

# GreeSE Papers

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### **Cypriotism as a Political Ideology: critical contributions and conceptual limitations**

**Antonis Pastellopoulos**

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# Cypriotism as a Political Ideology: critical contributions and conceptual limitations

Antonis Pastellopoulos<sup>1</sup>

## ABSTRACT

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The present paper summarises and evaluates the available literature on Cypriotism, an ideological position which opposes Greek and Turkish Cypriot nationalism, aspiring instead for a common Cypriot identity that transcends historical and existing ethnic divisions. It situates the literature within the broader scholarship focusing on nationalism in Cyprus, noting how Cypriotism is typically represented in relation to Greek and Turkish nationalism. The paper moves on to examine the limitations of the Kohn dichotomy, a theoretical framework originating in nationalism studies which has been employed in the literature to conceptualise Cypriotism as a political ideology, further outlining certain conceptual confusions which appear to originate from its utilisation. Drawing on contributions from the available literature, it concludes with a proposed modified definition for Cypriotism that aims to address both the theoretical limitations and the conceptual confusions identified.

**Keywords:** Cypriotism, Cyprocentrism, Kohn dichotomy, nationalism, Cyprus Problem

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## 1. Introduction

Engaging with Greek and Turkish nationalism has become an integral part of the scholarship surrounding Cyprus. This engagement has been characteristically interdisciplinary, ranging from political science and anthropology to history and sociology, producing critical readings that have undoubtedly enriched our understanding of contemporary Cypriot social relations, as well as the historical origins and unfoldment of the Cyprus Dispute. Given the ongoing influence of these variants of nationalism in Cypriot social and political life, this diverse assemblage of texts offers not merely critical insights, but a solid foundation upon which future theoretical and empirical endeavours can develop, mapping out the development of Greek and Turkish Cypriot nationalism and connecting it with the broader social, political and economic transformations at play.

Significantly less attention has however been extended towards Cypriotism, an ideological current that emerged in a consistent fashion at least since the 1970s, as a response and as a challenge to the hegemony of Greek and Turkish Cypriot nationalism. While a literature surrounding Cypriotism does exist, it remains scattered across a number of heterogeneous mediums, ranging from published books, journal articles and conference papers, to unpublished drafts, postgraduate theses and informal pamphlets. This rather inconsistent publishing pattern has subsequently affected access to the literature, as a number of texts have remained either difficult to locate, or largely outside of official circulation, in turn constraining potential attempts at engaging with the topic.

This publishing pattern can be explained, to a certain extent, by the late development of Cypriot academic institutions. As the first Cypriot university opened its doors only in 1989, Cypriot academics received their credentials and training outside of Cyprus, often subsequently being employed in academic institutions abroad (Trimikliniotis, 2019: 139). With few local options being readily available for the dissemination of critical scholarship, Cypriot academic publications have followed a fragmentary pattern, as scholars published their work, and continue to do so, through a diverse array of journals, publishing houses

and academic institutions, the vast majority of which are located outside of the island. Since opportunities to publish academically for a specifically Cypriot readership remained limited at least until the early 2000s, academics aiming to influence or intervene in local social and political debates tended to either self-publish their work, or, more often than not, circulate it as articles in local political magazines, often of a left-wing persuasion.<sup>2</sup> A lasting effect of this practice has been the continuous inaccessibility of these texts to future generations, as their publication in non-digital, non-academic mediums, has excluded them from receiving formal digitisation and dissemination in online academic platforms, in contrast to publications found in academic journals. Inaccessibility is however not merely limited to such texts, but also burdens older academic publications as well, most notably academic monographs and books, as many have neither been digitised, nor have they received recent reprints, making them difficult to locate.

An additional barrier to accessing the literature originates in its further fragmentation through language, as academic publications are often published in one language, such as English, Greek and Turkish, without subsequently receiving translations, making bilingualism a minimum prerequisite to adequately access a substantial section of the literature. The combination of linguistic barriers and general inaccessibility to academic texts has particularly affected the study of Cypriotism, as some of the most notable contributions are only available in Greek (Panayiotou 1992, Mavratsas 1998), while others have remained formally unpublished (Panayiotou 1996), or largely out of circulation (Attalides 1979). As a result of this lack of access, a discontinuity between past and present scholarship has been evident in the study of Cypriotism, as empirical and theoretical contributions are not transferred in a consistent fashion to a new generation of academics. A notable effect of this disconnectedness is the slow fading out of the term 'Cypriotism' in more recent academic research, which often explores senses of

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<sup>2</sup> These magazines have included, among others, *Entos ton Teihon* (Within the Walls, 1985-1990), the last issues of *Traino stin Poli* (Train in the City, 1987-1994) and *Eks Iparhis* (From the Beginning, 1999-2004). A number of them can now be found online on the website of the Cyprus Movements Archive ([movementsarchive.org](http://movementsarchive.org)).

Cypriotness without engaging with; and building on past literature documenting and theorising Cypriotism as a political ideology. As a consequence, contributions to the study of Cypriotism, while still taking place, have remained sporadic and inconsistent.

The present paper aims to alleviate these limitations, by concentrating, summarising and exploring this literature. Following a brief historical contextualisation, it proceeds to discuss some of the contributions in the study of Greek and Turkish Cypriot nationalism, situating the literature on Cypriotism within this broader analytical context. The paper moves on to further examine some of the theoretical limitations identifiable in this literature, placing particular emphasis on the theoretical constraints associated with the Kohn dichotomy, a conceptual framework originating in nationalism studies that has been employed in the study of Cypriotism. Building on the available literature, it concludes with a proposed modified definition of Cypriotism, in an attempt to address and transcend the theoretical limitations identified.

