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Incorporating a Class Analysis within the National Question: Rethinking Ethnicity, Class, and Nationalism in Cyprus

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This article has two main aims. First, it aims to challenge the widespread narrative in Cyprus studies that presents ethnic identities as historically inevitable and natural. Rather, identities need to be conceptualized as socially constructed. The second aim of this article is to problematize the argument that ethnic or national groups are homogenous actors. It underlines the need to deconstruct these supposedly unitary actors by making use of a class-based conceptualization of the state. By using such a conceptualization, the article will focus on the period between 1878 and 1974. It will start with a concrete analysis of the class structure in the Cypriot society and then will trace how different classes in both communities positioned themselves vis-à-vis political structures of power and how these positionings paved the way to the division of the island.

INTRODUCTION

Cyprus studies are dominated by theoretical narratives that explain the conflict on the basis of two competing nationalisms. The key argument of such narratives is that ethnic conflicts result primarily from historical hatred and ethnic antagonism. Ethnic or national groups are assumed to be homogenous and somehow naturally compete. Often identities are presented as if they are natural or historically inevitable and the ethnic dimension is conceptualized as an essential part of identity.

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In this frame, this article aims to do two things. Firstly, it aims to challenge the historically inevitable nature of identities by emphasizing their social construction. Identities need to be seen as “subjectivity constructed, articulated, and contested in a historical framework determined by class, status and power conflicts.” One of the key arguments in this respect is that nationalism arises as an alternative form of mobilization to class mobilization for working class. Nationalism establishing its hegemony in Cyprus from the late 1940s onwards can be read in terms of the rise of an ideology that promotes a cultural form of identity by legitimizing the existing power structures and class power of the dominant classes by shifting attention away from class-based mobilization. It is worth it to note that very few studies exist that attempt to incorporate a class analysis within the national question in Cyprus. Yet, it is important to underline the interrelationship between class and ethnicity and that “ethnicity can be seen to have the ability to articulate different ideological discourses and to represent different class political interests.”

Such a kind of a narrative that does not problematize the social construction of identities leads to another problem: Often in most accounts on Cyprus, both communities feature as unitary actors. In other words, Turkish-Cypriots and Greek-Cypriots are assumed to be homogeneous and political analyses are based on the unitary interest of the Greek- and Turkish-Cypriot communities. We believe that there is a need to decompose or deconstruct unitary actors in order to reveal the domestic origins of the drastic policy shifts of the recent past in Cyprus. This necessitates challenging narratives that construct states as rational unitary and autonomous actors.

The article will begin with an examination of the two mainstream readings of the Cyprus conflict. These common-sense readings of the Cyprus problem can be referred to as the liberal conflict resolution model and the global/regional geopolitics model. The first approach conceptualizes conflict in Cyprus as a problem of historic enmity between Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots whereas the second approach understands the conflict as a manifestation of geopolitical conflicts.

Our key argument is that these two mainstream perspectives are limited theoretically due to two reasons: Firstly, they do not problematize the social construction of identities. They take identity as a given and accept that ethnicity is an essential part of identity. Secondly, they conceptualize states as rational unitary and autonomous actors, each moving toward their own national interest. This conceptualization of the state draws on a Weberian conceptualization of the state that emphasizes the ways in which states constitute autonomous sources of power and operate on the basis of institutional logics and dynamics with variable forms of interaction with other sources of power in society.

We broadly draw on Marxist approaches that anchor the analysis of the state in terms of its structural relationship to capitalism as a system of
class relations. Our argument is that the state cannot be conceptualized as a rational, unitary actor that acts as a neutral arbiter. The state apparatus has no overall rationality but reproduces in a political form the conflicts of interest that mark civil society. In all class societies, conflicting interests continuously struggle to influence the state to gain the upper hand, and state decisions that are taken at any particular moment in history reflect not the putative national interest but a particular solution to conflicting class interests and the interests of other internal and external actors at that particular junction.

The article will make use of such a class-based conceptualization of the state to analyze the process that led to the conflict and the eventual division of the island. It will focus on the period 1878—when Britain occupied and started administering Cyprus—to 1974 when a Greek coup followed by Turkey’s military intervention completed the de facto partition of the island.

We shall also underline that we are aware that studies connecting class and national question often fail to properly integrate the agency, mediation, and articulation processes by which class interests are translated into political projects and policies, thereby producing mechanical and reductionist reading. Hence, arbitrary interpretations are made about automated class choices. We believe that class factors are crucial in this process; however, these are mediated via institutions and are manifested as articulations in the class and wider social struggles. In any case, empirical proof is required; otherwise conclusions are arbitrary analytical leaps with a missing link between class interests and particular policies.

To this end, we will start with a concrete analysis of the class structure in the Cypriot society and then trace how different classes in both the Turkish-Cypriot and the Greek-Cypriot communities positioned themselves vis-à-vis political structures of power and how these positionings paved the way to the division of the island.

THE NATIONAL QUESTION IN CYPRUS: A GEOPOLITICAL GAMBLE OR AN ETHNIC CONFLICT?

In this section, we will critically examine the two mainstream readings of the Cyprus conflict that are widely reproduced in textbooks and journalistic studies. The first approach is the liberal conflict resolution model. It perceives the Cyprus problem as a problem of historic enmity between Greeks and Turks, manifested as an identity conflict over the control of a state. The second model is the global/regional geopolitics model. It reads the problem as the manifestation of geopolitical conflicts reflected in the externally imposed rigid constitutional structure, which imploded into fragments due to foreign machinations.

