

“Turkey: The Question of Minorities”

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Final Paper: “Cyprus as minority issue”

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Cyprus as a minority issue

Amidst the massive collection of literature dedicated to the Cyprus question, most recent analyses contest or reject the supremacy of the ethnic prism for reading the current situation of the Island. Navaro-Yashin for instance argues that the Greek/Turk conflict has been ‘overblown’¹. The stereotypical view is, for instance, André Fontaine’s reading of Cyprus as a strategic struggle between Islam and Christendom, almost as a clash of civilizations². All these critiques have one important point in mind: nationalist discourses and foreign policy doctrines are too often enshrined as monolithic grassroots, which they are not.

This paper follows the path of the conventional approach since it considers that the Cyprus enigma throughout the XX^o century and still during the 2004 referendum is “why is enlarged belonging (pan-Turkism, pan-ottomanism, pan-Hellenism, pan-orthodoxy or whatever else) stronger than Cypriotism?” There are multiple answers to this question, involving the sociology of the island or economical and religious settings. Vamik Volkan published in 1988 a pioneering and controversial study in which he described in psychoanalytic terms the mechanisms of ethnicity resulting in the outburst and perpetuation of the Cyprus conflict³. The book points out the entanglement of personal identities and the idea of nation as ‘fatherhood’, the Schmittian-like construction of the enemy and its demonization through the masks applied by each community to the islanders living on the other side of the line, the reciprocal victimization of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, and finally war as exorcism or therapy to a succession of grievances both communities have failed to appease. Such sophisticated approaches, just like the classical military-diplomatic approaches, all bring their own truth to the understanding of the inextricable Cypriot mess, and none should be dismissed. Furthermore, Volkan’s theories provide an interesting framework to analyze the construction of structural conflict between groups and minorities.

We wish here to focus on the way the self-recognized Turkish population in Cyprus, mirroring and inspiring its Greek counterpart, resorted and appealed to the ‘homeland’, the Turkish state, thus creating a paradoxical status of ‘*minority from the outside*’. As a minority, Turkish Cypriots called for protection and for getting closer to the ‘centre’ of what they considered to be their cultural block. The word ‘minority’ is used in one unique occasion in the writings on the Cyprus Question: Greek Cypriots are said to consider Turkish Cypriots as a

¹ Navaro-Yashin in Papadakis (dir.), *Divided Cyprus*, p. 84.

² Fontaine, « Chypre, La Croix et le Croissant » in *Le Monde*, January 24th 1997, p. 16.

³ Volkan, *Cyprus : War and adaptation, A psychoanalytic history of two ethnic groups in conflict*.

*“minority of, more or less, untrustworthy, lazy, culturally inferior and essentially barbaric people, who still have expansionist aim towards Cyprus”*⁴. ‘Minority’ comes in common language with pure numbers: the Turkish population constitutes around 20% of the Island’s; that is enough for Greek nationalists to use the term in order to erase the problematic issue of coexistence. Yet, Turkish Cypriots do not bring their claims to Nicosia, they do it to Ankara.

Are Cypriots Turks mere ‘Turks Abroad’? In fact, they constitute, from a Turkish point of view and in a classical minority framework, an unknown. They are neither a Diaspora, nor a simple Cypriot minority supported by an external power. They are Turkey’s children got astray in the nationalist discourse, those who inhabit *Yavuvratan* (baby land); but the Turkish Cypriot nationalist discourse is also the product of a negotiation with the Turkish State, and the claim for *taksim* (partition) itself differentiates Cypriots from Turks living in Turkey. Identity politics in Cyprus are further complicated by the interaction with Greek nationalisms (in Cyprus and in Greece), and the complex construction of Turkish identity in the post-Kemalist period.

While the first section will review the now classical account of the clash of two nationalisms (I), we will then turn on the mobilization of the homeland by Turkish Cypriots and its recent evolutions (II). The third section will try to analyze the role and content of supranational norms as applied to Cyprus (III).

I- The Nationalist Clash of two Cultural Areas of Influence in the Aegean

A. The early ages of the Cyprus Puzzle

Cyprus is in essence a disputed territory. It switched from one rule to another (Byzantine Empire, Catholic Lusignan dynasty, Venetian domination) each century or so before the Ottoman Empire, and since the latter’s demise it is not exaggerated to state that *“Cyprus has [...] been the playground of the nationalisms of Greece and Turkey”*⁵.