## 2. Brief Historical Context

As Andrekos Varnava (2012: 155) notes, Cypriots did not share a homogeneous identity when the Ottomans handed administrative control of the island to the British in 1878. Instead, premodern identifications of religion and locality began to transition towards; and be subsumed under emerging national identities, as the island was socially and politically transformed during the early years of British colonialism (Ibid: 190). This process was accelerated by extensive modernising reforms in the internal administration of Cypriot socio-political life, driving further the national homogenisation of the island's population. It was during the first decade of British rule that political disputes over identity developed, concentrated initially within the Christian community of the island, with two factions competing over political and ideological hegemony, the Hellenists, who represented the ideas of Greek nationalism, and the Orthodox-centrists, who stressed prenational conceptions of Christianity as their political identity (Ibid: 179-180). A similar

dispute was to repeat itself later on in the 20<sup>th</sup> century among Cypriot Muslims, with Young Turks (and later on Kemalists) advocating for Turkish nationalism, in opposition to traditionalist Cypriot Muslim elites, whose positions of power depended upon Ottoman social, legal and political structures, as well as their consistent loyalty towards the British colonial administration (Nevzat, 2005: 430-431).

The nationalists triumphed in both ideological disputes, dominating political, educational and religious institutions, paving the way for the development of a Greek and a Turkish national identity, each with its corresponding nationalist ideology, national aspirations and antithetical long-term aims (Ioannou, 2020: 11). *Enosis* (union), the unification of the island with Greece, became the central aim of Greek Cypriot nationalism, which was in turn uncompromisingly opposed by Turkish Cypriot nationalism. Considering *enosis* an existential threat, Turkish Cypriot nationalists initially maintained their support for the prolongation of British rule, but eventually adopted the position of *taksim* (partition), demanding the partition of Cyprus upon ethnic lines (Loizides, 2007: 174-175). As nationalism increasingly shaped Cypriot political life in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Greek Cypriots, constituting the majority of the population, dominated the anti-colonial struggle and placed *enosis* as its core demand, bringing the two nationalisms into direct confrontation, as each nationalism aimed to assimilate Cyprus, either in part or as a whole, with its corresponding 'motherland' (Ioannou, 2020: 14). Despite the initial support for independence by the emerging Cypriot labour movement, the Communist Party of Cyprus eventually switched its position towards *enosis* after the formation of the Progressive Party of Working People (AKEL), and by the 1940s, the political right and the political left were no longer contesting the central aim of the anti-colonial struggle (Kalantzopoulos, 2018: 116). Rather, the hostility between right and left reflected opposing positions in relation to political strategy, ongoing class disputes, and a broader antagonism over hegemony, concluding in the 1950s with the Greek Cypriot nationalist right gaining hegemony over the anti-colonial struggle (Kızılyürek, 2019: 106).



This confrontation was both manipulated by the British colonial administration and further fuelled by broader tensions between Greece and Turkey. The first pivotal moment of crisis arose during the Greek Cypriot anti-colonial, pro-enosis guerrilla campaign of the 1950s, as Turkish Cypriot nationalists responded with the formation of their own paramilitary units, an antagonistic process which deteriorated into inter-communal violence by 1958 (Ioannou, 2020: 15). What came to be known as the Cyprus Dispute was initially 'resolved' through a compromise between the various interested parties (Britain, Greece, Turkey and the two communities), by offering Cyprus its independence in 1960 under a bi-communal constitutional structure, which necessitated inter-communal collaboration for the functioning of the newly independent Republic of Cyprus (Salem, 1992: 119). Despite securing independence, the Greek and Turkish Cypriot political elites continued to pursue antagonistic aims, leading to constitutional collapse and further inter-communal violence, with the most intensive fighting concentrated during 1963-64, the first wave of armed clashes following the establishment of the Republic.

This new cycle of violence concluded with Greek Cypriots retaining complete control over the state; while Turkish Cypriots were largely pushed into ethnically segregated enclaves, surrounded by Greek Cypriot military and paramilitary forces (Ekici, 2019: 23). With the establishment of a military dictatorship in Greece in 1967, tensions increasingly rose between the Greek and Greek Cypriot governments, reaching their peak in the Greek-backed 1974 coup d'état against Greek Cypriot president Makarios, triggering the invasion of the island by Turkish forces (Hughes-Wilson, 2011: 86). The events of 1974 concluded with the occupation of 38% of the island's territory by the Turkish military, the internal displacement of hundreds of thousands of Greek and Turkish Cypriots; and the de-facto ethnic segregation and geographical partition of the island, with the United Nations mediating an informal ceasefire and establishing a buffer zone between the opposing armies (Kliot and Mansfield, 1997: 503-504).

Since 1977, inter-communal negotiations have been hosted by the United Nations with the aim of reunifying the island under a new federal bi-communal structure. Such an

arrangement would see each community controlling its own federated state, under a central bi-communal government (Ker-Lindsay 2009: 16). In 1983 the area under the control of the Turkish forces declared itself an independent state under the name 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus' (TRNC); but has received no formal recognition beyond the Republic of Turkey, leaving Turkish Cypriots in diplomatic and economic isolation (Ekici, 2019: 50). The Republic of Cyprus, which has remained under Greek Cypriot control since 1963, is recognised as the sole sovereign state over the whole territory of the island; but is in fact able to execute effective control solely in the territory south of the buffer zone. Direct communication between the two sides became possible only since 2003, with the opening and permanent establishment of checkpoints accessible to the general public, enabling the crossing of civilians across the buffer zone. The closest the island has come towards reunification was in 2004, when a proposed peace plan commonly known as the Annan Plan was placed in parallel referendums, with the majority of Turkish Cypriots accepting the plan, in contrast to the majority of Greek Cypriots, who rejected it.