The liberal conflict resolution model is the dominant mainstream approach in international relations and conflict resolution schools regarding
Ethnicity, Class, & Nationalism in Cyprus

Since the end of the Cold War, conflict resolution (CR) has been increasingly associated with the prevalence of liberal peace: with the collapse of communism as an alternative to Western capitalism, the end of history was declared as a result of “the triumph of liberalism.” Often the main source that is referred to legitimize the concept of liberal peace is Immanuel Kant’s classic work Perpetual Peace.

Today, even from within a liberal perspective the dominant peace-making models are being questioned. In particular, the neoliberal quick-fix solution promoting peace neither works in practice nor complies with classical liberal thinking that requires stable and legitimate states owned by the people that are prerequisites for markets to operate. The recipes of rapid democratization equated with market liberalization, as the key to the transformation that would bring about peace, reconciliation, and prosperity in fragile postconflict contexts are highly problematic. Critiques of liberal peace conflict resolution question the models and implementation in different regions of the world for being epistemologically and politically flawed. The feasibility of liberal peace models are questioned on different counts: First, “promoting a standardization of peace interventions in civil war situations often fails to deliver a widely enjoyed peace.” The post-1989 world order rather than a triumph of liberalism can be seen as a collapse of liberalism as the world system is more polarized than ever before and the concept of liberal peace is essentially “the rhetoric of power” in the context of the decline of American power and the crisis of the world system. Wallerstein is in no doubt that “the period from 1990 to 2025/2050 will most likely be short on peace, short on stability, and short of legitimacy.”

The liberal conflict resolution model often depicts the Cyprus problem as a classic example of identities in conflict, a case of a generic ethnic enmity since time immemorial: The main contradiction here is merely an internal one and everything else is essentially adjacent to it. This is a theoretical and political trap that overplays the generic ethnic antagonism at the expense of the international geopolitical conflicts as well as the internal nonethnic factors, that is, intraethnic, class, and other political/social polarizations. Such approaches often obfuscate the geopolitical interests and historical role of the imperial forces/powers, particularly the United Kingdom (UK), the United States of America (USA), and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), as well as the role of the so-called motherland countries, Greece and Turkey. Hence, various attempts to destabilize the newly independent republic after 1960 and various partitionist plans and designs proposed by Turkey, Britain, and the United States between 1956 to 1974 to accommodate the two NATO allies so as to maintain the integrity of the southern flank of NATO cannot be understood independently of imperial interests or designs.

On the other hand, the second approach, the global/regional geopolitics model is essentially a geopolitical reading of the problem. There are right-wing and left-wing versions of this reading: The conservative and right-wing...
versions are often legalistic and/or take the form of international relations and/or political works or journalistic type of best-seller conspiracy theories. Left-wing geopolitical readings reflect Perry Anderson’s approach as well as the approaches of Vassilis Fouskas and Alex Tackie.\textsuperscript{12}

First, from a methodological and philosophical perspective these approaches are historically speaking problematic, even though we are in agreement that the current divide of Cyprus is largely shaped due to factors connected with colonialism, postcolonialism, and imperialism. This type of analysis seems to ignore the internal political, social, and class dynamics that codetermined the historical outcome of events together with regional, global, and other foreign factors. Otherwise, what we are left with is people, classes, and political and socioeconomic forces within nation-states that are reduced to mere puppets of imperialism. This may not be the aim of well-intentioned scholars who do not shy away from confronting such issues elsewhere; however, it is typical that in their analysis not only do they undervalue the importance of class struggles and the political contestations in Cyprus between various alternative forces of the left and right but they obliterate these historical struggles.

Another problem relates to the strategy of the left in Cyprus. It appears that such approaches\textsuperscript{13} see very little, if any, role for Cypriots themselves to act as subjects to resist in any meaningful way: The Olympian analysis by Anderson is a historical nonstarter, as it somehow entails a return to some notional point of the past before the machinations of the British divided us. Obviously, this is practically impossible and, more importantly, it leads to a fruitless debate on the political implications of leftist activism and strategy. In the geopolitical game, the left in small states appears to be doomed: In such a grim and closed system, there are no possibilities for a strategy that would offer any glimmer of hope for the forces proposing to transcend the divide. However, there are possibilities for resistance and alliances that can make a difference for the left in big and small states, despite the overwhelming power of imperial forces.

Our assessment of the two models—the liberal conflict resolution model and the global/regional geopolitics model—leads us to two critical conclusions. On the one hand, the policy implications of the thinking produced by both schools of thought contain implicit assumptions about the power relations of the global/regional system, leaving little room for manoeuver for Cypriots in terms of struggles for a common future transcending the ethnic/state divide. In other words, they fail to offer any insights into a political strategy that would allow for the transcendence of the current partitionist cul-de-sac in the real world. For the liberal conflict resolution model, it is a matter of fine tuning the demands of the two sides to reach an optimum settlement; for the global/regional geopolitics model, the genuine concerns of Cypriot independence would be subordinated, either by accepting their subordination to the Empire, or by rejecting it, which will
also mean accepting the power of the Empire via the consolidation of partitionism.

We argue that both schools of thought are disabling and contain fallacies in their assumptions and political implications. What is missing is a multidimensional reading that would properly grasp the vitality and actual agency of the local dynamics as well as locating state formations in Cyprus in a global context. As we will elaborate further below, these models are also rather limited due to their implicit assumption on the nature of the state.

Much of the theorization on CR is based on assumptions about the nature of nations and nationalism. It is beyond the scope of this article to delve in any detail in these debates. Yet, there is a need to briefly distinguish different perspectives on nationalism that many CR models draw on. The primordialist case views nations as premodern, primordial phenomena that survive social, political, and economical transformations and that “nations emerged before nationalism.”14 A more sophisticated attempt to retain some of the alleged premodern essence of nations is that of Anthony Smith, who sees them as modern mutations of the primordial Ethnie, though not necessarily in some physical descent or blood sense. This is the ethnicist or ethnic essentialist approach that maintains “the ethnic origins of nations.”15 Eric Hobsbawm’s rigorous research on the vocabulary of the subject illustrates the modernity of the term in different languages.16 Apart from Hobsbawm, the idea of the nation as a novelty is shared by authors such as Ernest Gellner,17 Benedict Anderson,18 and Etienne Balibar.19 The modernist approach sees the emergence of nations and nationalism as a modern phenomenon, closely connected with the historical events in the last three centuries to do with social, economical, and political transformations of the world. This article takes the modernist thesis as the most advanced and relevant to understanding conflict and more importantly how to overcome it.

