

The EOKA Cause

Nationalism and the Failure of Cypriot Enosis

Andrew R. Novo



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*To Yiannis and Natalie, my two most valuable guides through this
long and challenging process.
'More is thy due than more than all can pay.'*

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Introduction

No issue has played a greater role in defining the modern history of Cyprus than the cause of Cypriot unification (*enosis*)¹ with Greece. Like many political causes, in the abstract, it is neither good nor bad. Supporters of *enosis* once considered it, and some still do consider it, a natural resolution of the essential 'Greekness' of the majority of Cypriots. Opponents often argue that it undermines the multicultural nature of Cyprus. In their view, *enosis*, as a concept, leaves Turkish-Cypriots either with no place on an island that is equally theirs or in the reduced status of second-class citizens. Both of these nationalistic views suffer from the myopia imposed by chauvinism and a selective understanding of citizenship, nationality and history.

On 1 April 1955, a segment of pro-*enosis* supporters calling themselves the National Organization of Cypriot Fighters (EOKA)² launched an armed struggle against British security forces. They were no more than a few dozen in number; later in the conflict, the number of sworn EOKA members would peak at approximately 300. Nevertheless, at the height of operations, 35,000 British troops along with 5,000 policemen drawn from Cyprus and across the empire were deployed to establish and keep order on an island with only half a million inhabitants.

EOKA's goal of *enosis* was distinctive among the insurgencies of the post-Cold War period. In an age when most resistance movements fought for independence, EOKA sought to unify Cyprus with an existing nation – Greece. This was not the only peculiar feature of violence in Cyprus. Contrary to the left-wing politics which inspired much anti-colonial sentiment globally, the struggle in Cyprus was spearheaded by nationalists from the right wing and championed by the Orthodox Church. Within Cyprus, both the Greek-Cypriot majority and the Turkish-Cypriot minority had sovereign states protecting and advocating their interests in the international community. Elements within the Greek government, both officially and unofficially, supported the cause of *enosis* – though more hesitantly than Greek-Cypriot nationalists desired and more cautiously than either the British or Turkish governments wanted to admit. Support from policymakers in Athens was critical in sparking and maintaining the insurgency, although they eventually proved more open to compromise than the Greek-Cypriots who initiated and carried out the campaign. The Turkish government was also an essential player. Due to its desire to protect both the Turkish-Cypriot minority and its strategic interests in Cyprus, Ankara opposed *enosis*. By 1958, Turkey was actively training and supplying a Turkish-Cypriot militant group – the Turkish Resistance Organisation (TMT)³ – and it was feared that Greece and Turkey were on the verge of war.

Cyprus was also viewed as essential to British regional interests. Britain's withdrawal from the Indian subcontinent and Palestine after the Second World War was

fundamental to a repositioning of British power. Within some circles, there were hopes that a post-war empire could be reinvigorated by focusing on territories in Asia, Africa and the Middle East. British imperialism was also adopting greater flexibility, exerting its influence through economics, military partnerships and political relationships rather than the traditional means of direct political control.⁴ Cyprus was seen as a keystone to these policies. As the Middle East military headquarters from 1954, the island was a crucial component in Britain's regional posture. Troops based in Cyprus supported British interests in Jordan, Iraq and the Suez Canal. Because of these factors, events on the island affected broader alliance structures and influenced British policy throughout the region.⁵

For these reasons, the focus of this book is both local and international. It explores dynamics among and within the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot communities analysing the components of nationalism and ethnic conflict at play on the island. It lays out the inception and ideology of the *enosis* movement, and the nature of the British response at both the military level and the political level. Utilizing recently declassified British security documents, primary Greek-language sources from EOKA's members and interviews with key participants in conjunction with literature on both counter-insurgency and the end of the British Empire, it explores the cause of *enosis* from a multitude of perspectives. The goal is to understand why the pursuit of this objective led to violence and how the ideologies both supporting and opposing it within the broader Cypriot community (Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots) – and within the Greek-Cypriot community specifically – determined the course of the struggle. While the compromised outcome of Cypriot independence has been studied extensively, this book also hopes to provide a brief analysis of how the peculiar factors enumerated here continue to influence conflict in Cyprus today.

On a more theoretical level, this book looks to uncover the close relationship between violence and political action. At the same time, precisely because tensions in Cyprus were inescapably linked to the broader region, the book delves into the dynamics of British, Greek and Turkish relations, with their concomitant influence on international affairs. It seeks to weave the domestic account into the international narrative by demonstrating how the relatively minor conflict in Cyprus had implications for key Cold War relationships far beyond the island.

Chronologically, Cyprus fits within a string of anti-colonial struggles against British power during the 1940s and 1950s. These conflicts include the operations of Jewish nationalists in Mandate Palestine, communist forces in Malaya and the Mau Mau Uprising in Kenya. As part of this broader discourse, Cyprus, like Palestine, Malaya and Kenya, has been the subject of serious scholarly work from several perspectives.⁶ Robert Holland's excellent book *Britain and the Revolt in Cyprus 1954–1959* (1998), as the title suggests, is focused on British perspective towards events in Cyprus in tandem with domestic British politics. David French's more recent book, *Fighting EOKA* (2015), is similarly Anglo-centric, with a focus on the military aspects of the struggle, particularly analysing it as a counter-insurgency campaign.⁷ Other works such as Stephen Xydis's *Cyprus: Conflict and Conciliation, 1954–1958* (1967) or Andreas Varnavas's *A History of the Liberation Struggle of EOKA (1955–1959)* (2004) focus on developments in Cyprus and in Greece. Xydis's later work *Reluctant Republic*

(1973) follows the intricate diplomacy between Greece and Turkey between 1958 and 1960 that established the modern Republic of Cyprus. Hatzivassiliou (2002) presents an analysis of the first nine decades of 'the Cyprus question'.