### 3. Perspectives on Greek and Turkish Cypriot Nationalism

Given the influence of nationalism in the various phases of the Cyprus Dispute, it is not surprising that national identities and nationalism have remained central to the study of Cyprus, particularly among academics who maintain a critical position towards nationalist politics and their role in the unfolding of the conflict (Trimikliniotis, 2019: 164). Pascalis Kitromilides (1979) was one of the first to explore the ideological content of nationalism in Cyprus, focusing on Greek Cypriot nationalism, which he linked to the ideas of Greek irridentism that came to prominence after the Greek Revolution of 1821. In his historical analysis, Kitromilides argues that Greek Cypriot nationalism developed a double political function during the British colonial period. On the one hand, it expressed the popular support for national self-determination, by mobilising the Greek Cypriot population against British colonialism through the demand of *enosis*. On the other, it was utilised as

an ideological orthodoxy by the Church and the Greek Cypriot bourgeoisie against the emerging Cypriot left and the liberal sections of the political right, as a strategy of barring political opponents from challenging the legitimacy of the Greek Cypriot political and economic elite (Kitromilides, 1979: 24). For Kitromilides, this function of Greek Cypriot nationalism engrained intolerance and illiberalism as a lasting characteristic of Cypriot public political life, continuing to survive and safeguard the interests of the elite well after the island's decolonisation (Ibid).

As Kitromilides further notes, Greek Cypriot nationalism came in confrontation with Turkish Cypriot nationalism, as the latter encompassed elements of pan-Turkism combined with a hyphenated anti-Greek rhetoric (Ibid: 27). In his own work, Niyazi Kızılyürek (2015: 179) observes that Turkish Cypriot nationalism developed through antagonism with its Greek counterpart, consolidating its ideological positions through its opposition to *enosis*, the implementation of the Kemalist reforms, which gave rise to a modernist, secular national identity; and the identification with Turkey as the national centre of the Turkish Cypriots. The combination of ideological illiberalism and Greek and Turkish nationalist contestation formulated what Kitromilides describes as 'the dialectic of intolerance' (1979: 27); the reproduction of an adversarial, uncompromising mode of politics that has remained entrenched in the political life of post-independence Cyprus.

The relationship between the two nationalisms has been further explored in the comparative study of Yiannis Papadakis (1998) on the ideological content of Greek and Turkish Cypriot nationalist narration. Papadakis argues that the two nationalisms follow the same structural logic, presenting a sharp distinction between victim and aggressor in their narrations (Papadakis, 1998: 69). In his analysis, he highlights the centrality placed by each nationalist narrative over the 'questionable' motives of the other community, producing conflicting mediated meanings over history, reenforcing the ideological paradigms of victimhood found on each side of the dispute, with Greek Cypriot narrations explaining historical events through Turkish expansionism and Turkish Cypriot ones through the unbending support of Greek Cypriots for *enosis* (Ibid: 80). As he further notes

in his ethnographic work on collective memory (Papadakis, 2005), Greek and Turkish Cypriot nationalist narratives emphasise different and often antithetical historical events while paying little attention to others, making the narratives, as well as the collective memories forming around them, difficult to reconcile.

In her own comparative work, Rebecca Bryant (2002) however challenges the tendency to view Greek and Turkish Cypriot nationalism as mere reflections of each other. Examining how they are founded on different discourses over the nation and its relation to territory, Bryant demonstrates that the two nationalisms produce distinct processes of naturalisation that are specific to each community. For Bryant, Greek Cypriot narratives naturalise the nation through a genealogical discourse which traces 'links that are already assumed' (2002: 522), tautologically reaffirming the inherent Greekness of Cyprus. Thus, Greek Cypriot nationalism legitimises its claims by demonstrating this inherent Greekness from antiquity to the contemporary period, presenting this historical trajectory as a pure, undisturbed linearity. In contrast, Turkish Cypriot nationalism follows what Bryant calls an archaeological discourse, emphasising the utilisation of factuality and immediate experience, legitimising its positions upon an assemblage of historical facts, rather than through the employment of self-fulfilling, teleological assumptions (Ibid: 524). As Bryant further highlights (2004: 216), this indicates that Greek and Turkish Cypriot nationalisms embrace different ontological starting points, morphing a separate mode of interpreting the world, a process which drives Greek and Turkish Cypriots further apart.

Nationalism is however not an unchanging phenomenon, and some emphasis has also been placed in documenting the ideological shifts taking place after the island's de-facto partition. In his examinations of Greek nationalism in Cyprus, sociologist Caesar Mavratsas (1997, 1998) observes that following partition, Greek Cypriot nationalism has largely shifted from supporting *enosis* to favouring the island's independence. Mavratsas traces this shift to the direct involvement of Greece in the events of 1974, since the Greek coup gave the pretext for the Turkish invasion, as well as the ensued stigmatisation of right-wing Greek Cypriot nationalism, as far-right Greek Cypriot nationalists actively

participated in the Greek-backed coup. In the aftermath of the Turkish invasion, *enosis* was both discredited and stigmatised, losing popular support, as it no longer signified national liberation, becoming associated instead with treachery and ideological fanaticism (Mavratsas, 1998: 101). With support for Cypriot independence emerging as the new political consensus, Greek Cypriot nationalism adapted its position in favour of maintaining an independent Cypriot polity, combining it with an ideological commitment for the re-affirmation of the island's Greekness, a commitment reflected in official historical narration, cultural and educational policy, ceremonial symbolism and the active seeking of closer diplomatic and cultural ties with the mainland Greek state (Mavratsas, 1997: 728).