The sociological foundations of CR theory are found in Georg Simmel’s work on conflict. Another seminal work is Lewis Coser’s book on the functions of social conflict.20 However, the field of CR as a distinct and influential area of study really took off in the late 1950s and 1960s21 with American CR scholars.22 Across the Atlantic, the Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung developed his own schema through the formation of a peace institute23 and the launching of a journal.24 Since the 1970s, there has been remarkable innovation in CR theory and practice, as scholars drew more from the various critiques and nuanced analyses within CR, as well as from other studies. Various approaches developed. The needs-based CR that assumed eight fundamental needs (control, security, justice, stimulation, response, meaning, rationality, and esteem/recognition) the Burton school, Roger Fisher, and the Harvard Negotiation Project developed the interest-based negotiation and as well as several others.25

Post-1990s developments within CR have seen an increasingly self-critical field of research. Many contemporary CR theorists have adopted
Johan Galtung’s distinction between structural (that is, the result of oppressive/unequal social, political, and economical structures), cultural (that is, the expression of cultural differences or practices in the ways of life of ethnic or social groups), and direct types of violence.\textsuperscript{26} Lederach refers to the domination of International Relations (IR) and Political Science both in CR theory and practice.\textsuperscript{27}

As a result of this criticism, subtler versions of CR theory appeared. Thus, Oliver Ramsbotham, Tom Woodhouse, and Hugh Miall provide a more sophisticated and dynamic model of CR.\textsuperscript{28} Nevertheless, the study marks an evolution rather than a paradigm shift or scientific revolution. Their hourglass model of conflict containment, conflict settlement, and conflict transformation, for instance, is seen to entail a long-drawn process rather than a highly nonlinear, fluid, and contradictory process within a fragmented and polarized social structure as in many cases they are.

The CR perspective offers valuable analytical tools worth exploring and developing in the theory and in the practices that relate to conflict situations. However, there are a series of analytical and practical problems related to CR approaches, even in its most sophisticated versions.

The CR theories of the 1980s and 1990s, for instance, were criticized due to a number of factors. They often relied heavily on behaviorism. Actors are seen more or less corresponding to some preprogrammed creature. Human behavior was assumed to be predictable as it is acquired through conditioning, which assumes that humans can be somehow programmed into behaving in particular ways, leaving no room for freedom to act otherwise, reacting to social conditions in unpredictable ways, rebelling, or exercising their own will against the expected behavior. Ethnic or social groups or political actors are assumed to be caught in the so-called prisoner’s dilemma: This is where each side assumes that the other side is acting as an individualist who will behave in a manner to gain advantage in what has been seen as a zero-sum game. For instance, if each of the warring factions that have agreed to disarm for the benefit of peace would assume that the other side is secretly cheating by arming to gain advantage, they would both cheat increasing the risk of war. They often suffer from negative functionalism, whereby every social actor and action is generally assumed to have some utilitarian value to the actor. The fact that they tend to refer to actors assumed some homogeneity within and between these. This is hardly the case with ethnic state conflicts. In these cases, the actors in question are states, political parties, politicians, organizations, the United Nations (UN), military establishments, social groups, and classes and individuals, all of which are diverse and dissimilar.

Even sophisticated versions of CR theory that recognize the importance of wider and diverse social, international, and political factors tend to essentialize and effectively reduce conflict to individual factors like psychology rather than addressing the complex and multifaced social, economic, and
political aspects. One of the most common assumptions made by CR theorists concerning the nature of ethnic conflict is that these conflicts result primarily from historical hatred and ethnic antagonism that is, ethnic or national groups that are assumed to be homogenous and somehow naturally compete. This would be the core of the problem, the essential aspect of the conflict. Both at a theoretical and at a concrete level, this approach is highly questionable as it consistently underplays the role of other factors, including modern ones, in the continuation of the conflict. Identity is taken as a *given*. The ethnic dimension becomes an essential part, if not the core part, of identity.29

**CLASS RELATIONS, THE NATIONAL QUESTION, AND ETHNIC CONFLICT**

The previous section focused on the two mainstream perspectives on Cyprus: the liberal conflict resolution model and the global/regional geopolitics model. We noted their limitations and especially their failure to problematize the social construction of identities.

Another limitation of these perspectives is that they draw on a Weberian conceptualization of the state that understands the state as an autonomous source of power that is not imprisoned by social forces. Such a state is seen as a rational, unitary, and an autonomous actor.30 This perspective criticizes state formations in Cyprus for their deficient modernization. Unlike a liberal state or a state that is based on legal-rational authority that becomes the embodiment of the general interest of society and the neutral arbiter of all particularistic claims, the state formations in Cyprus failed to evolve into states based on rational-legal authority. They could not become neutral arbiters between conflicting interests but instead exacerbated the contestation between the two communities in Cyprus.31

We are critical of such a conceptualization by drawing on Karl Marx’s conceptualization of the state. In his critique of the state in capitalism, Marx focused on the role of authority in embedding the reproduction and accumulation of capital in lived social relations. Even though it was wide open to reductionist interpretations, “the old chestnut of the executive committee of the bourgeoisie” actually summed this up rather well.32 This means that the state is confronted with a political need to sustain capital accumulation in order to secure the material and political reproduction of the state and it intervenes to this effect. Yet, the state’s intervention to safeguard the general external conditions for the reproduction of capital is not a straightforward process. The state apparatus has no overall rationality but reproduces in a political form the conflicts of interest that mark civil society.33 In all class societies, conflicting interests continuously struggle to influence the state to gain the upper hand and state decisions that are taken at any particular moment in history reflect not the putative national interest but a particular
solution to conflicting class interests and the interests of other internal and external actors at that particular conjunction.