Cyprus derives, like modern Greece and Turkey, from the Ottoman matrix. The appropriation of Greekness and the pan-Hellenism later exported to Cyprus was progressively constructed in the aftermath of the 1821-1830 War of Independence, on which the philhellenic mobilization in Europe projected its own shadow. Early nationalist groups existed that were later turned into martyrs, like *Filiki Heteria* (fiercely repressed by the Ottomans in Cyprus), but the nationalist ideology evolved from a reforming stance towards the 3 pillars of Neo-

⁴ Mavratsas in Aktar & al (dir.), Nationalism in the troubled triangle, p. 214-5.

⁵ Aktar & Al (dir.), Op. Cit., p. XIII.

Hellenism: the *Megali Idea* (irredentism consisting in freeing all orthodox communities from the Ottoman rule, unifying the Aegean as an Hellenic pivotal pole –a posture that implied both the Greek self-perception of a maritime nation bridging the West and the East, and the mythologization of Independence⁶), Ancient Greece and the Byzantine/Orthodox legacy. In Kemalist Turkey as well as in Greece, nationalisms were the product of the decay of *Pax Ottomanica* and the modernization process requiring the building of nation-states around the Aegean. The figure of the Greek was constructed against *tourkokratia*, especially through the stark pro-Western tropism of Greek nationalism: the War of Independence was reinvented as a struggle between a romantic intelligentsia and the barbaric oriental Ali Pacha. This culminated with the 1922 ‘great catastrophe’ when kemalists burned Smyrna. While Turkish nationalism, in its Kemalist or Gökalp’s versions, did not fundamentally demonize the Greek, many parallel sources, like Enver Pasha’s pan-Turkism or Turanism, and even the foundational character of the 1919-1921 war contributed to militarize in minds the boundary between the two ‘civilizational areas’.

Cyprus, meanwhile, switched hands in 1878. The British came in but brought no fundamental change to the Ottoman structure until the 1920s. This mainly meant that the remnants of the *millet* system were preserved through *ethnarchism*, a privilege granted by the sultan to the Archbishop to rule over the members *Rum* millet inside the island. By contrast, the Turkish settlers’ who had served the Ottoman administration as qâdîs, imams and bureaucrats; were left dropout and backward, deprived of their unique social backbone when the link with the Porte suddenly shattered. Like “*orphans who have been deprived of motherly love*” would write Denktash later on⁷. Greek nationalism made his way to Cyprus as a fantasmatic representation of Greece, and thanks to the central role of the Church⁸. Indeed, the Cyprus Church developed Greek Cypriot nationalism as a response to the colonial administration in a successful effort to maintain its hold on the Island: it reintroduced the Cyrillic alphabet as evidence of the Hellenic legacy and constructed the ‘retroactivity’ of the Greek Cypriot nation⁹ that finally equated the history of the Church and the history of the Greek nation of Cyprus in Greek Cypriot historiography.

B. Greek and Turkish Foreign Policies as vehicles for nationalism

⁶ See the writings of Greek irredentists like Ion Dragoumis, or Athanasios Souliotis-Nikolaidis (Organization of Constantinople, 1909).

⁷ Aktar & al (dir.), Op. Cit., p. 176

⁸ Anagnostopoulou, “Chypre de l’ère ottomane à l’ère britannique (1839-1914). Le rôle de l’Église orthodoxe chypriote » in *Études balkaniques*, vol. 5, pp. 143-183, 1998.

⁹ The expression is from Michalis in Aktar & al, p. 154.

"The motherlands not only exported their nationalisms to the Island," note Aktar & al, *"but they also shaped and strengthened nationalist passions domestically, turning Cyprus into a 'national question' for themselves"*¹⁰. Cyprus irrupted in the Turkish political debate with the Menderes government (1955-1957) under the telling denomination of "the national cause of Turkish Foreign Policy". This illustrates one important feature of Turkish foreign policy: in the Middle East as well as in the Aegean, it is traditionally marked by nationalism.

The initial Turkish position was annexation, to which Ankara had to renounce because of Cold War settings. Bora notes that *"the image and identity of the 'enemy' began to be reproduced out of minority identities as part of the civil war mentality of the anticommunist Cold War ideology"*¹¹; and it is true that Turkish diplomats repeatedly described to Americans the Greek Cypriots as a bunch of communists and the AKEL as a Marxist organization. Turkish foreign policy towards Cyprus began to part from NATO anticommunism under the nationalist impulsion coming from the civil society, especially student movements demonstrating for partition with the motto *"Cyprus is Turkish and will remain so!"*. Accounts multiplied on 'Turks' held hostage in Southern Cyprus, and Denktash's forced exile was used as a symbol. Rauf Denktash's activism was crucial in awakening Turkey's sensibility to the Cyprus question. In the early 1970s, this Anschlöss-like cause had become consensual in Turkey; and Nihat Erim, Turkish negotiator in London and Zurich in 1958-9 (and former prime minister) concluded that *"The problem of Cyprus is not that of two Cypriot communities [...] but rather that of Turkey"*.

