fifty percent.<sup>95</sup>

What this writer expresses as a "melting away" (*erimek*) of identity often finds expression as a fear that Turkish Cypriots will be assimilated into a non-Turkish majority and thereby lose their identity. The interviewee above, for instance, continued,

The state has an assimilation fear, in other words they fear that the people there will lose their identity. Whether it's the Kemalists or the religious people, they don't want the people there being assimilated in the long run. Before they would do this [counter this] by feeding them Kemalist nationalism. Now it's with conservative ideas. But there's certainly a fear that their own symbols will be reconstructed. In other words, that a new identity will be created. There's a fear that "they shouldn't be assimilated in the majority" or "in the EU."

As we see from the quotes above, there is a logical association at work that equates secularism with loss of faith, loss of faith with loss of Turkishness, and loss of Turkishness with a loss of values. Another academic who has ties to the government noted,

Of course, the subject of religion in the island is one that must be discussed. Cypriots don't know much about religion and because of this the Turkish State has doubts about how they will preserve their Turkish identity. Because it doesn't match with the Turkish perception of religion. For that reason they're in a strange dilemma. Should the island continue to have its own understanding of religion, or should it resemble that in Turkey? I went to a funeral there, about 80% of those attending the funeral don't perform the prayers. Their relationship to religion is a bit troubled. I don't know if things developed this way in reaction to Turkey, or if it was always this way. Maybe Kemalism did this to them. I don't know. I do believe that after reunification, after they integrate with the Greek Cypriots, religion will become more important. Because Greek Cypriots are a much more religious community.

Moreover, that loss of values, for some, appears to imply a willingness to do anything for profit, including join with Greek Cypriots. This has become a theme in Islamist writings about the island:

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<sup>95</sup> Mehmet Ali Bulut, "KKTC Artık Arafta Bir Ülke," *Haber 7* (19 Mayıs 2011).  
<http://www.haber7.com/yazarlar/mehmet-ali-bulut/745382-kkctc-artik-arafta-bir-ulke>

People who have lost their Islamic consciousness and sensitivity have also weakened their awareness of being Turkish. Because throughout history the Muslim religion and Turkishness have been intertwined. Those Turks who have lost their Muslimness have, after a period of time, also lost their Turkish identity. Those who remained attached to Islam, on the other hand, retained their Turkish identity. There are very strong bonds between Muslim identity and Turkish identity. . . . In North Cyprus, because of anti-religious secular policies, the Cypriot Turk has begun to lose his Islamic consciousness and Muslim identity. Distancing from religion has brought with it a loss of identity. Those persons whose spiritual side has been damaged have also weakened their ties with Turkish culture and identity. Instead of faith and culture, material interests and profit relations have begun to take precedence. A public has emerged that for the sake of its own interests is not disturbed by collaborating with the Greek side and behaving against Turkey, that instead of a unity of faith is more interested in an association of profit.<sup>96</sup>

As a result, a newly articulated conflict has emerged between adherents of the AK Party who appear to see bringing Turkish Cypriots back to the faith as a duty, and Turkish Cypriots who resent having their faith questioned. One leftist commentator remarked ironically on this perspective:

While Davutoğlu's "strategic perspective" gives little importance to the presence of Turkish Cypriots, the culture men of the religious segment declare Turkish Cypriots "without religion" and practically count North Cyprus as "Darül Harp" [the "place of war," a phrase used to refer to non-Muslim territories where Islam cannot survive].

The "war" that has been declared, in this instance, was that against the secularism of Turkish Cypriots, and an insistence on drawing them back to the faith. AK Party adherents have sought to accomplish this in the island through religious education, including building an imam-hatip school; through financing the building of mosques; and most recently through a "coordination committee" intended to control funding for youth housing and activities. The latter created a significant controversy in the island and, as of writing, a rift between President Mustafa Akıncı, who sent the Coordination Committee bill to the Supreme Court, where it was rejected as unconstitutional, and the right-wing government that attempts to align itself with the government in Turkey.

<sup>96</sup> Ahmet Faruk Nizamoğlu, 'Kıbrıs'ta Neler Oluyor?', *Tefekkür*, [http://www.tefekkurdergisi.com/Yazi-Kibrista\\_Neler\\_Oluyor-552070.html](http://www.tefekkurdergisi.com/Yazi-Kibrista_Neler_Oluyor-552070.html)

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## CONCLUSION: IMAGINING THE FUTURE

**T**he period since Turkey's Gezi protests has been a challenging one for the Turkey-north Cyprus relationship. Turkey has become embroiled in renewed violence in its southeast; it currently hosts more displaced persons than any country in the world; and the 15 July coup attempt led to a massive purge of government, military, and educational institutions. As noted earlier in this report, despite negotiations that began in summer 2015 in the island, Cyprus is currently a low priority on Turkey's foreign policy agenda. As one head of a Turkish NGO expressed it to us,

In the past nothing could be said about Cyprus apart from the official position. The Annan Plan marked a new era. It's no longer on the political agenda. The government looks at it from a more geopolitical perspective. It comes on the agenda when we talk about the EU or energy. But for the society, it's gradually begun to occupy a smaller place in their minds. No one's interested in Cyprus. In the past, whenever you said "babyland" everyone would get excited. But the subject has now been normalized. Turkey has much bigger problems to deal with. The Kurdish problem, Syria.

