

## **CYPRUS AND THE U.K.: PRESIDENT ANASTASIADES' SPEECH AT THE LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS**

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In 1960 Cyprus gained its independence from British colonial rule. It formally became the Republic of Cyprus. The 1960 agreements, established a constitutional partnership between the Greek and Turkish Cypriots. Cypriots for the first time in their history, were given the opportunity to govern themselves within a bicomunal legal framework. It lasted only for three years and eleven years later in 1974, the de facto geographical partition was the island's new political reality. Ever since numerous attempts to find a solution have failed.

Very recently, new compelling historical evidence (cf. Ktoris, 2013) substantiates the presence of a historical quid pro quo among the British, the Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. This historical quid pro quo became more evident soon after Cyprus became a crown colony in 1923 up until the signing of the 1960 agreements.

This process has produced strategic and political dividends among the parties concerned, with the Greek Cypriots, as the larger ethnic entity being the least favored recipient of this dividend. The distributive effects of the quid pro quo were not only extensively defined by the politics of national identity, but also by the way each community has managed to articulate its interests more effectively through the politics of national identity.

In other words, the collective articulation of communal interests were put under the ideological and procedural guidance of nationalism. Inevitably the consequent political derivatives led to the institutionalization of centrifugal rather than centripetal tendencies and practices. This in turn provided the

social background for the emergence of myth and speculation, which eventually culminated into divisive self-fulfilling political and cultural prophecies, manifested in inter-ethnic animosity.

Each community, through the politics of national identity sought after its own particularistic definition of interests. Within this framework, each community has advanced its own respective interpretation and understanding of its vital interests.

This was more evident in the larger Greek-Cypriot community. The independence of the Republic was perceived by the Greek-Cypriot nationalists as an unequivocal historical defeat, and an urgent need to rectify it became central to the Greek community's political agenda. Thereafter the island's Odyssey set sail, in 1963. And although the island has been through various dramatic and tragic phases and stages, the journey is still on, to this day still.

Intransigent maximalism was (and still is) the persistent trait of the Greek-Cypriot elite's collective mindset. Needless to point out, that their own definition and perception of historical defeat has never been attributed to this intransigence and any political analysis was never addressed within this context.

Rather, for their political plight, a systematic political argument has been formulated along the line of a consistent British political partiality, in favor of the Turkish Cypriots.

Nonetheless, it is not farfetched a claim, that the post-colonial regime reflected essentially a new power bloc. The state and the church were fused into one, representing not only the hegemonic but the dominant political apparatus without detectable boundaries between them, in the new republic. This new bloc, a political product of the relations of force at the time, encapsulated the

overall hegemonic interests of the Greek -orthodox church and its organic linkages with the Greek -Cypriot landed "aristocracy" . The fusion of church and State represented not only a solid political foundation but the dominant as well. As a result it managed to address quite effectively its own distinct subjective politicoeconomic interests. The only threat to this power bloc was emanating from the 1960 constitutional partnership.

I.e. the (smaller) Turkish-Cypriot community's equal legal status which was constitutionally sanctioned. The Greek-Cypriot elite was not willing to accommodate itself to this new constitutional reality. This new constitutionality was perceived as a severe threat to its hegemonic dominance. The Greek-Cypriot power bloc through the strategy of statolatry superimposed itself on the overall political life of the island. This statolatry was politically immature, maximalist in orientation, hostile to and psychologically intransigent in seeking conflict resolution practices. Instead, it engaged (to what is often the case in similar circumstances) in the manufacturing of external threats. To this effect the British was an( the) ideal target. However the recent formal visit to the U.K. by President Anastasiades, marked a turning point in British-Cypriot relations. It seems that the new Cypriot leadership is in the process of re-evaluating the island's strategic causal texture in an effort to delimit geo-strategic uncertainty.

A testament to this is the President's speech before a select audience at the London School of Economics while on his formal visit to the U.K.

His speech "*The True story about the geopolitical role of Cyprus: David or Goliath?*", maps out, in my view, a politically conscious shift in Cypriot foreign policy to contextualize Cyprus's geo-strategic interests in Eastern Mediterranean. This speech, explicitly depicts a concrete, cohesive and a coherent analysis of the forces at work in the region. In his speech, the President underlined the importance of Cyprus as a strategic geo-political entity

with a vital contributory role in preserving and enhancing peace and stability. He reiterated with clarity, that this task can only be fully implemented through a viable and permanent settlement of the Cyprus issue, pointing out at the same time his determination to normalize relations with Turkey through the solution of the problem.

Most importantly, the President made it quite clear to his audience that the long-awaited western re-orientation of Cypriot policy and the need for an overall bilateral improvement of British-Cypriot relations constitutes a fundamental dimension of his government's overall foreign policy. Towards this ends, it is not irrelevant the signing of specific agreements between Britain and the Republic of Cyprus which facilitates the diffusion of economic benefits to the Republic, is not irrelevant toward this end.

The opening up of approximately 200 square km of previously restricted land within the sovereign base areas, should be interpreted as a gesture of a good will by the British government vis a vis the Republic of Cyprus. This should be taken as a renewed political impetus to improve further British-Cypriot relations. In my view this bilateralism should not fall short of the need for a new strategic partnership. The President in his speech, quite succinctly stressed the strategic imperative for Cyprus to strengthen and to enrich its relations with the Anglo-Saxon world and particularly with Great Britain, if one considers the specific historical context.

In his concluding remarks, lest there was any doubt on his determination to move things forward, President Anastasiades even resorted to William Shakespeare's words of encouragement to the public "*to be great in act as you have been in thought*". The question however remains: Is the President determined enough to utilize this Shakespearean inspiration to follow his own political Odyssey like Odysseus in Homer's "Odyssey"? Is he determined to confront the suitors of rejectionism , to confront the contemporary Scyla and

Charybdis and finally to reach his own Ithaca and to anchor the island into a peaceful and prosperous future?

In conclusion, the British presence on the island this particular political conjuncture, is a *conditio sine qua non* for the strategic security of the Republic of Cyprus. To the extent that this geostrategic imperative is being comprehended, evaluated and appreciated positively by Cypriot domestic politics, then one can hope the negative dividend, the outcome of a historical *quid pro quo* which burdens for so many years the Greek Cypriot majority, could be addressed.