To this end, in the remaining part of this article, we will use this class-based conceptualization of the state to focus on the period between 1878 and 1974 in Cyprus. To reiterate, our aim is to decompose or deconstruct unitary actors such as the Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots in order to trace how different classes in both the Turkish-Cypriot and the Greek-Cypriot communities positioned themselves vis-à-vis political structures of power and how these positionings paved the way to the division of the island.

Our journey starts in 1878, when the Ottoman Empire signed the Cyprus Convention with Britain. At the time, Ottomans had suffered another heavy defeat at the hands of Russia. According to the Convention, the British would be given the right to occupy and administer Cyprus in return for backing the Ottomans in the face of future Russian encroachments. Soon after in 1882, the British attempted to introduce their first major political reform in Cyprus: the establishment of a colonial parliament (the legislative council). The council included three Muslims and nine Christians elected by the people as well as six British members appointed by the colonial administration. The ultimate power resided in the governor.

Britain’s control of the island also introduced significant transformations in terms of class relations. The Ottomans ruled using the millet system, which was basically recognizing the religious leaders of the flock and cooperating with them in the administration. Contrary to the persecution of the Orthodox Church by the Venetians, the Ottomans recognized the Orthodox Church. The Archbishop had direct recognition from the Sultan, as an Ethnarchic leader, the millet başı (community leader). The Archbishop effectively ruled over the Christian population, together with the kojabashides (noble land owners), who formed the ruling class who were as a rule elected as communal lords (πρόκριτοι). The Sultan recognized the Archbishop and the bishops as protectors of the Christians, who also had responsibility for collecting taxes with police escort. Following the Beylerbeyi (the Muslim governor), the most powerful person in Cyprus was the Archbishop. The third most important person in the power structure was another Christian, the Dragoman, who acted as an intermediary and translator between the Archbishop and the Beylerbeyi but also had crucial powers regarding economic affairs, taxation, and population census; he even prepared the budget and had direct access to the Sultan. The Dragoman would come from the kojababhis class. The vast majority of Cypriots, from both faiths, were poor peasants whilst their relationship was one of “peaceful coexistence.”

At the end of the 19th century, one can locate six main groups within the island’s Greek/Christian community: (1) high-ranking clerics, who controlled large areas of land owned by the Church; (2) the oligarchy of the large
land owners (kojabashis) who formed the ruling class; (3) a small section of merchants, who formed the embryonic bourgeoisie and who became attached to the British establishment; (4) a small layer of petty bourgeoisie, namely intellectuals and mainly teachers, who were attached to Athens and Hellenic nationalism; (5) peasants (the majority of the population most of whom owned negligible plots of land); and (6) finally a numerically small group of artisans/craftsmen, the embryo of the working class. The vast majority of people lived in conditions of poverty and was largely illiterate.

It is possible to say that it was Britain that introduced the emergence of a capitalistic class structure in the Cypriot society from the 19th century onwards. This involved the gradual transition of the semi-feudal power relations, with hegemony of the kojabashi (the noble landowners) and the high-ranking clerics under the Ottomans’ millet system, into the hegemony of the historical bloc around the bourgeoisie under British colonialism. On the arrival of the British colonialists in Cyprus, one could not distinguish a bourgeoisie class within the Greek/Christian community as such as the commercial bourgeoisie were essentially ingrained in a tradition of honor and transactions of aristocratic nature. This code of honor was conserved through tradition but was only valid amongst the aristocracy as the ordinary people, the reayas, were not considered to be worthy or credible of this treatment, something the British colonialists found alien. The legal developments, from a system of estate, based on a code of honor to a contract system based on written agreements and commercial profit illustrate the transformation in the class relations, whereby the newly emergent bourgeoisie becomes more prominent.

Hence, by the beginning of the 20th century, a small bourgeoisie consisting mainly of commercial bourgeoisie was on the rise, who mustered around them intellectuals and professionals, such as doctors and lawyers. Although this was the overall schema, the class boundaries were not very clear as the landowners would many times also be involved in commerce and merchants would invest in land. Furthermore, there was no homogeneity in the group; for example, the merchants/brokers of British products who had close ties with the British were generally pro-British and conservative, whilst the professionals had a liberal Enosist and nationalist tendency.

At this point, it is significant to appreciate the relationship between class and nationalism, particularly with regard to the working class. Nationalism represented an alternative form of mobilization to class-based mobilization for the working class. The peasant and urban poor mobilizations of the 18th century in Cyprus aimed to protest heavy taxation and, in this respect, they were class revolts. Especially, the period from the uprising of 1765 in support of popular demands for taxation relief to the triple uprising in 1833 was a particularly rebellious one. For example, in 1804, peasants besieged Nicosia and, according to reports of the time, the uprisings were multicultural with Orthodox Christians, Muslims, and Linovamvaki taking part.
in these uprisings. Yet, following British colonialism, the Greek-Cypriot urban working class started to be mobilized under the banner of nationalism. Hence, the Greek-Cypriot ideology of *ellinobristianismos* in the period 1920–50 can be seen as such an ideology that functioned by shifting attention away from class consciousness (and political mobilization on the left), and focusing/promoting a cultural form of identity legitimizing the existing power structures and class power of the upper classes. From the 1920s to 1950s, the church and the resurgent class movement competed in their effort to mobilize the working class. By the late 1940s, the influence of the Greek-Cypriot right was strengthened over the Greek-Cypriot working class at the expense of Ανορθωτικό Κόμμα Εργαζομένου Λαού (AKEL; Progressive Party of the Working People).