Complementing these works is a wealth of recent scholarship on the various nationalisms at play in Greece, Turkey and Cyprus and their influence on conflict in Cyprus. Ioannis Stefanidis's *Isle of Discord: Nationalism, Imperialism and the Making of the Cyprus Problem* (1999) is a seminal contribution followed, chronologically, by Morag (2004), Dietzel and Makrides (2009), Gates (2013), and Kitromilides (2013). The goal of *The EOKA Cause* is to unify these different streams with an analysis of the implications of violence in Cyprus on the broader region and global politics. This is important precisely because these geopolitical issues exerted such a powerful influence on events in Cyprus and, in turn, were significantly influenced by them.

At the same time, three core considerations of the British colonial power shaped the strategic environment: the global, the regional and the local. Globally, the imperatives of Cold War policy dictated the need to defend Europe from the threat of the Soviet Union through a strong NATO. Regionally, Britain hoped to maintain its influence and power projection capabilities in the Middle East and ensure the continued cooperation between Greece and Turkey. Locally, changes in the Cypriot status quo threatened law and order on the island. As events in the late 1940s and early 1950s increased the importance of Cyprus to British policymakers, the desire to put an end to British rule among Greek-Cypriots also grew in intensity, thus paving the way for a showdown.

While British policymakers were constrained by considerations along these three axes, the Greek-Cypriot nationalists who championed *enosis* had their own weaknesses. Although their cause had broad support within their own community – from both the left and right – it was opposed by both Turkey and Turkish-Cypriots with near unanimity. Greek-Cypriot leaders failed to acknowledge the real and substantive opposition from Turkey for *enosis* and underestimated or ignored the anti-*enosis* sentiment among the Turkish-Cypriot community. In choosing to pursue their goal through violence, Greek-Cypriot leaders did not calculate the unrest which violence would spark with the Turkish-Cypriot community and were ill-prepared for both the local and international ramifications of such a confrontation. Among EOKA and its supporters there was an unrealistic expectation that Turkey would remain sidelined in any dispute regarding Cyprus. At the same time, the broad-based rhetorical and emotional support for *enosis* among Greek-Cypriots did not translate to universal support for EOKA's tactics. Over the course of the struggle, divisions *within* the Greek-Cypriot community over the violence and the methods of EOKA would open additional fissures in the island's political life.

On the international level, Greek-Cypriot nationalists exerted a great deal of pressure on Greece to support their cause. But here too, they miscalculated. Exhausted from its experiences of the Second World War, the German occupation and its own civil war, Greece was not in a position to support new disruptions domestically or internationally. Greece was hesitant to upset its close relations with Britain. Later, the government in Athens came to view the cause of Cypriot *enosis* as a threat to the

Greek minority in Istanbul and its own relations with Turkey. These larger political issues of Greek-Turkish relations were never adequately accounted for by the Greek-Cypriot nationalists, who continued to pressure Greece for more support than it could reasonably be expected to give.

In the end, the cause of *enosis* was hamstrung both by local conditions and by the international climate – a resolution short of the stated cause of unification was agreed. This new arrangement was inherently unstable and created, in Xydis's memorable formulation, a 'reluctant republic'.⁸ The Cypriot republic proved not only reluctant but also unstable. The jagged wounds of political divisions, intercommunal violence, constitutional collapse, coup, invasion and occupation remain unhealed. Through Cypriot society more broadly, the bad blood left behind by the unresolved legacy of the *enosis* struggle – and the violence which followed it – endures.

The regional influences and enduring implications of the struggle in Cyprus are powerful reasons to present the story of the cause of Cypriot *enosis* comprehensively and in its own right. When treated as case study or footnote for broader arguments about British decolonization, as in David French's *The British Way in Counter-Insurgency, 1945–1967*, operations in Cyprus have become par for the course of 'dirty' colonial counter-insurgency campaigns where the doctrine of 'minimal force' was only minimally applied and the notion of 'hearts and minds' was little more than window dressing for repression.⁹ French's arguments build on existing critiques of British counter-insurgency approaches. John Newsinger's *British Counterinsurgency: From Palestine to Northern Ireland* (2002), for example, condemned the brutal means of repression used in various campaigns.¹⁰ David Anderson presents a similar picture in the edited volume, *Policing and Decolonisation: Politics, Nationalism, and the Police, 1917–65* (1992). In his analysis on Cyprus, Anderson focuses on the role of law enforcement in the counter-insurgency campaign, particularly the difficulty in recruiting and maintaining loyal Greek-Cypriot officers. He is concerned with the social aspect of the police force and the ethnic tensions caused by employing Turkish-Cypriots and Greek-Cypriots to police a Greek-Cypriot nationalist movement. Such a focus is commensurate with Anderson's major work *Histories of the Hanged* (2005), a comprehensive and bitterly critical account of British policy towards the Mau Mau Uprising in Kenya. Like Kenya, Anderson sees Cyprus as 'a dirty war'.¹¹ Interpretations like those of French and Anderson are meant not only to expose the facts of British excesses but also to oppose the views articulated by authors such as Thomas Mockaitis (1990) who argue that Britain developed a largely successful model of counter-insurgency characterized by the doctrine of 'minimum force'. In this interpretation, 'minimal force' was the result of humanitarian impulses, respect for the law and practical considerations of intelligence gathering. It had a parallel in the efforts directed to winning 'hearts and minds'.¹²

