



The Glocal Green Line: The Imperial Cartopolitical Puppeteering of Cyprus

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ABSTRACT

Cyprus has been divided for more than four decades by a cease fire line known as “the Green Line”. This long-standing partition has made the island infamous for the seemingly unsolvable antagonism between its “Turkish” and “Greek” inhabitants. In this article, we argue that, in order to better understand why this division has remained obstinately meaningful for Cypriots, we need to “delocalise” the Green Line that separates them. We contend that the foundation upon which the conflict between Greek and Turkish Cypriots has been built—and consequently also the location of the Green Line keeping them apart—does not lie in an indigenous hostility between the Greek-speaking and Turkish-speaking communities of Cyprus. Instead, we argue that this is the result of imperial puppeteering: Cyprus’ Greco-Turkish enmity is largely based on perceptions of space, heritage and identification that were first introduced during the British colonisation and have been persistently—if not always deliberately—reinforced by chronic external intrusions and counter-productive conflict-resolution initiatives. We claim that a succession of British imperialism, Hellenic irredentism, Turkish nationalism, Cold-War geopolitics, UN conflict resolution and EU expansion have created, inculcated and reinforced cartographically organized perceptions of space, history and culture—a *cartopolitics*—that have invented the *Turkish Cypriots* and *Greek Cypriots* as identity categories and perpetuated their antagonism. Thus, rather than an essentially local and binary play, the Cypriot conflict should be regarded as a *glocal* drama in which outside actors have been pulling the strings of the island’s politics. The readjustment of the historiographical and geographical limitations to which the Cypriot conflict has been confined so far has decisive implications for the island’s reunification: merely to zoom in on the hostile dichotomy at work is insufficient. Rather, to understand the persistence of the Green Line fracturing the island we need to zoom out from Cyprus.

A Glocal Genealogy of Cypriot Segregation

To walk alongside Nicosia’s Green Line today implies walking along a lingering past that uncannily refuses to fade away. A succession of sandbags, dilapidated

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façades pockmarked with bullet holes and a scatter of slouching soldiers cut through Cyprus' capital as unassuming reminiscences of the murderous conflict that started to unfold between the island's Turkish-speaking and Greek-speaking communities back in the 1950s. The peak of their interethnic violence, in 1974, led to Cyprus' partition along the “Green Line”: the UN-guarded buffer zone that has separated the island in two halves and largely severed the interaction between Greek and Turkish Cypriots ever since (see [Figure 1](#)).

This territorial partition has been replicated in many everyday borders that divide the lives of Cypriots—from political identity to collective memory—and, most recently, in the Turkish North's exclusion from the Greek South's membership to the EU. We claim that by conceptualizing the Green Line as part of the bigger picture of EU border making we can better understand it: not as a stand-alone exception but as a fragment of a larger cartographical imagination with geopolitical implications for the wider European context. The Green line can be seen as a scale replica of the physiographical convention that invents discontinuity between “Europe” and a vaguely defined “East” along the Bosphorus, the Ural Mountains or even, oddly, the Mediterranean (Dunn 2010, 15; Bueno-Lacy 2011, 64). These borders are the expression of the widely held misconception of almost essential incompatibility between “East” and “West” and the long-standing and recurrent prejudice that it begets: the portrayal of Semitic people in general—and Muslims, Arabs and Turks in today's political context—as Europeans' most antagonistic others (Al-Azmeh 2003; Allen 2004;



Figure 1. Ceci n'est pas la Ligne Verte. Based on: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/europe/cy-green-line.htm>

Born, Dziewulski and Messling 2015; Bulliet 2006; Khaf 1999; Vaughan and Vaughan 1997; Bayraklı and Hafez 2016).

However, neither the Green Line nor Europe's physiographical borders are self-evident testaments of spatial, ethnic and civilisational splits between Europe and *the Orient* but rather proof that power can rupture otherwise seamless communities, cultures and geographies (Said 1978). Cyprus offers an inestimable scale model to study how the borders of Europe have been made by concealing the sustained historical contact between East and West that has left profuse traces of cross-fertilization in what today is considered as quintessentially European heritage—from the gothic cathedrals and Renaissance art to cuisine, science and philosophy (Al-Azmeh and Fokas 2007; Brotton 2002; Bulliet 2006; Goody 2004; Raquejo 1986). Thus, studying the Green Line might provide as many insights into the interethnic conflict between Greek and Turkish Cypriots as into the growing anxiety towards Muslims across the EU (Goodwin and Raines 2017).