On the other hand, newspaper clips and articles of the late 19th and early 20th centuries that were compiled by Ahmet An revealed the perceptions of the Turkish-Cypriot nationalist elites who were troubled by their observation that Turkish-Cypriots depended on Greek-Cypriots and that commerce, industry, and high-level public office was under Greek-Cypriot monopoly. In this period, Turkish-Cypriots were largely confined to traditional, unskilled occupations. Turkish-Cypriots were fully dependent on Greek-Cypriots for their vital needs such as law and health. Furthermore, Turkish-Cypriot town dwellers were dependent on Greek-Cypriot traders for the provision of consumption goods, while Turkish-Cypriot peasants were dependent on Greek-Cypriot merchant-usurer capital for both the realization of their produce and the provision of subsistence goods. Thus, one frequent source of complaint was the extraction of the surplus generated by the Turkish-Cypriot peasants by the Greek-Cypriot town-based commercial capital. According to Hakan Arslan, the uneasiness on the part of nationalist elites regarding this economic subordination of Turkish-Cypriots was the main reason why “the establishment of a circuit and circulation of capital and circuit of income between the Turkish-Cypriot rural and the Turkish-Cypriot urban has become one of the basic objectives of Turkish-Cypriot nationalists.”

The late development in the formation of a Turkish-Cypriot bourgeoisie is often cited as a cause for the delayed advance of nationalism and, therefore, it deserves to be elaborated briefly. As Altay Nevzat reports:

Whereas within the Greek-Cypriot community a wide business middle class arose as a result of socio-economic changes, the Turkish-Cypriot middle class remained limited in numbers and restrained in its civil service function. It was, therefore, entirely dependent on the British colonial government for promotion opportunities. Because of the economic dominance of the Greek-Cypriot elite, on the one hand—which controlled the prosperous trade-sector—and the lack of economic mobility within the Turkish-Cypriot society on the other, no middle class could evolve and hence no autonomous nationalism could develop.
It is worth to note that a greater proportion of the Turkish-Cypriot elite were members of the civil administration rather than being part of the bourgeoisie and therefore more dependent on the British.\textsuperscript{55} Nevzat remarks: “This, no doubt, must have circumscribed the autonomy of many to freely express nationalist sympathies, let alone to agitate openly and defiantly.”\textsuperscript{56} However, Nevzat also refers to Elie Kedourie who “points correctly to the flaw in the modernist supposition that because the middle classes were pre-eminent in fostering nationalism in western Europe, this had necessarily to be so also in other areas of the world.”\textsuperscript{57} According to Kedourie, the term “middle class” (or bourgeoisie in Marxist parlor) “is closely tied to a particular area and a particular history. It presupposes and implies a distinct social order,” one he contends is marked by “rapid industrial development.”\textsuperscript{58} This and other such features cannot be linked, he insists, to the existence of a nationalist movement:

In countries of the Middle and Far East, for example, where the significant division in society was between those who belonged to the state institution and those who did not, nationalism cannot be associated with the existence of a middle class. It developed rather, among young officers and bureaucrats, whose families were sometimes obscure, sometimes eminent … educated in Western methods and ideas, often at the expense of the State.\textsuperscript{59}

This was precisely the case in the Turkish-Cypriot community as many pioneering nationalists came from petty bourgeoisie professionals.\textsuperscript{60} Just like the Greek-Cypriot community, the Turkish-Cypriot community was internally divided whereby some sectors explicitly supported British existence in Cyprus whereas some sectors were opposed to it. Internal tensions within the Turkish-Cypriot community surfaced especially in the control of Evkaf and its vast property. The Evkaf can be defined as “the pious foundation that was in Cyprus the greatest source of accumulated communal wealth, having control of vast resources of land and property charitably donated over the years by members of the Moslem community.”\textsuperscript{61}

Arslan cites Salih Egemen\textsuperscript{62} and underlines the various types of rents Evkaf extracted, and the various revenue sources that it allocated. What is interesting is how different sectors in the community such as peasants, tradesmen, and local notables were all dependent on Evkaf:

Thus, peasants were largely dependent on Evkaf land, which were of two types: Big Evkaf farms with large expanses of land, located outside Nicosia and other towns, where peasants worked for Evkaf, and lease lands away from the towns, which peasants rented and tilled on their own account. Also, note that the majority of shops in çarşı (Turkish marketplace) belonged to Evkaf. Thus, the esnaf (tradesmen) were basically dependent on Evkaf for shops and on the Evkaf chest for circulating
capital as they were periodically strapped for cash. Finally, elements of the esraf [landlords] were also dependent for revenue on posts on the board of governors of Evkaf. Note that Evkaf revenues were typically ground rents. It controlled the distribution of arable lands and shops, thus the allocation of revenues in the town and villages, and it controlled the redistribution of rents amongst the elite.63

Evkaf would soon come under the sway of the British. Even though the Cyprus Convention had foreseen one Evkaf appointee from Istanbul and the other a British official, in practice, it was largely under British control, and eventually with the annexation of 1914, the British began to appoint both delegates, and the Evkaf totally lost its potential to act as a source for autonomous Turkish-Cypriot political mobilization.64 In 1925, a British-educated lawyer, the notable Sir Münir (Mehmet Münir), was appointed as the Muslim director of the Evkaf, and, in 1928, a royal decree turned the nominally autonomous Evkaf into a department of the British colonial administration, empowering the governor with the appointment of its Turkish director.65 Within these circumstances, it was not surprising that the leadership cadres of the Turkish-Cypriot nationalists were composed of petty bourgeoisie professionals whose livelihood did not completely depend on Evkaf.66