A similar shift has also been observed taking place within Turkish Cypriot nationalism in the post-1974 period, as support for the cultural autonomy and political independence of Turkish Cypriots has been gradually gaining ground (Loizides, 2007: 181-182). This shift appears to be related to the effects of the island's de-facto partition on the Turkish Cypriot community, which have led to discontent both with Turkey, as well as with the motherland version of Turkish Cypriot nationalism that has dominated political life in the first decades following partition. While *taksim* was technically achieved in 1974, the community has remained in continuous international isolation, as the territory of the self-declared Turkish Cypriot state has not received recognition, being considered instead internationally as an illegal state (Navaro-Yashin, 2012: 6). Wide dissatisfaction has further emerged with Turkey's interference in Turkish Cypriot politics, the extensive influence of the Turkish army in everyday life and the ongoing settlement of a mainland Turkish population that is perceived as both alien and culturally different to the Turkish Cypriot community (Kızılyürek and Gautier-Kızılyürek, 2004: 51).

## 4. The Literature Surrounding Cypriotism

Cypriotism is commonly presented in relation to Greek and Turkish Cypriot nationalism, as that ideological current which actively opposes both nationalisms and the ongoing partition of the island, aspiring for a common Cypriot identity that transcends historical and existing ethnic divisions (Khan, 2002: 44). Other terms that have been used in the literature to describe political or social phenomena expressing similar, or identical positions, include 'Cypriot consciousness' (Attalides, 1979: 59), 'Cyprocentrism' (Peristianis, 2008: 224) and 'Cypriot identity' (Panayiotou, 1992: 15), all of which are presented in a conflictual relation to the dominant Greek and Turkish Cypriot nationalisms.<sup>3</sup> It is worth noting that the term has also been employed to describe a particular sociological reading of Cypriot modernity, rather than merely a political ideology. In his unpublished work on Cypriot identity, Andreas Panayiotou (1996) defines Cypriotism as the 'historical experience of Cypriot modernity as a systemic phenomenon' (1996: 15), connecting it to the crystallisation and evolution of a Cypriot identity that has been morphed through the survival and adaptation of 'surpluses', of cultural, social, historical and political remnants that have neither been subsumed; nor eradicated through Greek and Turkish national homogenisation (Ibid: 2). Ranging from Cypriot folk culture and linguistic difference; to the historical experience of inter-communal co-existence and specific elements of modernism inherited from British colonialism, these surpluses act for Panayiotou as the foundations for the subsequent development of a specifically Cypriot consciousness in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Ibid).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Since some of these terms appear to originate from public political discourse in the Republic of Cyprus, a discourse that has been historically dominated by Greek Cypriot nationalism, terms like 'Cypriot consciousness' and 'Cypriotism' were initially or subsequently assigned negative connotations.

<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, while Panayiotou's manuscript (1996) has never been formally published, and was made available online only in 2018, it was referenced in Mavratsas' 1998 book on Greek Cypriot nationalism (1998: 220), indicating that the manuscript was privately circulating in specific academic circles.

Nonetheless, the term has been utilised more consistently to describe a particular ideological position. A widely employed definition originates in Mavratsas, who defined Cypriotism as ‘the idea that Cyprus has its own *sui generis* character and, thus, must be viewed as an entity which is independent from both the motherlands of the two main communities of the island, that is, Greece and Turkey’ (1997: 721). The definition itself hints towards the ideological content of Cypriotism, in so far as Cyprus is considered as an independent, autonomous entity contained within its own territorial space, in contrast to the various expressions of Greek and Turkish Cypriot nationalism, which consider the island as a national, historical, ethnic, or cultural extension of a larger political entity, a ‘motherland’ nation-state. Additionally, the definition is further characterised by an emphasis on difference, since Cyprus is argued to maintain a *sui generis* character, entailing a set of characteristics that make it stand out from both Greece and Turkey, in a yet unspecified way.

As Nicos Trimikliniotis notes, Cypriotist positions have often been met with ridicule and censorship (2019: 161), particularly by individuals and institutions that are in agreement, either partially or fully, with Greek and Turkish Cypriot national narratives. As ideological disputes over identity have the tendency to become heated and intense in Cyprus, this atmosphere has occasionally been reflected in academia. Thus, in some cases Cypriotism has been simply met with dismissal. For example, Turkish Cypriot psychoanalyst Vamik Volkan (2008) has described Cypriotist positions held by Turkish Cypriots as large-scale identity confusion (2008: 107), while Greek Cypriot academic Demetra Demetriou (2020) has described left-wing Greek Cypriot expressions of Cypriotism as ‘a-historical, isolationist, [...] nativist, and most often permeated with hatred towards anything Hellenic’ (2020: 3). In both cases, Cypriotism is claimed to originate in foreign interventions intending to undermine and replace existing national identities with a new, Cypriot nation. Volkan connects it to western diplomats attempting to facilitate the reunification of the island (2008: 102), while Demetriou argues that Cypriotism is a

colonial construction (2020: 2), originating in the minds of British colonialists.<sup>5</sup> By approaching Cypriotism as atypical, external, and artificial, a process of delegitimization appears to be at play in the work of both Volkan and Demetriou. As the local Greek and Turkish Cypriot national identities are not scrutinised in a similar, critical fashion, they are re-enforced as autochthonous, inherent, and historically rooted, gaining an aura of normalcy and objectivity that is simultaneously denied to Cypriotist senses of identity.