The very *Greekness* or *Turkishness* that nationalists on both sides of the Cypriot Green Line persist to represent as a threat to one another, just like the very *Europeanness* that mushrooming demagogues purport to defend from Islam in the rest of the EU, betray a fundamental historical ignorance about the very identity that they are anxious to shield. The consanguinity between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots as well as between Europeans on the one hand and Arabs/Muslims on the other runs much deeper than Cypriot ethno-nationalists and Eurocentrists would like to admit. Therefore, in this paper we want to focus on the stubbornness of the Cypriot Green Line not only because its persistence is more counterintuitive than it has often been granted but because the imperial aloofness that has shaped the conflict that sustains it echoes a much larger dispute about European borders, history and future.

Even though Cypriots' ethno-national identification might remain mostly Turkish or Greek, their 300 years of *convivencia* under Ottoman rule offer hints of a long-lived shared heritage—however rebutted by the pervasive evocations of deep and ancient differences embedded in the inescapable Green Line (Cassia 1986, 3–28; Kitromilides 1977, 35–70; Brambilla 2009, 121–138).¹ Thus, the specific question that drives this paper is: Why would people who have shared so much for so long keep eschewing reconciliation even though the violence that caused their separation has faded away? The inter-communitarian distress and geopolitical tension one would expect from a militarized buffer zone guarded by the longest-serving UN peacekeeping mission is simultaneously offset by an atmosphere of sheer uneventfulness. Today, a casual border-crosser can experience the Green Line as a superfluous inconvenience that seems more suited to enforce the inertia of tradition rather than as a border keeping at bay any impending security concerns.

What then has kept the island's communities apart and the approaches to the resolution of its conflict going amiss for over 40 years now?

By way of an answer to this question, a great deal of the literature on the Cypriot conflict has conceptualized it as a “protracted conflict” stemming from *longue durée* incompatibilities between Cyprus’ culturally discordant Greek and Turkish communities—an animosity often postulated to be rooted in a mutual ethnic animosity dating back hundreds or even thousands of years (e.g., Azar 1985, 68; Fisher 2001; Coleman 2003, 4; for a notable exception see: Kontos et al. 2014).² Although we do not dispute that Cypriots’ own agency has played a role in stoking and perpetuating their conflict, we are wary to assume that ethnic bad blood between Turkish-speaking and Greek-speaking Cypriots has caused a spatial, social and political fracture for as long as Turks and Greeks have inhabited the island.

Moreover, the very assumption that Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots have always thought of themselves as such is anachronistic. For most of Cypriot history, *Greek* and *Turk* have been inexistent or unstable categories of either ethnic self-identification or division (on the historical instability of words see: Foucault 1971, 152). Accordingly, we explore how these very categories of ethnic identification have acquired their meaning and how they have persistently precluded the formation of a Cypriot nation state with its own identitary mythology (Foucault 1982; Hobsbawm 1990, 20–22).³

In what follows we contend that imperial intrusions have largely determined Cypriots’ inimical politics through either strategic or cavalier impositions that have been persistently puppeteering their identities and digging an entrenched *cartopolitical* fracture across the island. As we will make clear, the very meaning of “Turkish Cypriot” or “Greek Cypriot”, by association to the nation states that they refer to, evoke a cartography of antagonistic Greek and Turkish political myths. This geopolitical cartography, in turn, is associated to an entire system of thought that has constructed the history, culture, space, politics and even people from East and West, Europe and Turkey, Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots as inherently different. However, the Bosphorus is as questionable a civilisational split between Europe and *the Orient* as the Green Line is between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots (Said 1978).

Imperial Cartopolitics

The imperial impositions in Cyprus that we aim at identifying in this article follow a broad understanding of empire derived from its classical etymological root in the Latin *imperare*: to command. In this article, we understand this imperial command as *a centre’s pre-eminence to rule over a subordinated periphery* (Hardt and Negri 2000; Hobsbawm 1987; Kumar 2017; Münkler 2005). Thus, the empires and imperial attitudes whose influence on Cyprus we discuss

belong to an imperial political technology that, historically, has been characterized by the hierarchical duality between a metropole that rules and colonies that obey.⁴ We pay attention to the political organizations (i.e., states as well as international and supranational organizations) whose relations with Cyprus can be captured by what Edward Said described as the “high-handed executive attitude of nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century European colonialism” (Said 1978, 2).