The debate over whether the campaign in Cyprus was a 'dirty war', a successful implementation of 'minimal force' or a failure due to insufficient brutality is tangential to the core issues which defined the course of the struggle. The situation in Cyprus was more complex than any of those descriptions suggest. It was defined by larger factors than debates about counter-insurgency tactics. Cyprus was not a 'clean' war by any

means, although it is reasonable to ask if any war has ever been so. In Cyprus, British forces used brutality and torture, abnegated numerous civil liberties, imprisoned thousands, executed those convicted of capital violations of emergency decrees and deployed tens of thousands of soldiers and policemen to combat EOKA. These actions, however, do not negate the fact that the British were confronted with lethal and widespread violence on the part of EOKA. In addition to protests and strikes, EOKA guerrilla teams ambushed British soldiers. EOKA gunmen shot down policemen and, most controversially, targeted Greek-Cypriots (in the police force and civilians) who they considered 'traitors' to the cause.

In formulating a response, British forces were also in a delicate situation within Cyprus and internationally. In Cyprus, they were soon forced to combat radical Turkish nationalists and attempted to contain violence *between* Greek- and Turkish-Cypriots. They attempted to maintain their interest in the island, but also sought to prevent war between Greece and Turkey – NATO allies since 1952. Lessons from other counter-insurgency campaigns were applied in Cyprus, but their application took a back seat to realities on the ground and their efficacy was circumscribed by the dynamics of international diplomacy and the realities of British grand strategy.

The Cyprus campaign took place not only in the context of other counter-insurgencies but also in the broader framework of a massive reappraisal of Britain's strategic position in the wake of the Second World War. During this period, the British Empire was changing, and refocusing itself on Africa, the Middle East and Southeast Asia while reducing the size of its army. Since its withdrawal from the Indian subcontinent, British policymakers worked to develop a new paradigm of British power through economic bonds, military cooperation, political influence and a special relationship with the United States.

These are some of the many layers to the conflict in Cyprus which this book will illuminate. The struggle in Cyprus, its causes, conduct and conclusion, have not only defined the island's post-colonial history but also shaped the broader history of the region. Like many colonial conflicts its incomplete resolution led not to a durable peace but to an enduring period of civil strife. This violence culminated in the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974. Turkey's continued occupation of the northern third of Cyprus remains 'one of the most intractable questions in contemporary international relations'.¹³ The dispute continues to influence relations among Turkey, Greece, Cyprus, the United States and the European Union. Today, it casts a shadow on Turkey's EU accession bid and Cyprus's own attempts to exploit the hydrocarbon wealth in its territorial waters.

Many ingredients shaped the emergency in Cyprus: nationalism, ethnic conflict, international diplomacy, decolonization and grand strategy. Much was at stake for the British in Cyprus and the campaign against *enosis* reflected this. At the same time, the deal that finally ended the violence did not satisfy the aspirations of Greek-Cypriot nationalists. Cyprus did not join the Greek state. British policymakers accepted independence for much of the island while retaining sovereign base areas. As in many other colonies, Britain's withdrawal was earlier than London had hoped, but later and less comprehensive than anti-colonialist forces would have liked. This denouement was largely the result of the successes and failures on the ground and the realities of

the international political scene. In a world of continued intercommunal violence, where geopolitics retains its enduring salience, where the lines between terrorism and insurgency are increasingly vague, where communism is no longer the primary mover of insurgent movements and where ethnic conflict and renewed violence in the name of nationalism seems omnipresent, it is worth giving Cyprus a more comprehensive look.

Terra irredenta

Duelling nationalisms

Πάλι με χρόνια με καιρούς, πάλι δικά μας θα 'ναι. *Once more, as years go by, once more it shall be ours.*

– Greek folk song

Greek nationalism, like most modern national movements, has its origins in the nineteenth century. As such, it was the natural inspiration for the Greek Revolution, which began in 1821. After Greece became a sovereign nation in 1830, the quest for unredeemed lands became the primary if not 'the *only* ideology' of the Greek state.¹ In the main, this expansionary agenda was successful. To its initial territory in the Peloponnese, *Sterea Ellada* (Central Greece) and a few islands in the South Aegean, Greece added the Ionian Islands, ceded by Britain, in 1864. Following the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–8, the Great Powers compelled the Ottoman Empire to cede Thessaly in 1881. In 1913, Greece acquired Macedonia, Epirus and Crete as the spoils of her successful participation in the Balkan Wars. In 1919, Western Thrace was added, part of the price paid by a defeated Bulgaria at the conclusion of the First World War. In the same manner, Italy was compelled to surrender the Dodecanese Islands in 1947. Through various vicissitudes, however, the island of Cyprus was never incorporated within the Greek state.²