In other terms, Cyprus was an important element of politization of Turkish Foreign Policy between 1960 and 1980, as illustrates the 1978 Ecevit Doctrine which stated that after the 1974 'peace operation' (official terminology), the threat on Turkish land had shifted from the North (Russia) to the West; İnānç concludes that *"Turkey found itself facing the Greek issue once again"*¹². During the Özal years, the new battle flag was the so-called 'neo-ottomanism' aiming at shaping Turkey's international role as a protector for the peoples around the East Mediterranean sea. This involved, *ipso facto*, the perception of Cyprus as an Ottoman Island and the test ground of these ambitions, adding another layer to the linkage. Still in 2000, Suleiman Demirel rewarded Denktash claiming that he *"does not in fact defend the rights merely there of the Cypriot Turk or of Turkey in Cyprus. He is engaged in the struggle of the Turkish World and of Turkism. This is the flag we speak of"*¹³.

C. The intertwining of minority issues around the Aegean

¹⁰ Aktar & Al (dir.), Op. Cit., « Introduction », p. XVI.

¹¹ Aktar, p. 117.

¹² İnānç in Aktar & Al (dir.), Op. Cit., p. 68.

¹³ Kiziliurek in Aktar & Al (dir.), Op. Cit., p. 189.

A spectacular illustration of both the clash of two nationalisms and the minority dimension of the Cyprus Island is the broader minority context around the Aegean. It further evidences how, at least rhetorically, the region is divided. This fact is comforted by the long tradition presenting the Bosphorus as the bridge between Europe and the East, and the geopolitical tradition originating in it¹⁴. Along the 'symbolic' line halving the Aegean, social boundaries were maintained to separate the 'enemies from the inside'. Conflict served to protect identities built by the nationalist discourses as an essence of civilization.

The Ottoman tradition of population management (*surgun*, settlers in Thrace and the Balkans as well as in Cyprus) had taken over the Byzantine Empire's melting of populations. The 1923 mandatory exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey (1.200.000 Anatolian Greeks and 400.000 Muslims were displaced) stemmed from the same inspiration, though with a slightly different objective (homogenizing both nation-states in the building). However, Cypriots (for they were under British rule) as well as Turks from Thrace and many Greeks in Istanbul were excluded from this exchange. What is interesting for us is that these minorities have known, despite very different contexts, a parallel fate. Reciprocity was practiced between Turkey and Greece¹⁵, and the developments in the Cyprus question always had repercussions on them. Following the 1964 clashes in Cyprus, non-Turkish citizen Greeks in Istanbul were deported. Student leader Atila Özer warned that « *the Military and Turkish Youth will cooperate and obstruct enosis at all costs. If Denktash is not freed, the Greeks in Turkey will be expelled* »¹⁶. The same occurred in 1974 as for the rights of 'Muslims' in Thrace. It is unsurprising then, that Greeks were keen on supporting Kurdish claims within Turkey, as happened in 1999 during the Öcalan affair. Not only did Greece offered asylum to Öcalan in Kenya, but right-wing and left-wing Greek groups demonstrated in support of Kurdish claims.

Obviously, this was the result of escalating political tensions originating in such diverse sources as the continental shelf division, the flight information region or the remilitarization of Greek Islands (including Cyprus under President Clerides with the 1993 'Cypriot missiles crisis' and Greece's 'dogma of unique defence'). Yet, Cyprus is first and foremost one ring in the Aegean chain; and political interaction in this area is notably articulated around a minority framework based upon reciprocity. It is worth noting that these Greek-Turkish tensions are,

¹⁴ Dimitri Kitsikis, *L'Empire Ottoman*, « Que sais-je ? », n° 2222, Paris, PUF, 1985.

¹⁵ Akgönül, Samim (ed.), *Reciprocity and Greek and Turkish minorities: Law, Religion, Politics*, Istanbul: Bilgi University Press, 2008.

¹⁶ Feyzioğlu, 2000, p. 457, quoted in Aktar & Al (dir.), *Op. Cit.*.

arguably, waning in the wake of the Greek civil society mobilization following the August 1999 Istanbul earthquake¹⁷.