While there are numerous factors that may induce the Turkish government to express increased interest in the island—e.g., confirmation of the major gas finds that so far have not been discovered off the coast of the island<sup>97</sup>—our concern in this report has been with Turkish public perceptions of Cyprus, the Cyprus Problem, and Turkish Cypriots, as well as the interaction of such public perceptions with Turkey's foreign and domestic policies.

In this regard, it seems pertinent to emphasize that Turkish public life is now politically and socially divided in a way that it arguably has not been since the establishment of the Republic. While class, gender, ethnic, and political differences always existed in the country, the embattled "48%"—as those who did not vote for Erdoğan in his 2014 presidential bid call themselves—are now in a struggle with a majority united around support for the Erdoğan

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<sup>97</sup> Ayla Gürel, Fiona Mullen and Harry Tztimitras, *The Cyprus Hydrocarbon Issue: Context Positions and Future Scenarios* (PCC Report 1/2013).

agenda. That agenda includes increasingly autocratic powers for the presidency, given impetus by the 15 July attempt and threat to Erdoğan's life. Public dissent has now been stifled in the country, as many opposition and dissident voices are being swept up in the vast purges that are "cleansing" the state's military-bureaucratic complex.

In this context, there seem to be two factors with the potential to sway public opinion in relation to the island, though such perceptions are clearly divided. The first stems from the purge of followers of exiled preacher Fethullah Gülen following the July coup attempt. Although there have been attempts to implicate some Turkish Cypriots as Gülen supporters, these attempts have so far fallen flat. Indeed, at this juncture Turkish Cypriots' well-known secularism plays an important role in distancing them from a battle played out between two former allies who once worked together to penetrate and even undermine Turkey's secular establishment. While the battle currently being waged in Turkey's political landscape puzzles Turkish Cypriots, it also presents the challenge of maintaining their own autonomy in the face of a struggle that does not concern them but could potentially spread to the island.

For persons in Turkey, indications so far are that the current turmoil in the country has emphasized for many the separateness of north Cyprus, especially visible in the exponential rise in real estate inquiries by Turkish nationals since 15 July. North Cyprus had not previously been a favored spot for Turkish nationals to purchase second homes, as the cheaper market in Turkey sufficiently met their needs. However, in consonance with a reported exodus of educated and middle-class Turks from the country,<sup>98</sup> academics, artists, and others who do not want to relocate to Europe or the Americas but feel that they must consider leaving the country are now apparently looking to north Cyprus as a closer, safer option.<sup>99</sup>

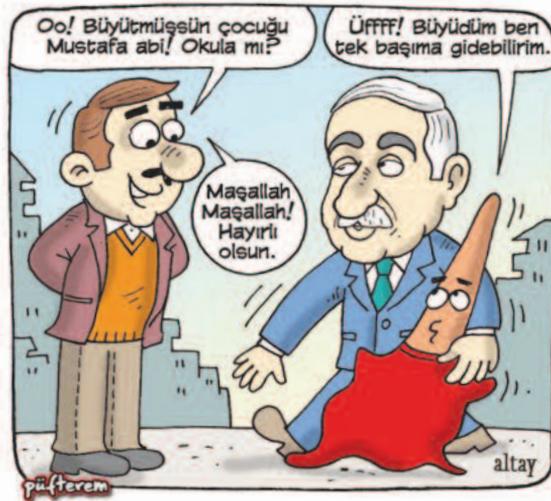
These members of the "48%" who are now quietly fleeing the country appear to see north Cyprus as a potential haven in the region. This is aided by the increasingly vocal Turkish Cypriot resistance to AK Party projects for the island, especially manifest in opposition to the building of a theological school and mosque outside Nicosia; Turkey's plans for management of the undersea water pipeline; and a coordination committee that was to be established to manage funds devoted to youth activities. Moreover, both the theological school and coordination committee projects are part of a series of efforts on the part of the AK Party government to "Islamize" the island's Turkish population, which, as we saw in the previous chapter, many supporters of the AK Party claim have lost their religion and values. Turkish Cypriot resistance to these efforts of the "52%" consequently makes the island more appealing as a haven for the rest.