In the context of Greek nationalism and its foreign policy manifestation, the *Meghali Idhea*³ (Great Idea) – which aimed to restore a state akin to the Byzantine Empire in the Balkans and on both sides of the Aegean – *enosis* was a natural aspiration among many Greek-Cypriots. Understanding the foundations of *enosis* – along with the intellectual and historical baggage it brought in tow – are critical to how we analyse the origins of the struggle against British colonial rule, its course, the forces that evolved to fight against *enosis* and the struggle's result. Greek nationalism framed *enosis* as natural, justified and inevitable. It conceived of Cyprus as a 'Greek' island. Its tenets precluded substantive compromise with Turkish-Cypriots or even a recognition of their concerns for their cultural integrity and social status. In practice, it would impose strategic limitations on the movement, leaving the *enosis* cause with almost insurmountable handicaps.

For many Greek-Cypriots, Greek nationalism served as the foundation for Cyprus's inclusion within the framework of the *Meghali Idhea*. As a foreign policy for Greece, this stressed the importance of bringing Greek speakers within the Greek state. In this way, it was a mirror of contemporaneous, and largely successful, Italian and German irredentist campaigns to form nation states based on linguistic and cultural affinities. Although the *Meghali Idhea* was a current in Greek foreign policy from the beginning of the Greek state, it is most commonly identified with the expansionist policies of Eleftherios Venizelos beginning with the outbreak of the Balkan Wars in 1912 and culminating ten years later with the Greek disaster in Asia Minor.⁴ Although the Asia Minor Catastrophe⁵ dealt a crippling blow to Greece's physical capacity to pursue irredentism, the ideal remained central to the country's education system and political culture. As one modern scholar has described it, even after 1922, Greeks students 'continued to imbibe the highly romantic, irredentist nationalism of their fathers'.⁶

After the Second World War, as opposition to British colonial rule on Cyprus definitively became the project of nationalist Greek-Cypriots working in tandem with the Orthodox Church, the negative impact of the policy of '*enosis* and only *enosis*' on the island's Turkish-Cypriot minority became more acute. Tensions rose between the two communities and Turkey gradually became more wary of developments in Cyprus. Turkish opposition was a major source of international pressure against *enosis*. Difficulties for the cause existed in Greece as well. Greek poverty and the civil war (1946–9)⁷ forced Greece to tread cautiously on the issue to avoid losing vital support from Britain, and later, from the United States. At the same time, while *enosis* might have seemed a natural choice among many Greek-Cypriots, its pursuit was not without peril or controversy.

Part of the controversy stems over the perpetual debate, waged across time and disciplines, concerning the 'Greekness' of Cyprus. Most Greek and Greek-Cypriot writers emphasize cultural and historical continuity between Greece and Cyprus.⁸ A particular view of history is central to this argument, namely, that 'Cyprus is inhabited by a race, akin to the ancient Arcadians, which has ever belonged to the Hellenic World. . . . Cyprus had an integral Greek character and contributed to the creation of Greek civilization'.⁹

British bureaucrats, on the other hand, were at pains to distinguish between Cypriots and Greeks, pointing out somewhat tautologically, as Turkish and Turkish-Cypriot representatives later would, that the unification of Cyprus with the Greek state was illegitimate because Cyprus had never been part of the Greek state.¹⁰ Overt racial prejudices often characterized the British analysis of Cypriot identity. Sir Charles Belcher, Cyprus's chief justice from 1927–30, conceded the Europeaness of Greek-Cypriots but remained unconvinced of their Greekness. In his view, they spoke 'a dialect of Greek, but you can no more draw racial conclusions from that than you can from American negroes speaking English. They are darker-complexioned than the mainland Greeks, and almost certainly have a large admixture of Asiatic blood'.¹¹ Belcher's contemporary Sir Ronald Storrs, who served as governor and commander-in-chief of Cyprus from 1926 to 1932, took a different view, writing that '[t]he Greekness of Cypriots is, in my opinion, indisputable'. Perhaps directly refuting Belcher, he wrote that 'Nationalism is more, is other, than pigmentations and cephalic indices. A man is

of the race of which he passionately feels himself to be. No sensible person will deny that the Cypriot is Greek-speaking, Greek-thinking, Greek-feeling, Greek.¹²

Three decades before Storrs, Winston Churchill weighed in on the issue declaring that he thought 'it only natural that the Cypriot people, who are of Greek descent, should regard their incorporation with what may be called their mother country, as an ideal to be earnestly, devoutly and fervently cherished'.¹³ Churchill's view was tempered by a characteristically incisive observation, often echoed by Turkish academics and representatives – that those Greek-Cypriots who earnestly sought *enosis* on the basis of their Greek descent should 'not forget that they must show respect for similar feelings of the others'. The 'others' Churchill spoke of were the Turkish-Cypriots. Their 'similar feelings' represented their right to oppose union with Greece, and perhaps to choose to become part of Turkey in the event Britain ceased to govern Cyprus.¹⁴