II- The irresistible ascent of homeland referents and the politics of triangular belonging

A. Enosis and Yavuvratan

In Cyprus, both communities' nationalisms took the form of the proclamation of an organic link with the motherlands. But the development of *taksim* and *enosis* was, first, not an inexorable move, and, second, thoroughly shaped by their mutual interactions. Even though the 1955 armed struggle for *enosis* did launch the current state of affairs, the construction of boundaries has to be envisioned in a broader ontological perspective. Cypriot claims for partition must not be conflated with interstate relationships: indeed, early on, the 1930 Venizelos-Ataturk treaty of friendship sealed decades of *entente cordiale*. While *enosis* developed around the Church and gained legitimacy through its struggle for independence, the Turkish response in the wake of the collapse of the Empire (in 1917-8, a Congress against Muslims was held) made the choice of kemalist secularism, perpetuating the organic and mythologized link with the Porte and refusing to become a religious minority within Cyprus.

Paradigmatic was the combat of early Turkish Cypriot nationalists like Raif Effendi or Necati (conservatives) who demanded the restoration of the religious institution of the mufti as the path toward their recognition of their status of 'members of the great Turkish nation'. The *müftülük* was a remnant of the Ottoman rule transformed into a bureaucratic function (*fetva emini*) within the *Evkaf* (Islamic administration) by the British Storrs' reforms (1928); as such it mirrored, in the eyes of Turkish Cypriot nationalists, the role of the ethnarch in the Greek community and embodied the kinship with Turkey. A strong movement took place in 1931 against the colonial rule's will to enclose the Turkish community within a Muslim minority framework deprived of the right to self-government (repressed in October¹⁸).

In parallel, the Kemalist Revolution had a stunning impact since it allowed to preserve, without the Ottoman Empire, a Turkish Cypriot identity underpinned by the pan-Turkist connection. It created, around Dr. Küçük, a secular movement (*Kıbrıs Türktür Partisi*) that

¹⁷ See Ziya Önis & Sunhaz Yilmaz, "Greek-Turkish Rapprochement: rhetoric or reality?" in *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 123, n°1, pp. 123-149, 2008.

¹⁸ Though there is no room to tackle this issue, it is generally accepted that the 'rule and divide' British colonial yoke (Turkish Cypriots serving as policemen e.g.), and its brutal repressions (still in 1958), also made of both nationalisms products of anti-colonialism. The AKEL's history is symptomatic in this respect.

would eventually come to dominate the whole nationalist sphere. When the *müftülük* was re-established in 1948 (election of the mufti in 1953), following Governor Winster's 'Turkish Affairs Committee' that recommended it as a mode of minority management, Küçük's followers soon understood that it was to eclipse the nationalist secularist movement and opposed the new *müftüs* (with the help of the DP in Ankara). The 1960 'state along bi-communal lines' imposed by the London and Zurich Treaties quickly came to treat Turkish Cypriots as the 'Turkish minority' whose rights could only stem from the generosity of the ethnarch (1963 Makarios' Constitution), and Turkish Cypriot nationalists dashed into *taksim*.

Denktash's trajectory is emblematic and subsumes Turkish Cypriot nationalism after 1960. He came to monopolize the nationalist stance, supplanting his master Küçük, and imposed his vision of a "confederation of two communities geographically distinct, based upon mandatory exchanges of population", thus reifying the boundaries drawn by his predecessors. In his oft-cited statement of belief (1995), he affirmed "*I am a child of Anatolia. I am a Turk from all my heart with my roots in Central Asia. I am a Turk by culture, language and I share our joint history. The terms like a joint state, Cypriot culture, Cypriot Greeks and Cypriot Turks are nothing but empty words*"¹⁹. Further, he asked "*when they have Greece and we have Turkey, why should we live under the umbrella of the same republic?*" and concluded stating that "*there is only one Cypriot being living in Cyprus; this is the Cyprus donkey*"²⁰. Denktash aimed at offering a remedy to the 'pitiful' situation of Turkish Cypriots, their insignificance and vulnerability, notably their tendency to stick desperately to the colonial administration, by enhancing the pride of being 'Turks' and negating both independence and any sort of Cypriot identity.