Academics sympathetic to Cypriotism have however provided more attentive readings, with most detailed research focusing on Cypriotism in the Greek Cypriot community. In his 1998 work *Facets of Greek Nationalism in Cyprus*, Mavratsas presents Cypriotism as a de-ethicised political ideology which emphasises the independence and autonomy of Cyprus from Greece and Turkey, stressing the inclusion to an independent Cypriot polity over and above identification with the Greek or Turkish nation (1998: 86). Mavratsas further argues that the dispute between these two positions is reflected in the consciousness of Greek Cypriots, to the extent that Greek Cypriot nationalism dominates political and theoretical consciousness, while Cypriotism appears to be permeating in pre-theoretical consciousness, as everyday Cypriot life is characteristically differentiated and autonomous from mainland Greece (1999: 100). Mavratsas here pays attention to linguistic differences located in the widespread use of the Cypriot Greek language variety, the fundamentally different social and political institutions found on the island, the engagement with Cypriot, rather than Greek mass media and sports, as well as the Cypriot educational system, which create, according to him, a 'specifically Cypriot lifeworld' (Ibid: 98).

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<sup>5</sup> Demetriou further states that the idea of constructing a Cypriot nation has been promoted by the Neo-Cypriot Association, an organisation that was formed in the Republic of Cyprus in the 1970s. There appears to be however little evidence to support this claim, as the Association has never publicly promoted the creation of a Cypriot nation; or denied the existence of Greek and Turkish national identities on the island, supporting multiculturalism and political liberalism instead. For a discussion on the ideology of the association, see Mavratsas (1997: 724). The refusal to *consciously* promote a Cypriot nation as an alternative to Greek and Turkish Cypriot nationalism has also been identified as an ideological element characterising the extra-parliamentary Greek Cypriot left. For more information, see Pastellopoulos (2018).



A similar reading appears in the work of Nicos Peristianis, who employs the terms Cyprocentrism and Hellenocentrism to describe Cypriotism and Greek Cypriot nationalism, noting that Cyprocentrism in Greek Cypriot society stresses rapprochement with Turkish Cypriots, in contrast to Hellenocentric perspectives, which emphasise closeness to Greece (2008: 2). In his research on perceptions of national identity among Greek Cypriots, Peristianis further highlights what he describes as the dual loyalty imbedded in Greek Cypriot society. On the one hand, there is the loyalty towards the state, which is perceived as the key institution through which the island can be eventually reunified; and on the other hand, there is the loyalty towards the ethnic/national group, which demarcates the historical, cultural and linguistic points of difference with the Turkish Cypriot community (ibid: 253). For Peristianis, this dual loyalty gives rise to a series of political positions, ranging from a balancing between the two loyalties, to the adoption of extreme positions identifying completely either with the state, or with the nation.<sup>6</sup>

In his own theoretical vocabulary Panayiotou employs the term 'Cypriot identity' to describe Cypriotism, arguing that it is characterised by the identification with the territory of Cyprus, by support towards the island's political independence and by the recognition of Cyprus as a historically heterogeneous cultural space, in contrast to Greek and Turkish Cypriot nationalist positions, which perceive the island as having a monolithic cultural history (1992: 13-14). Expanding on the latter point, Panayiotou argues that this recognition gives rise to a 'synthetic identity of the Cypriot that understands itself as the bridge between Turkism and Hellenism, which constitute extreme poles' (ibid). Although recognizing the possibility that Cypriotism could evolve into a national identity, Panayiotou argues for a Cypriot identity acting as a bridge over existing national identities,

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<sup>6</sup> It is worth noting that Leonard Doob (1986) identified a similar split existing within both communities, which he described as 'double patriotism', the parallel identification of an individual with her nation, as well as with the island of Cyprus in particular. Doob noted several differences which Cypriots perceived to distinguish them from mainland Greeks and Turks, including differences in language, traditions, a higher level of education, a long history of peaceful inter-communal co-existence and the inheritance of institutions and customs originating in British colonialism (1986: 391-392).

embracing tolerance towards heterogeneity and safeguarding in this way the island's independence (Ibid: 15).

While there have not been any open disputes surrounding the origins of Cypriotism as an identifiable ideological current, there does not appear to be a clear consensus in the literature. For Michael Attalides, its first expressions can be traced to the 1960s, connected with the independence of the island, a development which crystallised a different set of political and economic interests for the Republic of Cyprus than those of Greece and Turkey (1979: 58-59).<sup>7</sup> While not specifically disputing this position, both Mavratsas and Peristianis emphasise the decade following 1974 as the 'golden age of Cypriotism' (Mavratsas, 1997: 96), at least within the Greek Cypriot community, arguing that the momentary stigmatisation of Greek Cypriot nationalism enabled the ascent of Cypriotism in the public political sphere (Peristianis, 2008: 224). Academics writing on the Turkish Cypriot community tend to focus instead almost exclusively on the post-1974 period, identifying Cypriotism as a 'project' of the Turkish Cypriot left (Ramm, 2006: 529, Kızılyürek, 2012: 173). Its expanded influence is typically attributed to the generalised discontent over the ongoing political isolation of Turkish Cypriots; and the demographic change that has been developing in northern Cyprus following 1974 (Kızılyürek and Gautier-Kızılyürek, 2004: 51). Lastly, Panayiotou traces Cypriotism to the 1920s, focusing on the early positions held by the Communist Party of Cyprus, which included an initial opposition to *enosis*, support for the island's independence and the ideological commitment towards inter-communal collaboration (Panayiotou, 1996: 43), paving, for Panayiotou, an alternative road to modernity than the one imposed on Cyprus by colonialism (Panayiotou, 2006, 274).

The literature focusing on Cypriotism in the Turkish Cypriot community appears to be more limited, tending to explore the more exclusionary implications of the ideology.