Soon after Evkaf became the key institution whereby intraelite rivalry between the Turkish-Cypriot nationalist elites and elites aligned by the British explicitly manifested itself. Under these circumstances, Turkish-Cypriot nationalist elites demanded Evkaf’s gaining autonomy and its transference to the Turkish-Cypriot community.67 Meanwhile, the British gave full backing to the loyal, more conservative, traditional Turkish-Cypriot elite in an effort to obstruct the success of the nationalists.68

Meanwhile, the anticolonial struggle as a popular mass movement had already started in the 1930s amongst the Greek-Cypriots. On 21 October 1931, Greek-Cypriots rioted against the British that ended with the burning of the governor’s residence. The key demand was Enosis or unification with Greece.69 As a result, the colonial administration instituted a decade of authoritarian rule where it abolished the legislative council, banned elections and political organizations, banned the teaching of Turkish and Greek history in schools as well as censuring the press.70

It was after 1931, with the October uprisings that the class-national question became more apparent: a popular uprising, largely spontaneous, against the British yoke, with a social content.71 One interpretation is that the 1931 uprising marks the victory of the Greek bourgeoisie over the old oligarchy of landowners.72 In the case of the Turkish-Cypriots, the authoritarian rule instituted after the 1931 uprising served to repress the nationalist camp. Colonial administrations banning the nationalist camp left pro-British Sir Münür the only official leader representing the Turkish-Cypriots.73
The class structure and class conflict became much more important in the national question with the growing independence of labor. The 1920s witnessed the foundation of the first workers unions as well as the Κομμουνιστικό Κόμμα Κύπρου (KKP; Communist Party of Cyprus) that was established in 1926. The party addressed both communities and opposed Greek nationalism and Enosis policy. The labor struggles by the militant labor started to be organized en masse in the 1940s and 1950s in Παγκύπρια Συνομοσπονδία Εργατών (PSE; The Pan-Cypriot Confederation of Labor) and later Παγκύπρια Εργατική Ομοσπονδία (PEO; The Pan-Cypriot Labor Federation). Since there were no Turkish-Cypriot trade unions at the time, the working class of the two communities pursued a collective struggle.

Following the declaration of the Republic of Cyprus (RoC) in 1960, it is possible to argue that the Greek-Cypriot bourgeoisie and Greek-Cypriot politics at large were aligned with pro-Enosis rather than pro-independence policies. This was the policy up to 1967, when the policy of the feasible ("το εφικτό") was adopted. By this time, the Greek-Cypriot community had experienced significant disappointment due to motherland Greece’s government’s attitudes. Furthermore, after 1960, as a result of economic and social development, a new bourgeoisie that associated its interests with the existence of the republic was on the rise.74

From 1920 to 1950, the Church and the class movement represented by AKEL and labor unions were engaged in a competition in order to address and mobilize the working class. In this period, class struggles implanted a horizontal alliance between Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots. Yet, institutions such as the Church and schooling either as a consequence of their practice or intentionally perpetuated the ethnic segregation between the two communities. Undoubtedly the Church or the Ethnarchy was a traditional political leader and remains to date a mass landowner with vital commercial interests. The Greek-Cypriot bourgeoisie or at least its dominant fraction, which included wealthy landowners and commercial interests, were closely tied with the Church and the political parties of the right. Traditionally, the Church had the allegiance of the petty bourgeoisie and mainly teachers/intellectuals, who formed the other elements of the hegemonic historical bloc. There were two elements in the Greek-Cypriot intelligentsia prior to the 1940s and 1950s: One was attached to London and the other to Athens. By the 1950s, however, they largely turned to the rhetoric of nationalism and the Church, as a result of the challenge by the left.

It was only after the 1930s, more specifically in the 1940s and 1950s, that the Enosis nationalism became the hegemonic Greek-Cypriots consciousness. At the time, Enosis became the shared strategy of the right and the left. Especially after 1950 that marks the absolute political hegemony of the Ethnarchy.75 AKEL was isolated, effectively excluded from political influence, and a Cold-War-type anticommunist suspicion restrained it to a defensive strategy.76
Meanwhile, the Turkish-Cypriot nationalist elite consolidated their hegemony in their respective communities by undercutting the expression of horizontal class alliance between the two communities. By the 1950s, the Turkish-Cypriot nationalism would develop into a mass following.\(^7\)

The rise of the nationalist movement became manifest with the foundation of the Volkan (Volcano) to be replaced by Türk Mukavemet Teskilâtı (TMT; Turkish Resistance Organization) in 1957.\(^8\) Egemen underlines how TMT broke the power of esraf (local notables who owned land), which constituted the key supporter basis of the pro-British camp, and aimed to garner support from peasants in villages as well as the petty bourgeoisie professionals and in specific the primary school teachers.\(^9\)

Another novelty of this period was the attempt to create a national bourgeoisie in Nicosia that would also be the support basis of the TMT.\(^10\) Especially after 1963, this process would continue in full swing as TMT’s monopolization of violence served to ensure the creation of a significant enclave market and thereby the control of sectors by the nationalist elite over critical economic connections (travel agencies, banks, economic aid) with Turkey. Thus, domestic economic surplus was appropriated by a nascent bourgeoisie in the form of trade profits.\(^11\)

The breakdown of constitutional order in 1963 and ensuing intercommunal violence caused a withdrawal of Turkish-Cypriots from the civil service and from political life. From 1964 to 1974, most Turkish-Cypriots were crammed in scattered enclaves (comprising only 2%–3% of the islands territory) under a parallel administration of their own. A harsh economic blockade was imposed on these areas by the Greek-Cypriots until early 1968.\(^12\) The civil servants and political leaders who had withdrawn from the RoC reorganized social life in the enclaves as “a state within-a-state, a replica of the state from which they had withdrawn.”\(^13\) The Turkish-Cypriot chauvinist elite imposed its siege mentality on the enclaves it controlled and silenced those members of the Turkish-Cypriot community who insisted on intercommunal cooperation.