He understood that his nationalist combat was to be fought inside Turkey, with the Ankara government and the civil society. In 1957, Ankara created the TMT (*Turkish Resistance Organization*), an illegal organization endeavoring to create the *fait accompli* of partition by cutting economic links between the two parts of the island and breathing life into the '*imagined separated community of Turks*'²¹. Denktash's early activities were very much linked to right-wing fascist groups involved in intercommunity violence and attacking unions' workers, following Turkey's anticommunism. When Turkey came to consider that since annexation was no longer possible it had no interest in rebelling against NATO's injunctions to self-restraint, Denktash's claims suddenly became more flexible: this negotiation-oriented posture gained him

¹⁹ Kizilyurek, Niyazi. "Kibrista Sivil Toplum Ve Sivil Toplum Kuruluslari Uzerine Dusunceler" in Gelecegin Sesi: Turk-Yunan Yurttas Diyalogu, Belge T.U. Istanbul: Istanbul Bilgi University Press, 2004, p. 48. Quoted in various sources.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 193.

²¹ Aktar & al (dir.), Op. Cit. p. 182.

Ankara's support to take the lead of the Turkish Cypriot community (as vice-president of the island). After the 1974 intervention, Makarios –who had been ousted by the EOKA coup, thereby understanding playing with nationalism could be playing with fire- and Denktash found a reciprocal interest in building a silent coexistence (1977 agreements) that allowed each community to maintain its pervasive nationalist ideologies without really being bothered by their inherent limitations. Nationalist discourses were to be encroached in daily life as official identities. The 1983 proclamation of independence of the TRNC constituted the final stage of this process. Interestingly, it took the paradoxical form of a *coup* against the Turks, during the transmission of power to Turgut Özal. Indeed, Turkish Cypriot's Turkishness could not rely exclusively upon Turkey; it had paved its own way.

B. The burden of rhetoric? From Turks in Cyprus to Cypriot Turks

The lack of enthusiasm embodied in the 2004 referendum (to say the least) and the stagnation of routine intercommunity negotiations for 39 years since the Partition²² seem a remarkably strong evidence that nationalist official ideologies are widely supported among the population. As Bryant notes, the opening of the Attila Line in 2003 was not like the fall of the Berlin wall: in memories, the mapping remained marked by the Green Line²³. Cassia shows how emblematic is the recovery of missing persons today: Turks mourn them as unrecoverable since they happen to have fallen on the wrong side²⁴. Cassia concludes Cyprus has turned into a fabric of *différance*²⁵. More broadly, on both side of the island, a large array of facts comforts what could be described as 'personal nationalism'²⁶ in the form of the reproduction of the ethnic cleavage, from visible symbols in the buffer zone to education. Thus, Navaro-Yashin indicates that history books for children "*recount that Cyprus used to be attached to Anatolia but that due to an accidental geological transformation in ancient times, it broke away from Turkey*"²⁷. The example is telling, but it casts only a very limited light.

To Christopher Ramm, the nationalist construction of collective identity failed in the sense that *taksim* brought no amelioration to the daily life of Turkish Cypriots. In his words, Turkish Cypriots are experiencing since the 1990s an identity crisis which could explain the

²² Current negotiations, mediated by the UN envoy Alexander Downer (2008-...), do not seem much more promising (they were substantially interrupted mid-2012).

²³ Bryant, *The past in pieces*, Pennsylvania University Press, 2010, Chapter 1.

²⁴ Cassia, "Guarding each other's dead, mourning one's own".

²⁵ He uses Derrida's concept (see Derrida, "La Différance" in *Bulletin de la société française de philosophie*, July-September 1968).

²⁶ Cohen, Anthony, "Personal Nationalism" in *American Ethnologist*, vol. 23, Issue 4, pp. 802-815, November 1996; he, notably, emphasizes that nationalism is constructed at the level of the self and daily experience.

²⁷ Navaro-Yashin in Papadakis (ed.), *Op. Cit.*, p. 86.

65% ‘Yes’ to the 2004 referendum: it was a vote directed against Denktash’s authoritarian application of the nationalist straightjacket. Ramm suggests that Cypriotism –originally timidly promoted by a few leftist groups²⁸- is gaining saliency around references (European Union, insularity, western globalization) common to ‘Greeks’ and ‘Turks’: to him, identities have not been externalized or globalized, but transnational trends offer new grounds for their renegotiation. Indeed, the scholarly literature has become less and less satisfied with the classical account of the constituent rift between Greeks and Turks in the Cyprus Case. To Vural & Rustemli, a generational framework relevantly explains recent changes: the different phases of official nationalism (Islam until the 1930s, secular modernism later on, partition and intercommunity violence then) have shaped differently the generations of Turkish Cypriots. Especially, younger and educated Turkish Cypriots are not as committed as their elders to the nationalist rhetoric and would tend to conceive Turkishness and Cypriotness (that they rather describe as a ‘non-ethnic’, ‘civic’ identity) as separate and compatible²⁹. Vural & Ozuyanik also read the Turkish Republican Party (CTP, Ali Talat’s party) reforms of children textbooks as a reintroduction of territoriality and a slightly more balanced presentation of the grievances in Cyprus³⁰. Others, like Floya Anthyias, underline that social changes (she calls “translocational”) due to migrations (Third World and Eastern Europe, plus Cypriot diasporas in Britain, Australia or the US), tourism or the implementation of the EU *acquis communautaire* (including human rights, cf. III), affecting Cyprus as a whole, have already begun to destabilize existing social boundaries.