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<sup>7</sup> It is during the 1960s that we can locate some of the earliest, if sparse, clear and direct political expressions of Cypriotist sentiment. For example, the publication of *Our Destiny* (1963), a compilation of articles written by businessman Nicholas Constantine Lanitis, articulated an early liberal version of Cypriotism, calling for inter-communal cooperation.

Christoph Ramm notes that conceptions of Cypriotness among Turkish Cypriots have been intrinsically connected with claiming a European identity (2006: 539), an ideological dimension which Mete Hatay (2008) has identified with processes of orientalism. In her own research, Meltem Hamit (2008: 50) has further maintained that these conceptions of Cypriotness are intrinsically linked with negative perceptions towards the mainland Turkish population that has settled on the island after 1974, rather than merely in opposition to the influence of the Turkish state and to Turkish Cypriot nationalism. This dimension has been further recognised by Enver Gülseven (2020: 35) and Mertkan Hamit (2009: 150), both of which highlight how Turkish Cypriot versions of Cypriotism are morphed through the exclusion of Turkish mainlanders, perceived as the internal other of Turkish Cypriots (Gülseven, 2020: 35). In contrast, variants of Cypriotism in the Greek Cypriot community appear to avoid clearly defining a demarcating line of exclusion, tending to stress tolerance and heterogeneity (Trimikliniotis, 1999, Pastellopoulos, 2018: 79, Rakopoulos, 2022: 8-9). This observation does not imply that one version of Cypriotism is necessarily more tolerant than the other, but rather aims to draw attention to the extent to which each version is consciously, rather than unconsciously, stressing cultural difference in relation to the various ethnic groups living on the island.

Such differences should not be surprising, given that each community has been developing independently of each other for more than 50 years, under vastly different economic, political and social conditions. There are of course specific elements that are present in Cypriotism on both sides of the divide, including opposition to the hegemony of Greek/Turkish Cypriot nationalism, support for the federal reunification of Cyprus and the promotion of a Cypriot identity that transcends existing ethnic identifications (Hamit, 2008: 49-50). Nonetheless, focusing on the differences is perhaps equally important, if we are to avoid overextending insights and findings originating within one community, over the other. In parallel to Bryant's objection in viewing Greek and Turkish Cypriot nationalism as mere sides of the same coin, it is worth pointing out that the Cypriotism present within each community should not be assumed to entail and acquire the same

ideological characteristics. Since both the historical, as well as the contemporary experiences of the Cypriot conflict are significantly different for each community, including the specific versions of hegemonic nationalisms that are in place, the ideological response found in each Cypriotism understandably varies, reflecting the context within which it develops.

## 5. Cypriotism and the Kohn Dichotomy

The differentiation between an 'ethnic/cultural' and a 'civic/political' version of nationalism has been commonly employed in the literature surrounding nationalism studies, in order to describe two distinct ideological expressions of nationalism (Blackburn, 2021: 1). Although not employing these specific terms, the popularisation of the distinction has been attributed to Hans Kohn and has commonly been referred to as the Kohn dichotomy (Coakley, 2018: 253).<sup>8</sup> Within this conceptual binary, ethnic nationalism is argued to be characterised by an emphasis on the myth of common ancestry and kinship, defining national membership through cultural, ethnic, phenotypical and/or linguistic characteristics; upon which claims for national self-determination are founded (Brown, 1999: 282). In contrast, civic nationalism is theorised as a political community formed through the co-habitation of a common administered territory, which generates a national character and civic culture through the involvement of the population in civic society and the management of state institutions. In turn, this gives rise to the formation of a general understanding of a common destiny, despite ethnic or cultural heterogeneity among the population, creating a unified loyalty between citizens towards their particular territorial homeland (Ibid: 283). The application of the dichotomy has been further characterised by a geographical split, identifying civic nationalism with Western Europe

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<sup>8</sup> While popularized by Kohn, such distinctions were not particular to his work, but were characteristic of 19<sup>th</sup> century European thought. For a brief, but informative examination of similar distinctions in European political and social theory, see Coakley (2018).

and the United States, and ethnic nationalism with Central and Eastern Europe, as well as much of the rest of the world (Jaskułowski, 2010: 294).

The dichotomy has been however criticised for its limitations in clarification and precision (Kennedy and Ginderachter, 2021: 3). As Krzysztof Jaskułowski highlights (2010: 296), characteristics ascribed to non-Western, ethnic nations have been historically present and continue to appear in Western, civic nations, and vice versa. Will Kymlicka (1995: 132) further points out that the category of the civic nation excludes cultural considerations a priori, despite evidence that nationalisms often described as civic maintain a cultural component. The utilisation of the distinction thus appears to act as a barrier, rather than as a tool for theoretical scrutinisation in further examining how culture varies and is interpreted within different expressions of nationalism.

The entailment of normative statements, attributing progressive values, such as liberal democracy, inclusivity and tolerance, to civic nationalism, while associating ethnic nationalism with illiberalism and authoritarian tendencies, has also been emphasised (Blackburn, 2021: 1, Jaskułowski, 2010: 290). Bernard Yack draws attention to the parallelism of the dichotomy with a series of questionable stereotypical binaries, including 'Western/Eastern, rational/emotive, voluntary/inherited, good/bad, ours/theirs' (1996: 196), with the dichotomy commonly presenting Western national identities as rationally constituted; and therefore, largely independent of the national myths and excesses that are attributed to ethnic nations. Taking his critique a step further, Yack argues that the dichotomy is itself founded upon its own 'myth of the civic nation' (Ibid), the conceptualisation of a historically pure civic version of nationhood that has, however, never existed. Similarly, Yael Tamir stresses that the dichotomy 'meant to establish the moral supremacy of the West' (2019: 425), encouraging 'the view that in civic nations the roles of culture, language, religion, ethnicity, and race are minimal and can therefore be ignored' (Ibid: 431). Indeed, this bias is characteristic of Kohn's own work, as he explained instances of ethnic nationalism in civic nations as the effect of external factors, while maintaining that the same phenomena in non-Western nationalism were internal to those

societies themselves – a pattern of theorisation which Jaskułowski identifies as an attribution error located at the heart of the original formulation of the Kohn dichotomy (Jaskułowski, 2010: 297).