Even Storrs, in spite of his apparent sympathy for Greek-Cypriot nationalism, conceded some peculiar limitations of Cypriot Greekness. With a first in classics from Cambridge, Storrs was not immune from the characteristic condescension of the British colonial class. Greek-Cypriots, he observed, might mention Homer and Sophocles as pillars of civilization, but the names of those great authors 'rather than their verses were cited'. Archbishop Kyrillos III (r. 1916–33), who laid some claim to being a scholar of ancient Greek, would, in Storrs's estimation, 'have been defeated by an average Sixth Form boy in a competition in classical Greek prose of iambics'. During a visit to the Central Training College for Boys, Storrs appeared simultaneously appalled and amused that neither a bookcase containing Greek classics nor the books themselves had ever been opened much less read.¹⁵ For Storrs, Greek-Cypriot claims of Greekness were diminished by the absence of a formal scholastic continuity with Hellenism. In his view, a claim of cultural lineage from Homer was less convincing if Homeric verses were not called upon to sustain it. Subsequent British administrators were similarly scathing in their assessment of Greek-Cypriot claims. In 1949, one official attacked what he perceived to be the counterfeit veneer of 'Greekness', which came not from 'accomplishments but by sentiment: by the insistence of the Greek-speaking Cypriot that he is as pure a Greek as any Athenian . . . and the rather shallow nostalgia connected with "Mother Greece"'.¹⁶ These arrogant attitudes coloured relations between Greek-Cypriots and British administrators, thus poisoning whatever potential existed for goodwill, cooperation or compromise.

Genetic links to the people of Athens and a working knowledge of the classics aside, by metrics like culture, religion, language and a shared sense of history, Greek-Cypriots were part of the Greek world. In fits and starts they had been so for more than 2,500 years. Storrs's point, that the Cypriots' own sense of their identity was what mattered, remained profound. Yet as Churchill implied, and others cogently argued, identifying the legitimate Greekness of Greek-Cypriots was distinct from assuring a Greek political future for the island itself. Cyprus's Turkish minority – which could claim to be Turks as much as the Greek-Cypriots could claim to be Greeks – was a major obstacle to *enosis*. Their very existence was an impediment to the concept of a Cyprus that was Greek in political terms. As the anthropologist Peter Loizos noted, 'to attempt to classify Cyprus sociologically as a "region" of Greece is to follow a line of non-thought that concludes that the Turkish minority had no rightful place in the

1960 independent republic'.¹⁷ Loizos, perhaps, overstates the point, but it is important to consider that the conception of Cyprus as a 'Greek' island presented enormous problems for the island's Turkish population. Just as prejudice on the part of British administrators prevented the establishment of a functional relationship with Greek-Cypriots, so did the nationalist attitudes of many Greek-Cypriots preclude compromise and cooperation with the Turks of Cyprus.

For Greek nationalists, Turkish-Cypriots had no political standing in the quest for self-determination leading to unification with Greece. Given the inherent Greekness of Cyprus, Turkish-Cypriots were apart from the island's political society. In its most extreme form, this parochialism denied the existence of Turkish-Cypriots *per se*. This view acknowledged that a few Turkish soldiers and administrators had come to Cyprus but argued that the rest of the Turkish-Cypriots were simply the descendants of Greek-Cypriots who had been forced to convert to Islam.¹⁸ Following the Ottoman conquest, conversions from Christianity did occur as Christians sought to avoid paying the personal tribute or *gizya* imposed by Muslims on non-believers. However, research suggests that these numbers were small. The larger contingent of Turks in Cyprus came as colonizers. These were predominantly janissaries and ordinary soldiers who were settled along with deported peasants from Anatolia in the decades following the Ottoman conquest.¹⁹ Supporters of the Greek-Cypriot nationalist line, however, insisted that the majority of Turkish-Cypriots were 'Venetians or Greeks who changed their religion to avoid taxes'.²⁰ Turkish narratives, on the other hand, focused on the fundamental 'Turkishness' of Turkish-Cypriots claiming that they had come to Cyprus in the late sixteenth century and 'preserved' their 'status as a separate community . . . ever since'.²¹

Regardless of their lineage, Turks in Cyprus feared that in the case of *enosis* they would, at best, have to accept the status of second-class citizens, existing as the humble and deferential 'little Turk'.²² At worst, they could face 'annihilation'.²³ Ignoring such factors, Greek-Cypriot nationalists went to great pains to push the Turkish presence on Cyprus aside in order to justify their view of the island as purely Greek. It was precisely this lack of place within the framework of the cause of *enosis* and its pursuit which made Turks and Turkish-Cypriots the cause's most trenchant opponents. As the movement coalesced around the Greek-Cypriot right and the Orthodox Church, the space devoted to considering Turkey and Turkish-Cypriots shrank further, thus putting greater and greater obstacles in the path of *enosis*.