Interesting also is the case of the Turkish Settlers brought by Ankara to the TRNC after 1974 with the vague hope to reverse the numerical relationship (a threat acutely felt by the Greek Cypriot population). Labeled as ‘kinsmen’ by the nationalist discourse, they are in fact viewed as a privileged cast engendering a new dichotomy separating Cypriots (*kirbisililar*) and migrants from Turkey (*turkiyeliler*)³¹. Progressively, the multiplication of settlers combined with a large phenomenon of outmigration left Turkish Cypriots with the feeling they have become ‘outnumbered’ by their ‘saviors’, and dispossessed of their de facto state through Turkeyfication policies, the presence of Turkish soldiers and the protection/advantages settlers enjoy. Though Navaro-Yashin does not use these words, the situation could be approximated by saying Turkish Cypriots came to feel as a minority within their own state, and unduly assimilated –along with other minor religious groups and migrants- as indistinctively ‘Turks’.

²⁸ Mehmet Ali Talat, president of the TRNC from 2005 to 2010, defended reconciliation and reunification with Ankara’s support.

²⁹ Vural & Rustemli, “Identity Fluctuations in the Turkish Cypriot Community”.

³⁰ Vural & Ozuyanik, “Redefining Identity in the Turkish Cypriot History textbooks”.

³¹ Navaro-Yashin in Papadakis (ed.), Op. Cit.

To a certain extent, the nationalist discourse got what it expected, but under a power configuration that created resentment in the population. These grievances are already implicit in some political claims, for instance against Turkish illegal migrants³². Thus, the identity crisis would stem from policies in the North as well as in the South that reshaped the consciousness populations develop of social and political difference (classes, migration, control of the Turkish state). Turkey itself inevitably comes to be seen through the lens of the –sometimes– colonial practices of its settlers.

The claims brought to Ankara always revealed deceitful, even for Turkish Cypriot nationalists. As Denktash himself wrote: « *The Cypriot Turks' greatest strength is their unwavering devotion to the motherland. Their greatest weakness is their unwavering faith in those governing the motherland* »³³. Greece had abandoned enosis in the late 1960s and Turkey's relationship with the North of the Island hasn't been straightforward either, notably because of supranational pressure and normativity.

III- Supranational normativity and pressure applied to the Turkish Cypriot Minority

Cypriot diasporas did play a minor role in attracting attention on the issue (just like Kurds in Europe), especially on the Greek side, but the phenomenon cannot be compared to the extension of the Turkish political scene that took place in Europe during the late XX^e century³⁴. However, Cyprus is in essence an international affair, attracting the attention of both International Law, and European normativity. As soon as 1919 for instance, müftü Ziay went to Versailles, as many representatives of Middle Eastern ethnic groups did, defend the cause of Cypriot Muslims.

A. The Annan Plan and International Law

Since the 1974 Turkish military occupation, Cyprus has received growing attention in terms of International Law (IPL). Contemporary IPL applied to Cyprus is the result of two important traditions: Western operations under mandate (interventionism clothed as law until the 1959 Zurich and London Agreements) and the decolonization context, the latter involving the whole

³² This meets with Ramm, Op. Cit., argument that the Turkish Cypriot Cypriotists now endeavor to close the Orient borders (he cites Mustafa Akinci). But he concedes that it is too early to know exactly which form of Cypriotism (promoting the island's role as a junction, promoting independence from Greece and Turkey, pro-European identity?) could emerge as a strong political referent.