That the use of the civic-ethnic binary continues to persist in the literature appears to betray its reification in the study of nationalism, blurring, rather than clarifying the ideological content of the phenomenon it aims to investigate (Kennedy and Ginderachter, 2021: 7). Nonetheless, the problem of deriving distinct, yet universal types of nationalism; is not merely due to a failing of theorisation, but indicative of a broader difficulty connected to the phenomenon that such theorisation aims to investigate. Ideologically, nationalism distinguishes itself in its focus on defining difference, as every nation is conceptualised as a unique entity, vis-à-vis all other nations. Thus, nationalism is characterised by a contradiction in relation to universality and particularity, in so far as the phenomenon appears and presents itself as a universal, yet the ideological content remains necessarily contextual and specific, with no two nationalisms ever being the same, as nationalism aims to ascribe a unique content to the particular nation which it invokes (Finlayson, 1998: 100). In this sense we can observe, alongside John Hall, that ‘nationalism has [...] existences rather than any single essence’ (Hall, 2003: 16), remaining necessarily contextual, particular and specific in its expressions and manifestations.

In the literature surrounding Cyprus, Cypriotism has been typically approached through the lenses of the Kohn dichotomy. Mavratsas equates Cypriotism with civic nationalism and Greek Cypriot nationalism with ethnic nationalism (1998: 88), while Peristianis also places these positions within the civic-ethnic distinction (2000: 187). This is again repeated in the analysis of Gülseven on the shifting senses of national identity within the Turkish Cypriot community, in which he defines Cypriotism early on as a strictly civic identity (2020: 22). The theoretical limitations of the dichotomy tend to repeat themselves in the study of Cypriotism, to the extent that elements associated with ‘ethnic nationalism’ appear to be a priori excluded from consideration when examining its ideological claims, in contrast to Mavratsas’ definition, which leaves open the possibility for a rich and

complex ideological content. For example, while Mavratsas recognises that Cypriotism stresses a common history, homeland and culture, he does little to explore these ideological dimensions, simply placing Cypriotism under the category of ‘civic nationalism’, since it opposes an ‘ethnic’ version of nationalism (1997: 723). Similarly, while Gülseven presents Cypriotism among Turkish Cypriots as constituted through a clearly defined internal other in the face of settlers and migrants from mainland Turkey, who are perceived as a threat to Turkish Cypriots’ ‘identity, values, norms and lifestyle’ (2020: 27), no consideration is taken over the extent to which such exclusions contradict the notion of Cypriotism as a strictly civic form of identification.

The tensed relationship between Turkish Cypriot versions of Cypriotism and the settler population, however, highlights the limitations of conceptualising Cypriotist notions of identity as fundamentally civic in character. In relation to the Turkish Cypriot polity, the settler population is not, in political terms, wholly located outside of the political community, as numerous settlers have been naturalised as citizens of the non-recognised TRNC (Akçali, 2007: 74). In addition, it is commonly accepted that a significant number of settlers will be allowed to stay following the island’s reunification, both as foreign nationals, as well as naturalised citizens, and will therefore be incorporated into the citizenry of a reunified Cyprus.<sup>9</sup> Despite this, and as Theodoros Rakopoulos has recently observed (2022: 23), settlers remain political outsiders regardless of their citizenship status in the TRNC, with Turkish Cypriots often rejecting their naturalisation as equal citizens. As negative views surrounding settlers are shared between Greek and Turkish Cypriots (Christiansen 2005: 165), their demarcation as outsiders can be assumed to further extend, at present, in the context of a potential reunified polity. It is precisely this ongoing demarcation of settlers as internal others and political pariahs which indicates that citizenship is not, in-itself, a sufficient criterion for belonging, in formulations of Cypriotism within the Turkish Cypriot community. In contrast, more recent scholarship

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<sup>9</sup> The exact number remains open to negotiation, changing in every new round of inter-communal talks. In the proposed Annan Plan of 2004, it was capped around 40,000 (Ker-Lindsay, 2011: 88).

suggests that it is local cultural markers, rather than citizenship status, which are employed to produce claims to a distinct Cypriotness, stressing the cultural difference and assumed superiority of Turkish Cypriots vis-à-vis the settler population (Sadikoglu, 2021: 177, Rakopoulos, 2022: 23).

Yet, and even though Cypriotist discourse has often made claims of a common culture, history and territorial identity specific to the island, or has articulated its positions through an open discourse of exclusion, its ideological content has seldom been explored beyond the utilisation of the Kohn dichotomy, leading to Cypriotism being commonly equated simply with a minimalist version of state patriotism. Furthermore, little to no attention has been paid to Cypriotist perceptions and representations of other ethnic or cultural groups, such as non-Turkish migrant workers, asylum seekers and naturalised non-native citizens. This absence of enquiry is, perhaps, indicative of the effect that assumptions accompanying the Kohn dichotomy can have on the prioritisation of social research. If Cypriotism is defined as a civic form of nationalism, and civic nationalism is, in turn, a priori assumed to be inclusive, liberal and tolerant, more focus appears to have been placed on exploring this inclusivity, typically in relation to the rapprochement of the two ethnic communities, rather than in examining the peculiar ways through which Cypriotism may also formulate notions of exclusion, othering and difference, theoretical and empirical endeavours that could potentially produce findings which contradict the very conceptual framework of the Kohn dichotomy itself.