The role of the church

In Cyprus, as in other bastions of Hellenism, the *Meghali Idhea* had three intellectual underpinnings: the unifying concepts of the Greek 'nation', Greek history – fusing the classical, Byzantine and modern Greek traditions²⁴ – 'and the concomitant unity of the core values of Greek national identity as "Hellenic Christian"'.²⁵ The religious component of Greek nationalism meant that Hellenism and Christianity were often and easily conflated. During the Ottoman period, various *milletler* or nations were categorized based on religious affiliation. In this way, the archbishop of the Orthodox

Church in Cyprus became the *ethnarch* (national leader) of the Greek-Cypriot community during the Ottoman period.²⁶

After the Greek Revolution, a tradition emerged that shaped collective identity within the Greek community. This painted the church as the 'principal source of Greek political culture.'²⁷ The confluence of Orthodox Christianity with the Greek nation did pose some problems in light of the church's history of cooperation with the Ottoman authorities. This cooperation had deep historical roots. In 1453, Lucas Notaras, grand duke to the last Byzantine emperor Constantine XI Palaeologos, was supposed to have said that he preferred to see the sultan's turban to the papal mitre in Constantinople.²⁸ A few months later, his wish was granted when the city fell to the Ottomans; Notaras was subsequently executed on the orders of Sultan Mehmed II. The church was more fortunate than the grand duke. The Ottomans restored much of the independence and privileges which had been sacrificed in favour of Catholic assistance which proved too little and too late to prevent the end of Byzantium. Orthodox clergy were exempted from the tax levied by the Ottomans on Christian subjects. The patriarch of Constantinople assumed the dual roles of the leader of the Orthodox Church and the head of the Orthodox nation, replacing the Byzantine emperor.²⁹

During the centuries of Ottoman rule, with its unique position secured, the church became 'instrumental . . . in securing the allegiance of the sultan's Christian subjects'. To overcome this compromising legacy, the confluence of Orthodoxy and Greek nationalism 'was systematically projected back into the Ottoman past'.³⁰ Aspects of history were glossed over as more recent actions, favourable to Greek nationalism, were emphasized. In this vein, the critical role of the church in the Greek Revolution took centre stage. Indeed, during the Greek War of Independence, Orthodox clerics played a leading role and were frequently targeted for punishment by the Ottoman authorities. In Constantinople, Patriarch Gregory V was hanged on 15 April 1821, even though he had no connection with the revolutionaries. In Cyprus, on 9 July, Archbishop Kyprianos was also hanged along with the bishops of Paphos, Kition and Kyrenia in an attempt to snuff out the revolution. In spite of this bloody warning, Greek-Cypriots contributed men and supplies to the struggle for independence even though their own island failed to become part of the Greek state.

In this context, while Greece struggled for independence from Ottoman rule, the concept of a 'Greek citizen' and a 'Greek Orthodox Christian' were not distinguished from each other.³¹ The same principle applied in Cyprus even during British rule where religious affiliation was a marker or substitute for national identity if not an individual's defining characteristic in its own right.³² Religious divisions imposed and then codified by the Ottoman conquest had a profound and lasting impact on the problematic relations between the two communities.³³ By fusing 'Orthodox and Greek national identity . . . religious minorities [were excluded] from the dominant political culture and . . . their full integration into society' was 'seriously hampered'.³⁴ This was true for minorities within Greece and would become a key obstacle for Cypriot *enosis*. This was a legacy of division inherited by the British, exacerbated by them, to be sure, but not their creation.

British rule began in 1878 through the terms of a defensive alliance concluded in Constantinople on 4 June, nine days before the beginning of the Congress of

Berlin. The agreement, formally known as the 'Convention of Defensive Alliance between Great Britain and Turkey, with respect to the Asiatic Provinces of Turkey', offered British support against Russian ambitions concerning 'the territories in Asia of His Imperial Majesty the Sultan', in return for the sultan's agreement that Cyprus 'be occupied and administered by England'.³⁵ Moving with expedience, Sir Garnet Wolseley arrived on 12 July (a day before the conclusion of the Congress of Berlin) as the empire's first 'Administrator'.³⁶ Ten days after his arrival, Wolseley met Bishop Kyprianos of Kitium in the port city of Larnaca. *The Times* reported that Kyprianos, in keeping with the unification of the church and Greek nationalism, announced that the Greek people of Cyprus accepted the transfer from Ottoman to British control 'because we believe that Great Britain will eventually help Cyprus, just like with the Ionian Islands, unite Cyprus with mother Greece'.³⁷ Cyprus was not the first territory in which the precepts of the *Meghali Idhea* ran headlong into the requirements of British imperialism, and the tensions implicit in Kyprianos's message would intensify over time. Still, neither the cause of Cypriot *enosis* nor the British attitude towards it had a clear form at this time.

From the British perspective, there was scepticism about the usefulness of the new acquisition.³⁸ In many ways, the procurement of Cyprus fit neatly into historian Sir John Seeley's famous contention, made in 1883, that the British acquired half the world in 'a fit of absence of mind'. Only four years after obtaining Cyprus, the opportunistic occupation of Egypt 'put Cyprus in the shade'.³⁹ Limited in terms of facilities, infrastructure, population and natural resources, the island was considered something of a 'backwater'.⁴⁰ As early as November 1912, Cyprus seemed surplus to imperial requirements. Winston Churchill, as first lord of the admiralty, suggested offering the island to Greece as compensation for British basing rights on the Ionian island of Cephalonia.⁴¹ This was ironic in light of the fact that Britain had ceded that very island to Greece half a century before.