³³ Denktas, 5 to 12, 1966, p. 239

³⁴ Bertrand, « Chypre : Diaspora et Conflit ».

self-determination (SD) arsenal. Right to self-determination is usually associated with independence (state succession in IPL), but if we turn to examine its content, we find that it is profoundly entwined with the concept of minority in the doctrine. Overused and dangerously threatening the stability of heterogeneous states, it has been restricted to “colonial contexts” and balanced with the aid of the concept of ‘internal self-determination’³⁵: when “internal self-determination” is unreachable (because the management of identities and minorities is not democratic), the right to self-determination turns into “external self-determination”, raising the prospect of separatism. Then, a sort of escalation is conceptualized between the “minority question” and the “self-determination issue” under International Law. In this light, Cyprus offers a stunning panorama challenging IPL doctrines. In 2009, The Republic of Cyprus (RoC) legal team before the ICJ tellingly insisted, about the Kosovo case, on the fact that minorities have no ‘entitlement to dismember existing states’³⁶ and the head of the mission added that contemporary Cyprus was not a case of SD but rather an unlawful use of force under IPL (a position generally enshrined by Western Powers). Self-determination for the Turkish Cypriot minority was never recognized by IPL; it could only apply to the liberation from the British yoke in 1960. Since Archbishop Makarios led the newly born RoC to the non-aligned movement in 1960, Greek Cypriot, following Greece’s foreign policy (aiming at counterbalancing Turkey’s military superiority), always put international law as one pillar of their ethnarchist organization, and its international support³⁷.

The first UN force sent in Turkey was the UNFICYP deployed in March 1964 to establish a buffer zone. Its failure was resounding, and so were most of the following international attempts until the five versions of the Annan plan, unanimously perceived outside Cyprus as an equitable deal. Yet, even if it tackled the issue of settlers, property, right to return and population exchanges, the Annan Plan would neither have constructed political equivalence between both communities, nor have ensured economic protection from the EU measures on the Turkish Cypriot side³⁸. The referendum was organized without Denktash and Papadopoulos’ consent, and the proposal thus introduced in a supranational fashion. The Annan plan is, for many commentators, the evidence that IPL failed to understand the deep-rooted fear of cultural ‘alien’ domination that nationalisms have implemented in Cypriot’s minds and politics. In general,

³⁵ These issues are tackled in all handbooks of International Law. For a thorough discussion of the self-determination pillar of IPL see Antonio Cassese, Self-Determination: a Legal reappraisal, Cambridge University Press, 1998.

³⁶ See this article of Cyprus News Report: <http://www.cyprusnewsreport.com/?q=node/352>

³⁷ Tzimitras in Aktar & Al (dir.), *Op. Cit.*, underlines that IPL in Greece became “dangerously close to becoming a form of banal nationalism” (p. 144) in Turkey since it allowed Greece to create a Manichean dichotomy between the lawful Greece and the expansionist Turkey. On Greek Cypriots, see Anagnostopoulou in the same book.

³⁸ Dodd, “Report of the House of Commons on Cyprus”.

International Law has come to be an important referent in Cypriot negotiations; but it focuses on the lawfulness of the use of force, respect of the norms of *jus cogens* and pragmatic initiatives. Human Rights entered the island as a language for claims brought to the international sphere on missing persons, militarization, and also to criticize the TRNC regime by comparing it to the Greek Cypriot model student. Indeed, as Webster shows, Human Rights were interpreted differently in the Turkish and Greek Cypriot halves of the island³⁹.

B. The Europeanization of the Cyprus Question

The shadow of European Integration has been weighing on the Cyprus issue since the admission of Greece in 1981. From then on, under the Cold War, the protection-seeking diplomacy of Greece resulted in a strong European support to the RoC, further reinforced by the RoC's accession to the EU in 2005. Again, the RoC saw the EU as another safeguard to its claim to the whole island, hoping perhaps –as many allege- that the EU would help to oust the Turks from the Island and reestablish the 1960 Republic. On the other hand, until the 1999 Helsinki Conference, Greece exercised a veto against Turkey's accession to the EU (withdrawn in exchange for guarantees that the non-settlement of the Cyprus question would not compromise the RoC accession); illustrating how Cyprus became an obstacle to Ankara's European ambitions. Helsinki marked the Europeanization of the Cyprus issue.

The influence of the EU carries a great deal of political pressure to the Cyprus question since it took over the interventionism of the Great Powers after the Cold War. However, while the latter made do with the status quo, the EU pressure attacked the equivalence between the interests of Turks in Cyprus and Turkey's general interests; especially since Turkey did not recognize the Republic of Cyprus –a member of the EU. Celenk notes that the EU accession process resulted in the assimilation of the Cyprus issue with the EU: it fostered directly and indirectly (through the internal balance of power in Turkey) a reconfiguration of Turkey's Cyprus policy⁴⁰. Resisting the pan-Turkist tropism of the Army for the sake of the admission, the AKP 'sacrificed' Cyprus in Denktash's words. Actually, whereas Cyprus remained a political battlefield in Turkey, it was Denktash the AKP sacrificed: suddenly isolated, he no longer had the support of the Cypriot Turk community, which disavowed him by voting 'YES' in 2004. Over time, however, nationalist views on Cyprus resurfaced as a result of the hurdles on the European path and the pro-Greek tropism of the EU.