On the other hand, the Greek-Cypriot power elite conquered the bicomunal state and declared Turkish-Cypriots to be rebels, stripping away many of the rights and privileges given to them by the 1960 constitution. The suspension of constitutional order created a state of exception that continues to this day.\(^14\) In 1974, the Greek coup and the Turkish military intervention completed the de facto partition of a fragmented country, which has remained in a state of limbo until our days.

**CONCLUSION**

This article has two key aims. The first aim can be formulated as highlighting the social construction of identities in a historical framework determined by class, status, and power conflicts. Our assessment revealed that nationalism
became hegemonic in Cyprus only after the late 1940s. The peasant and urban poor mobilizations of the 18th and 19th century aiming to protest heavy taxation were multicultural uprisings. Labor movement and class-based mobilization had acquired significance in the 1920s, and the working class of the two communities pursued a collective struggle in joint labor unions at the time. Yet, it was only later, following British colonialism that the Greek-Cypriot urban working class started to be mobilized under the banner of nationalism. So nationalism provided an alternative model of mobilization for the working classes that emphasized a cultural form of identity at the expense of class consciousness. Had the organizations of the left such as AKEL not advocated Enosis policy in the 1950s and stepped up class-based mobilization in cooperation with the Turkish-Cypriot left, history might have taken another route. Nationalism was not historically inevitable. Rather, its hegemony reveals the balance of forces of the time in Cyprus.

The second aim of this article was to problematize the argument that ethnic or national groups are homogenous actors and that the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities have unitary interests on the basis of their group identity. We underlined the need to deconstruct unitary actors. We noted this tendency to draw on a Weberian conceptualization of the state that conceptualizes the state as a unitary actor. Our assessment of the two mainstream readings of the Cyprus conflict—the liberal conflict resolution model and the global/regional geopolitics model—revealed how these models were guilty of these double sins: taking identity as a given and constructing the state as an autonomous source of power independent from social forces.

We argued that the state is not a rational or unitary actor but it reproduces in a political form the conflicts of interest that mark civil society. Our analysis of the period 1878 to 1974 led us to a few important conclusions. Britain’s control of the island in 1878 paved the way to the emergence of a capitalistic class structure in the Cypriot society from the 19th century onwards. Essentially this meant the gradual transition from the semi-feudal power relations peculiar to the Ottomans millet system, which were marked with hegemony of the kojabashi (the noble landowners) and the high ranked clerics, to the hegemony of the historical bloc around the Greek-Cypriot bourgeoisie.

By the beginning of the 20th century, it is possible to talk about the emergence of a bourgeoisie consisting mainly of commercial bourgeoisie. Another group that is worth to note is a petty bourgeoisie group such as intellectuals and professionals, doctors and lawyers who were mustered around them. There was an internal differentiation within the group in the sense that the merchants/brokers of British products who had close ties with the British were generally pro-British and conservative, whilst the professionals had a liberal Enosist and nationalist tendency.

Following the 1931 uprisings, the Greek Cypriot bourgeoisie further strengthened its position over the old oligarchy of landowners. The
Greek-Cypriot bourgeoisie were closely tied with the Church that was a traditional political leader and the political parties of the right. It is possible to refer to the Church, bourgeoisie, and the petty bourgeoisie—mainly teachers/intellectuals—as the key elements of the hegemonic historical bloc within the Greek-Cypriot community. The internal divide within the historical bloc continued throughout the 1940s and 1950s in the sense that a commercial bourgeoisie that had links with Britain were pro-British and the petty bourgeoisie were pro-Greece. However, by the 1950s, these internal differences were not as important and they largely turned to the rhetoric of nationalism and the Church. This attachment continued even after the declaration of the RoC, though by the late 1960s most turned their allegiance to the Cypriot Republic out of pragmatism and self-interest.86

On the other hand, Britain’s control of the island also introduced internal divisions within the Turkish-Cypriot community. During the early 20th century, the majority of the population (75%) of the Turkish-Cypriot community were peasants, 15% were civil administrators working in town centers, and the remaining 10% were merchants again working in town centers.87 In comparison to the Greek-Cypriot community, the late development in the formation of a Turkish-Cypriot bourgeoisie is often cited as a cause for the delayed advance of nationalism. Yet, as Kedourie underlines, in most countries of the Middle and Far East, nationalism is not associated with the existence of a bourgeoisie but rather with petty bourgeoisie (young officers, bureaucrats, and teachers) and this was precisely the case in the Turkish-Cypriot community as many pioneering nationalists came from petty bourgeoisie professionals.

In that sense, the key elements of a historical bloc within the Turkish-Cypriot community by the early 20th century would be civil administrators occupying key state offices, local notables that owned some land, commercial bourgeoisie, petty bourgeoisie, and, in specific, primary school teachers. By the 1930s, an internal crack surfaced within this bloc: Local notables, peasants, tradesmen, ulema (religious scholars) all depended on Evkaf in one way or another and that was now under the control of a pro-British director. The only exception was the petty bourgeoisie professionals who did not depend on Evkaf. It is not surprising that the leadership cadres of the Turkish-Cypriot nationalists were composed of petty bourgeoisie professionals.88

The interelite rivalry within the Turkish-Cypriot community that was represented by pro-British and pro-Turkish nationalist elites were resolved in favor of pro-British leaders after 1930 thanks to the colonial administration’s repression of the nationalist movement in the aftermath of the 1931 October Revolt. Yet, the situation would change completely at the end of World War II. After the 1950s, nationalism triumphed in both communities. The foundation of the TMT in 1957 introduced significant shifts within the hegemonic bloc. TMT cadres deliberately excluded sectors that were aligned
with the pro-British leadership; they broke the power of esraf and aimed 
to garner support from peasants in villages as well as the petty bourgeoisie 
professionals and in specific the primary school teachers. They also aimed to 
create a Turkish-Cypriot bourgeoisie in Nicosia that would also be the sup-
port basis of the TMT. This commercial bourgeoisie would later become 
the key supporter of right-wing parties especially after 1974.