Cyprus was offered again in somewhat more perilous (and better known) circumstances in October 1915 but this time as an incentive for Greece to join the war against the Central Powers. Confronting the costly deadlock of 1915, King Constantine I refused.⁴² By the time Greece did enter the fray in June 1917, choosing the side of the Triple Entente, the British offer was no longer valid. Greece received modest territorial concessions from Bulgaria at the conclusion of the war, but there was no mention of Cyprus. For Greek-Cypriot nationalists, such painful missteps on the part of the Greek government were compounded at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919–20 when the Greek prime minister, Eleftherios Venizelos, focused on securing continued support for Greek forces campaigning in Asia Minor. Cyprus was never raised in his negotiations with his British counterpart, David Lloyd George.⁴³ Venizelos clearly subordinated the cause of Cypriot *enosis* to larger issues of Greek policy which prioritized a mandate around Smyrna and aspirations towards Constantinople.

Cyprus and Greece remained, in the words of Virgil, 'lovers bound unequally by love'.⁴⁴ Greece never made the acquisition of the island a primary foreign policy goal in spite of Cypriot aspirations and Cypriot pressures. This disconnection of priorities was something the *enosis* movement was slow to recognize. At the same time, the *enosis* movement in Cyprus failed to grasp the limited resources and capacity Greece had for

territorial expansion after 1922 – particularly if it meant the renewal of conflict with Turkey.

In contrast, the Greek-Cypriot commitment to *enosis* gathered momentum even when Greece's capacity to support it reached a nadir. In 1922, the very year of the Asia Minor Catastrophe, the archbishop of Cyprus led the formation of a national assembly aimed at applying pressure on the British authorities. In 1929, a Greek-Cypriot delegation formally petitioned for union and was refused. In October 1931, the Cyprus government's attempts to raise new revenues, balance the budget and revamp the education system led to disturbances, a refusal to pay taxes and a boycott of British goods. Rioters burned a police car and the governor's residence. Governor Sir Ronald Storrs called out the British army units based in Cyprus and elements of the largely Greek-Cypriot police force to restore order, probably without quoting from his extensive knowledge of Homer. Eventually, the revolt, such as it was, was suppressed. Seven Cypriots were killed by security forces, 28 were injured, and 400 were arrested. Among the authorities, 39 military and police were also injured.⁴⁵ In the aftermath, 3,359 Cypriots were called to appear in court, 2,606 of whom were convicted and given sentences from fines to five years in prison. Most significantly, two bishops, Nicodemos of Kitium and Makarios of Kyrenia, were deported for life along with eight other senior political leaders, including the heads of the communist party.⁴⁶ New restrictive laws were promulgated, ending even the appearance of autonomy and self-governance, and which included restrictions on the election of a new archbishop.

In addition to targeting the church, the government's response also fell heavily on the Communist Party of Cyprus (CPC). The party itself was outlawed, its organizations were dissolved, its offices destroyed, and in addition to its exiled leadership, numerous party 'cadres were imprisoned or internally exiled to isolated villages in the countryside'.⁴⁷ This internal exile reflected the tendency of colonial administrators to admire (and in this case imitate) the draconian anti-communist policies then in favour in Mussolini's Italy.⁴⁸

In targeting the communist party, the British authorities also laid down the marker that they would ruthlessly suppress any organization which pushed for fundamental reform on the island. The marginalization of the communist party also undermined Greek- and Turkish-Cypriot relations. During the 1920s and 1930s, when it first emerged, the communist party sought to establish cooperation between Greek- and Turkish-Cypriots. Although vigorously opposed to British imperialism, Cypriot communists advocated independence rather than *enosis* in order to reconcile the two communities. At the time, they dismissed *enosis* as little more than Greek imperialism.⁴⁹ In the 1920s and 1930s, however, the goal of independence 'had very restricted appeal among the Greek population of Cyprus'.⁵⁰

Although Britain's display of force temporarily restored order, the events of 1931 were a harbinger of the violence to come. Also visible in this disturbance and the response to it was the burgeoning conflict between the British administration and the Cypriot Orthodox Church. A month before the riot, church officials had taken a leading role in opposing the increase in customs taxes which were part of the controversial new revenue plan.⁵¹ Changes to the educational system had also been seen as a blow to the church's authority – the most recent manifestation of a continuing battle fought by the

authorities in Cyprus to remove education from the hands of Greeks generally and the church specifically.⁵²