³⁹ Webster, "Democratization and Human Rights in Cyprus".

⁴⁰ Celenk, "The restructuring of Turkey's Policy towards Cyprus".

As for European normativity, it was seriously harmed by the absurdity of the RoC membership of the European Union since its sovereignty is *de jure* recognized over the whole island while it does not *de facto* rule over the northern part of the island. Talmon, for instance, criticized in 2001 the ECJ jurisprudence that took the non-recognition of the TNRC as precluding the establishment of any kind of relationship with Northern Cyprus for European states⁴¹. Overall, from the European practice ensued a considerable marginalization of Northern Cyprus. The EU offers economic and reputational security that is transformed into leverage over Turkey and the TRNC in RoC leaders' minds. This materialized with the 1994 embargo against Cyprus. Even Lord Hannay recognizes that the EU/RoC link acts as a disincentive⁴². Iseri Emre, though writing from a Turkish viewpoint, considers that the EU got entrapped in its own 'neo-functional' theory⁴³ that by bringing EU norms on the Greek side, it would in the long-run contribute to the settlement of the issue; to him, it only brought more imbalances⁴⁴. Such a pervasive influence is still to be demonstrated, but as we saw in II-b, it may have fostered subtle changes in Turkish Cypriots' process of identification and politization.

The ECHR role is minor since it has had to act either through Turkey or the RoC. One of the most famous examples of its intervention was the LOIZIDOU Case (1998), in which Turkey was condemned to pay reparations to a Greek Cypriot national for having stolen its property as a result of the 1974 intervention; but it did not lead to the acceptance by Turkey of the unlawfulness of the 1974 intervention. After the 2004 failure, nothing is more uncertain than the overall effect of the Europeanization of Cyprus on long-term Turkey's policy and the Turkish Cypriot minority.

IV- Conclusions

What can we conclude about the pertinence of the approach in terms of minorities? All the pertinent elements of identity-building, international/transnational intervention, claims to the central government, lead to characterize Turkish Cypriots as a *sui generis* minority trying to make its claims recognized by Turkey on the basis of its perceived Turkishness. Indeed, if we focus on the content of the discourse, on *enosis* and *taksim*, on the multiple efforts made to attract foreign intervention, on the straightforward refusal of independence, the term of 'nationalism' is misleading: the Turkish Cypriot community ran after an unnatural process of

⁴¹ Talmon, "The Cyprus Question before the European Court of Justice".

⁴² Hannay, « Cyprus: Lessons from the Debacle of 2004 and the Way ahead ».

⁴³ Angelos Sepos uses the words 'rationalist' and 'constructivist approaches' of the implantation of *acquis communautaire* in Southern Cyprus (Sepos, The Europeanization of Cyprus).

⁴⁴ Emre, "A Comparative assessment of the UN and EU's roles in the resolution of the Cyprus conflict: the scale of partiality-impartiality"

‘minoritization’, not after a ‘nation’; while trying to escape the reconversion of *enosis* into a sacred constitutional nationalism.

However, neither identity nor political projects are mere products of the discourses held over them, be it in Istanbul, South or North-Nicosia. The Aegean context offered an anchor, Turkey, but it brought no solutions to the contradictions of the Turkish Cypriot positioning, whose outcome was the indefiniteness and irregularity of their situation, embodied by a profound identity crisis and the powerlessness of the strong international action upon Cyprus. After half a century dedicated to the struggle for and perpetuation of partition, Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots paradoxically provided the word of ‘Cypriot’ with a powerful though ambiguous meaning. ‘Cypriot’ may mean today intercommunity violence and grievances, it may be a sinister denomination based upon a stark schism, but History unwillingly constructed it. That is not to say that coexistence is of any help to settle a conflict which is in essence political. As Loizos rightly says when shading the multiplication of micro-level bi-communal initiatives since 1992 (especially between young Cypriots), “*Denktash and Clerides spent more time talking to each other than many married couples, and the political elites, and masses, on both sides have studied each other obsessively at a media-distorted distance. It is not a lack of communication which has impeded progress in Cyprus*”⁴⁵. It is the impossibility of the Cyprus question to fit in any existing model of international relations or political science that illustrates, in theoretical terms, the Cypriot dead-end.

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⁴⁵ Loizos, “Bicommunal initiatives and their contribution to improved relations between Turkish and Greek Cypriots”.

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