The idea that the island might be such a haven was given further support by the election of long-time politician Mustafa Akıncı as TRNC President in spring 2015. Immediately after his election, Akıncı insisted on a tempering of the paternalistic discourse, putting him head-to-

<sup>98</sup> Zülfiyar Doğan, 'Darbe girişimi sonrası Türkiye'de yurt dışına yerleşme arayışları hızlandı,' *Al-Monitor*, 12 August 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/tr/originals/2016/08/turkey-coup-attempt-turmoil-fuels-migration.html>

<sup>99</sup> Didem Menteş, 'Emlakta Darbe Girişimi Etkisi,' *Yenidüzen Gazetesi*, 14 August 2016.

head with Turkish President Erdoğan. The latter moderated his language, referring to Turkish Cypriots as “brothers,” but tension between the two leaders remains. While the caricature below shows the amusement of some in Turkey at the insistence that Turkish Cypriots need to be treated as adults rather than children, there is nevertheless a sense that Turkish Cypriot leaders will resist attempts to shape their citizens in the image of the Turkish public.



*Image 10: The man on the left remarks to Mustafa Akıncı, “Oo! You’ve brought the child up, Mustafa Abi! Are you taking him to school!” The child in the shape of Cyprus exclaims, “Üff! I’ve grown up! I can go on my own.” The man replies, “Wonderful, wonderful! Good fortune to you.”*

In addition to these factors, however, there appears to be a gradual shift in Turkish public perceptions of Cyprus from a “national cause” or “national burden” to a “national opportunity.” Set as it is in the exact center of a region beset by strife and crisis, Cyprus appears as a potential hub for natural gas distribution; a node for Turkish-Israeli and Turkish-Russian collaboration; and a strategic launching pad for the EU in the region. Turkey appears to be moving away from its EU ambitions, but a united island would give it a foothold in Europe because of the Turkish Cypriot community and Turkish investments in the island. Because of its post-Annan strategy of developing Cyprus, Turkey now has significant state and private investment in the island, particularly including the water pipeline, so the Turkish Cypriot constituent state that a federal solution foresees in the island’s north would clearly maintain its attachments to Turkey, even in the case of a demilitarized island.

Today, with almost all media outlets in Turkey controlled by the government, there is a large degree of overlap between expressions of public opinion and government policy. Given that the media so often shapes public perceptions of problems, we see that the “perception

management” undertaken by the AK Party has its effects, also, in shifting public perceptions of Cyprus into the realm of “national opportunity.” Of course, the recent fallout of the 15 July coup attempt and the “democracy meetings” in Turkey show that it is easy enough to stoke the nationalist flame, and doing so in the case of Cyprus would potentially lead to a renewal of the national cause rhetoric. However, the AK Party and even its explosive leader, President Erdoğan, have demonstrated a surprisingly consistent stance on the Cyprus Problem, always expressing support for a bizonal, bicomunal federal solution. And in a context when so few advantageous opportunities seem to present themselves, we may expect that the language of Cyprus as “national opportunity” will become increasingly common in public discourse in Turkey to refer to a problem that blurs the foreign and domestic.

If the “national burden” discourse led to accusations by hardliners of “selling out” the island, the “national opportunity” rhetoric casts it not as one’s property to be “sold” but as a potential to be “managed.” The results of ongoing negotiations will show to what extent the image management of the AK Party will also “manage” the opportunities presented by Cyprus.

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This report provides a broad outline of the ways in which Turkish public attitudes towards Cyprus have changed over time, and the policy implications of such attitude changes. Since its establishment in 1923, the Republic of Turkey has exerted influence over the Turkish-speaking community in Cyprus. In the first thirty years of its existence, however, Turkey's influence was primarily social and intellectual, with Turkish Cypriot elites adopting Turkish nationalism and following trends coming from Turkey. As the report shows, the Cyprus Problem had to be brought to the attention of the Turkish public in the middle of the twentieth century by Turkish Cypriot elites in collaboration with pan-Turkist intellectuals in Turkey. Once put on the public agenda and formulated as a "national cause," however, Turkey's role and rights in Cyprus would become unquestionable, defining the limits of what could publicly be said in Turkey about the island.

The report examines the evolution of public attitudes towards Cyprus, the Cyprus Problem, and Turkish Cypriots over approximately seven decades. As the report shows, these three elements have been linked in various ways over time. While from the mid-1950's to the early 2000's the perception of Cyprus as a "national cause" encompassed both the strategic and the "human" elements of the problem, the post-2002 period has seen a transformation of Cyprus in Turkish public opinion from a "national cause" to a "national burden." More recently, because of conflicts in the region and Turkey's strategic interests, Turkish public discourse has begun to frame a potential resolution of the Cyprus Problem as a "national opportunity." Examining the evolution of public attitudes towards Cyprus also enables the authors to consider the current conjuncture and where the relationship between north Cyprus and Turkey, and between Turkish Cypriots and Turkish nationals, may be heading in the future.

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