Connections between the spiritual and temporal power of the church were deep and powerful. Lacking senior political representatives, the Greek-Cypriot people entrusted their clergy with the dual roles of spiritual and political leadership. An autocephalous⁵³ branch of the Greek Orthodox faith, the church in Cyprus occupied (and continues to occupy) a unique position of wealth, power and influence on the island. Under Ottoman rule, the church maintained and championed the 'Greek' identity of Cyprus. As *ethnarch*, the archbishop enjoyed political as well as spiritual power as the leading figure of the Greek-Cypriot community. 'In the eyes of the Greeks the church was not only the symbol of their ethnic and religious identities, but also their protector against mistreatment by local officials.'⁵⁴ Under British rule, in spite of the administration's desire to firmly separate church and state, leading clerics retained a high degree of involvement in the island's political affairs. Under the framework of the constitution of 1882, they became 'the most active members of the Legislative Council.'⁵⁵ As political awareness in Cyprus rose, the political authority of the archbishop over the Greek-Cypriot community became increasingly overt. It also set the stage for conflict with the British authorities. While Ottoman governance had allowed the archbishop of Cyprus free reign as civil and religious leader of the Orthodox community with the privilege to tax members of the church, British governance relied on the 'strict separation of Church and State.'⁵⁶ This put the British colonial state and the Cypriot Church in opposition with each other.⁵⁷ To a large extent, it was Britain's restrictive policies towards the church 'and the curtailment of the previously broad responsibilities the church had enjoyed under Ottoman rule that eventually strengthened its protest potential and support for political emancipation.'⁵⁸

The church's connection to the cause of *enosis* was even more fundamental than teachers and taxes. As the guardian of Greek identity in Cyprus based on language, culture and religion, the church became the natural incubator for the *enosis* cause. No institution in Cyprus reflected the feelings of Hellenism more deeply than the church with its critical links to Hellenic identity on historical, political and cultural levels.⁵⁹ During the first decade of the twentieth century, this political identity took a decidedly nationalistic colour as the church went through a 'crisis of "nationalization"' in which '[t]he more forceful nationalists eventually won. . . . [F]rom then on the Church of Cyprus assumed the uncontested leadership of the nationalist movement in the island, that aspired to union with Greece.'⁶⁰

The church was not alone in advocating for union during this period. In the 1940s, the successor of the outlawed communist party, the Progressive Party of Working People, AKEL,⁶¹ distanced itself from independence as favoured by the CPC. Gradually, AKEL, in spite of the scepticism of many of its members, transformed its platform. In 1942, a year after its founding, the party advocated self-determination. In 1943 and 1944 it spoke of the need for 'national restoration'. By the fourth party congress in July 1945, AKEL openly demanded 'union with mother Greece.'⁶² AKEL's stunning recalibration reflected the failed resonance of its inclusive message of independence. Its new advocacy for *enosis*, however, precluded compromise with any members of the Turkish-Cypriot left, who sympathized with broader goals of socio-economic reform. For just as Greek nationalism had manifested itself in the *Meghali Idheia* and the desire

for *terra irredenta*, the Turks of Cyprus began to develop their own political goals. Primary among these was the desire to thwart the *enosis* cause.

Duelling nationalisms

For Greek-Cypriots, the *enosis* cause was based on a fundamental sense of connection with the Greek nation. It was the misfortune of the Cypriot *enosis* movement that the same ideology which underpinned Greece's most ambitious plan for expansion, through the Treaty of Sèvres, concretized a rival Turkish nationalism which would eventually prove its most trenchant foe. In the face of the Greek occupation of Smyrna and the advance of Greek forces deep into Anatolia, Turkey's reformist leader, Mustafa Kemal, was able to consolidate his authority and lay the groundwork for a new Turkish nation. This work underpinned the modern Turkish Republic, established in 1923, and became the model for the emerging Turkish nationalism in Cyprus.⁶³

Some Greek scholars, exemplifying the nationalist claim that in general Greeks have done it first and done it better, argue that 'Turkish nationalism can hardly be dated prior to the Young Turk revolution of 1908, if then.'⁶⁴ In other words, Greek nationalism was at least a century older than Turkish nationalism, and in this way, its claims (particularly in reference to Cyprus) were somehow more legitimate. Turkish nationalism, however, had deeper roots than this view allows, although it contained its share of contradictions. Turkish national had roots as far back as the mid-nineteenth century, when the Jewish-Hungarian orientalist Arminius Vambery published on the subject in 1868. Several Young Turk leaders developed close relations with Vambery, and adopted his ideas.⁶⁵ Pan-Turkism, as it was primarily called, received a further fillip through the work of a number of Russian-born Tatars who developed their ideas in opposition to the rising tide of Pan-Slavism in the Balkans and in the wake of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–8.⁶⁶ In Cyprus, the emergence of a Turkish-Cypriot nationalism is also connected to the beginning of British colonial administration in 1878, partially as a result of awakening 'the Muslim Turkish elite to the danger of losing its privileged position, the danger of losing Ottoman domination itself and ultimately the incorporation of Cyprus into Greece.'⁶⁷

Over time, two key tensions surrounding the concept of Turkish nationalism developed. Both were based on specific historical conditions. First, the turbulent final decades of the Ottoman Empire witnessed a competition among unifying ideologies: pan-Turkism, pan-Islamism and an Ottoman national identity. Creating an Ottoman national identity 'was a chimera' as the moribund Ottoman construct was precisely what young nationalists aimed to replace.⁶⁸ Pan-Islamism had greater support. During the Turkish War of Independence, Islam remained a powerful force. However, the forcible end of the Caliphate in 1924 and the modernization programme favoured by Mustafa Kemal explicitly sidelined Islamism in favour of the more restrictive and modest Turkish nationalism.⁶⁹ Modest goals reflected the second tension – this one a function of the political realities which greeted the newly formed Turkish Republic – the tension between traditionally expansionist irredentism and a nationalism focused on purification and consolidation.