The identification of Cypriotism with civic nationalism appears to have further produced a certain conceptual confusion, as the civic-ethnic schema tends to equate Cypriotism with state identification and Greek/Turkish Cypriot nationalism with national identification, subsequently conflating positions held by the 'new', post-1974 Greek and Turkish Cypriot nationalisms, with Cypriotism. Neophytos Loizides notes that this conceptual confusion originates in outdated readings over Cypriot nationalism, which maintain that motherland nationalism has remained the dominant form of nationalism on the island. As Loizides (2007: 172) however clarifies, nationalism in post-partitioned Cyprus is primarily driven by



the identification of Cypriots with their corresponding island-specific ethnic communities, rather than their ‘motherlands’, each of which also maintains its own political unit, in the form of the Republic of Cyprus and the unrecognised Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.<sup>10</sup> These political units, in turn, have evolved to act as the nation-states of each ethnic community (Tombazos, 1999: 16). Thus, to the extent that these political units, in their current politico-ideological form, act both as representatives of a single ethnic community and are commonly understood to be so, identification with them should not be assumed to be a process independent of; or autonomous from the hegemonic reproduction of these ‘new’ versions of Greek and Turkish Cypriot nationalism. Rather, such identifications need to be comprehended as their necessary prerequisite. What should be thoroughly examined instead is the ideological content assigned and mediated through these identifications, rather than merely the identifications themselves.

## 6. Concluding Remarks

Returning to Mavratsas’ original definition of Cypriotism, we can address the critical insights of Loizides by modifying it in a way that demarcates more clearly the differences of Cypriotism with the ‘new’ versions of Greek and Turkish Cypriot nationalism. Thus, Cypriotism can be defined more accurately as:

An ideology which argues that Cyprus has its own *sui generis* character and, thus, must be viewed as a *unified political entity* which is independent from both the motherlands of the two main communities of the island, that is, Greece and Turkey, while *also being irreducible to either of the two main communities culturally, historically or politically.*

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<sup>10</sup> Loizides employs the terms ‘Greek Cypriotism’ and ‘Turkish Cypriotism’ to describe these identifications, while maintaining the term ‘Cypriotism’ without an ethnic prefix for positions envisioning a meta-ethnic identity. For the sake of conceptual clarity and consistency, the terms employed by Loizides are not utilised in our discussion.

Such a reformulated definition has the capacity to preserve the original meaning intended for the term, avoiding both the conceptual confusion that has emerged, as well as the restrictive theoretical framework of the Kohn dichotomy. Additionally, it leaves open the possibility for the examination of Cypriotism as a form of nationalism, without a priori defining it as such. As Mavratsas clarified, Cypriotists commonly object to being labelled as nationalists (1997: 723). Since in Cyprus the term 'nationalism' has been firmly connected with its Greek and Turkish variants, Cypriotists, as opponents of these ideological currents, understand themselves to be anti-nationalists and refuse to describe or accept the label for their positions, leading to a typical example where the theoretical meaning of a term contrasts sharply with the contextual meaning that has been assigned to it. This observation should not however obstruct us from critically exploring Cypriotism as a nationalist ideology, if Cypriotism, both as a socio-political phenomenon and as a set of ideas, corresponds to the conceptual and theoretical frameworks employed in the study of nationalism.

There is ground to argue that Cypriotism fits well within widely employed theoretical definitions developed in nationalism studies. For example, Benedict Anderson's definition of the nation as an 'imagined political community' that is 'imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign' (2008: 6) does correspond to the idea of a bi-communal or even multi-communal Cypriot people united under both an overarching identity and a single independent state. As Anderson clarifies, communities 'are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined' (Ibid). For national communities, this style of imagination is inherently limiting, entailing 'finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations' (Ibid: 7). These boundaries limit the nation both territorially and conceptually, maintaining disputable, but nonetheless limiting criteria for belonging to the imagined community. In the case of Cypriotism, this style of imagination is reflected in the confined identification with the territory of the island as an abstract political category, as well as with the identification of the two communities as constituent parts of a native Cypriot population corresponding to that political category. In

so far as Cypriotism maintains as its central political aim the reunification of Cyprus under a single bi-communal state structure, it further corresponds with Ernest Gellner's definition of nationalism as 'primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent' (1983: 1).

Regardless of our understanding of Cypriotism as an alternative form of nationalism or as a strictly anti-nationalist ideological current, the persistency of its dispute with Greek and Turkish Cypriot nationalism draws attention to socio-political dimensions that have remained largely secondary in the literature surrounding Cyprus, dominated as it is with the inter-communal and international aspects of the Cyprus Dispute. As Yael Navaro-Yashin points out, despite the common representation of the Dispute as a conflict between two national groups, those 'who have been discursively categorised as members of the same "ethnic" or "national group" [...] do not perceive or experience themselves as such' (2006: 95). This fragmentation of national identity into a series of differentiated and mutually exclusive identifications highlights the broader contradictions and contestations located within each side of the Cypriot divide, expressed through their re-configuration in ideological discourses that entail incompatible perspectives, interpretations and visions. It remains the task of future scholarship to explore, represent and conceptualise this fragmentation, connecting it with broader theoretical discussions on national identity, as well as with the particular historical and socio-political processes unfolding in Cyprus.

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