MOTHERLANDS AS NATIONAL CENTERS

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Since its early formulations, Greek national identity has been characterized by its self-perceived ambivalent position at the crossroads between East and West. This ambivalence has been mirrored in both Greek cultural identity (Tsoukalas 1994) and in the country's foreign policy (Heraclides 1995). On the one hand, Greek identity has looked to the East and the Greek Orthodox and Byzantine heritage, while, on the other, to the West that provided for nationalist inspiration and actual support for the nineteenth century young Greek state, as well as a reference point for the country's political and cultural orientation in the twentieth century.

Nonetheless, as with most Eastern nationalisms, Greek nationalism has been ambivalent towards modern Western European culture, from which it got initiated into national awareness and has seen it as alien to Greek traditions that are thought to be stronger, more important and more 'authentic' than Western influences. Although Greek nationalist narrative succeeded in establishing a continuous national past by linking ancient classical Greece to Byzantium, the internal clash between East and West still persists as a distinctive element of contemporary Greek identity.

Despite the fact that the Enlightenment and its liberal values stimulated late eighteenth century Greek nationalism (Veremis 1983), since the foundation of the independent Greek state, the nation was defined primarily in reference to common ancestry, language and culture (Kitromilides 1990). Throughout the nineteenth century, Greek national identity and consciousness was formed around the irredentist 'Megali Idea'. This was a political, cultural and eventually military project of integrating into an enlarged Greek state territories populated by Greek-speaking Orthodox Christians who lay beyond the state borders. This irredentist project epitomized the political expression of the ethnically, religiously and culturally-linguistically defined Greek nation (Triandafyllidou & Veikou 2002). The 'Megali Idea' further promoted the unification of a traditional and internally divided society, transforming it into a nation-state. So, Greece turned into the national center, the political and cultural base for all Greek populations living in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Balkans (Kitromilides 1983a). This central role of the Greek state was further reinforced by the concentration within its borders of the vast majority of the Greek Orthodox Christian populations of the Balkans and Asia Minor after the Balkan Wars and the Asia Minor disaster and the abandonment of the 'Megali Idea'. What was left outside the state boundaries after 1923, were the Dodecanese islands (that were incorporated in the Greek state in 1947), Cyprus, and the Greek minorities

of Northern Epirus in Albania, Constantinople and of the islands Imvros and Tenedos in Turkey.

The Greek-Cypriot nationalist movement for *Enosis* of the island with Greece of the 1950s was perceived as failed with Cypriot independence in 1960, since it did not achieve its primary goal to unify Cyprus with the Greek state (Kouloumbis 1996). Since 1963, the Republic of Cyprus has been functioning as a *de facto* second Greek state, as the internationally recognized state administration was left to the hands of the Greek-Cypriots only. The existence of this second Greek state – a paradox in the modern world of nation-states since the Cypriots never believed to be a separate nation, but rather saw themselves as members of the Greek and Turkish nations respectively – did not challenge the authority and the leading role of Greece as the national center of the whole Greek nation (Kitromilides 1983a). The Greek-Cypriot-controlled Republic of Cyprus always saw in Greece the 'motherland', the cultural and in many cases political center of the Greek nation, to which the Greek-Cypriots believed to belong. The existence of Greek populations outside the Greek state brought a distinction between the terms *Έλληνας* (Hellen, Greek) and *Ελλαδίτης* (Greek of Greece). *Έλληνας* is anyone who believes to be a member of the Greek nation, regardless of his citizenship, while *Ελλαδίτης* is a citizen of the Greek state. Despite the fact that the Greek-Cypriots see themselves as part of the Greek nation, a civic sense of 'Cypriotness' has been developed since the foundation of the Republic of Cyprus that is directly related to the citizenship of the Greek-Cypriots and their incorporation into the institutions of the Cypriot state (Mavratsas 1997). Nevertheless, the national symbols of the Greek-Cypriots are common with those of Greece (flag, national anthem, national commemoration days) and go side by side with the symbols of the Cypriot state, whose importance in collective consciousness lies with the civic dimension of Cypriot identity. This coexistence of Greek national symbols with Cypriot state ones is indicative of the persistence of Greek national identity on the island, despite its different political/administrative trajectory from the Greek state.

Thus, any solution to the decades-old Cyprus problem would have to confront these issues and create a common identity framework where the two main ethnic communities of the island would harmoniously coexist. Will the new federal - or whatever – state of Cyprus be able to transcend the 'nation-state' norm and establish an entity where the two communities would shift their civic – at least – allegiances to? And what would the role of the outside 'national centers' (i.e. Greece and Turkey) be? This remains to be seen.

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