While nationalist forces aimed for separating two communities, class 
struggles implanted an horizontal alliance between the Greek-Cypriots and 
the Turkish-Cypriots throughout 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. Yet by the 1950s, 
the Church and the nationalist historical bloc on the Greek-Cypriot side 
and the Turkish-Cypriot nationalistic elite consolidated their hegemony in 
their respective communities by undercutting the expression of horizontal 
class alliance between the Greek-Cypriots and the Turkish-Cypriots. The 
fact that the only Greek-Cypriot party that had bridges with the Turkish-
Cypriots AKEL was “restrained to a defensive strategy” advocating Enosis 
policy meant that the left within the Greek-Cypriot community had lost the 
hegemonic struggle it had fought since the 1920s. Consequently, those who 
defied the ethnic division and insisted on intercommunal cooperation in a 
common state had to pay a heavy price: They were murdered, marginalized, 
ignored, or silenced. The “dialectic of intolerance” within and between 
the two communities became the major characteristic of the political life 
in Cyprus, leading to interethnic conflict and the eventual partition of the 
island.

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NOTES

1. Andreas Panayiotou, “Models of Compromise and Power Sharing in the Experience of Cypriot 
2. Floya Anthias and Ron Ayres, “Ethnicity and Class in Cyprus,” Race and Class XXV(I): 65 
(1983).
3. Patrick Dunleavy and Brendan O’Leary, Theories of the State: The Politics of Liberal Democracy 
(Houndmills: Macmillan Education, 1987).
4. Stephanos Constantinides, Επισκόπηση της Νέατερης Κυπριακής Ιστορίας, Κοινωνικές 
Δομές, Θεσμοί και Ιδεολογία (Review of Recent Cypriot History, Social Structures, Institutions and 
Ideology) (Canada: Taxideftis Centre for Hellenic Studies and Research, 2011).
6. Immanuel Kant, Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Essay (New York, NY: Cosimo books, 
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Interview Conducted by Alina Rocha Menocal and Kate Kilpatrick,” Development in Practice 15(6): 


11. The most known are the Macmillan plan 1956 (United Kingdom) and various versions of the Acheson plans in 1964 (United States). These are well documented, see Christopher Hitchens, *Cyprus: Hostage to History, Cyprus from the Ottomans to Kissinger*, 3rd edition (London: Verso, 1997); Michael A. Attalides, *Cyprus, Nationalism and International Politics* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1979); Michalis Michael, *Resolving the Cyprus Conflict: Negotiating History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).


22. For instance, scholars like Jon Burton. The *Journal of Conflict Resolution* was founded in 1957, see http://jpr.sagepub.com/ (accessed 5 Jan. 2014).

23. The Peace Institute Oslo was founded in 1959, see http://www.prio.no/ (accessed 3 Jan. 2014).


25. See Ramsbotham et al., *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*.


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42. Yiannis Lefkis, *Πίζες [Roots]* (Limassol, 1984).


44. Ibid., 16–17.

45. Ibid., 34–35.


49. Panayiotou, “Models of Compromise.”


51. Egemen notes that the population of the Turkish-Cypriot community was around 50,000 by the end of WWI and 75% of this population were peasants engaged in farming, 15% were civil administrators working in Nicosia and other town centers, and the remaining 10% were tradesmen again working in town centers. See Salih Egemen, *Kıbrısh Türkler arasındad siyasal liderlik* [Political leadership amongst the Turkish-Cypriots] (Lefkoşa, Cyprus: Ateş Matbaacılık Limited, 2006), 90.


53. Arslan, “Turkish-Cypriot Nationalist Drive,” 120.


55. Nevzat, *Nationalism Amongst the Turks*, 141, 142.

56. Ibid., 141, 142.


58. Ibid., 140.


60. Egemen, *Kıbrısh Türkler arasındad siyasal liderlik*, 120.

61. Nevzat, *Nationalism Amongst the Turks*, 139.
64. Nevzat, *Nationalism Amongst the Turks*, 139.
68. Turkish-Cypriot nationalists defined the community as the “Turkish-Cypriot community” whereas pro-British Evkaf administrators (Sir Münür and his associates) defined the same community as an “Islamic community.” According to Turkish nationalists, there was a need to embrace the Turkish identity and implement the modernizing reforms of Kemal Atatürk, whereas elites aligned with the British vindicated cooperation by the British as well as giving up on the Turkish identity. See Egemen, *Kıbrıslı Türkler arasinda siyasal liderlik*, 117.
69. Ibid., 122.
70. Ibid.
72. Constantinides, *Επισκόπηση της Νέας ορεινής Κυπριακής* [The Octobristos], 83 (The October Uprising and the Communist Party of Cyprus) (Nicosia, Cyprus: 1994), 122.
77. Attilaides, *Cyprus, Nationalism and International Politics*, 117.
80. Ibid., 148.
82. Heraclides, “The Cyprus Gordian Knot,” 120.
84. Ibid., 632.
86. Attilaides, *Cyprus, Nationalism and International Politics*, 89.
88. Ibid., 120.
89. Ibid., 148.
90. Attilaides, *Cyprus, Nationalism and International Politics*, 89.

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