Our angle to study the imperial imprints on the island is what we have called *cartopolitics* (van Houtum 2012, 412).⁵ With cartopolitics we mean “the visual imposition of control and meaning over space as well as over its inhabitants, their behaviour and ideologies [...] It is a political technology that consists in cartographically defining political territories and empowering them with meaning” (Bueno-Lacy and van Houtum 2015, 485; Strandsbjerg 2012, 827). Although cartopolitics are often related to maps and visualized by them, they are by no means limited to them: they are *geopolitical imaginations that evoke a map*, like “the Orient”, “The Muslim World”, “the West”, “the Global South”, etc. We are interested in how Cyprus has been bordered and ordered within a structure of geopolitically meaningful hierarchies. Geopolitical metaphors that, for example, as ancient Greece and thus a gateway to the cradle of European civilisation for British imperialists in the nineteenth century or a threatening Mediterranean Cuba for the US during the Cold War. Contrary to their ambition to provide an objective representation of the world, cartopolitical notions predominantly derive from neither dispassionate history nor first-hand experience (Gregory 1994, 70; Derrida 1982, 307–330; Critchley 1999, 31–44; Ó Tuathail 1996, 58–86) but rather from a piecemeal of geographical signs edited and promoted by power and reproduced by the inertia of “common sense” (Eco 1976). These manipulated signs create a “cartography of identities” (Gregory 1995, 447), an imagined geographical distribution and historical belonging that tell us where we are, who we are and, in consequence, who are like us and who are different from us. These notions of space and history and the borders they engender form the basis of grand geopolitical strategies and imperialist interventions.

The cartopolitical b/ordering of spaces as well as the coinciding process of othering is often done via *heterotopias* and *chronotopes* (Bakhtin 2004; Foucault 1986). Heterotopias are “places within places”: notions of spatial connection or transmission between a *here* and an *elsewhere*, such as ideas of cultural connection between a colony and a motherland.⁶ Chronotopes—which literally mean “temporal locations”—are time-space distortions which national identities typically configure to celebrate, ritualize and invent the spurious longevity of a political myth (Renan 1997[1882]). Through both these spatio-temporal imaginary mechanisms, members of a political community mutually construct notions of themselves as part of anachronic and thus fictitious groups bound by a common geography and a shared history (Basso 1984, 44–45). Nation states have traditionally tapped into these

representational techniques to craft a mythology of their polity as pre-existent and even *essential* (Anderson 2006[1983]; Bottici 2007).

In what follows we will analyse the imperial cartopolitics—or what could be termed *cartocolonialism*—that various imperial meddlers have shipped into Cyprus. We will pay particular attention to the heterotopias and chronotopes that have configured Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot identities. Our aim is to explore how politically meaningful and cartographically organized imaginations of Cyprus, both within the island and beyond, have woven a dense web of local and worldwide interests which, we argue, have constructed and protracted the divide among Cypriots. Chronologically, we focus on the British Empire's pursue of its colonial interests in the Middle East; the post-colonial antagonism between Greek and Turkish national myths; the US concerns about a latent strife between crucial NATO allies in the Cold War context; the Greek-supported coup followed by the Turkish invasion and lastly the failed reunification plans brokered by the EU and the UN.

British British Sophistication

As the sluggish collapse of the Ottoman Empire threatened to splinter the Balkans into many nationalisms and endanger the delicate balance of power in the region, the British Empire occupied Cyprus in 1878 to safeguard its endangered commercial and military interests in the Near East (Hopkirk 1990, 328–329). Cyprus came into the British radar as a convenient location from which their empire could ward off the expansionist ambitions of the Russian Empire in the eastern Mediterranean, watch over Egypt and protect the Suez Canal as well as the passage to India—the “pearl” of the empire's colonies (Varnava 2005).

Although a mix of imperial wantonness and strategic geopolitical interests drove the British to colonize Cyprus, the fortuitousness of their colonisation eventually acquired the more calculated character of a civilising mission (a *mission civilisatrice*). The British government's ignorance about Cyprus together with its distinctively Anglocentric understanding of history and civilisation heavily influenced the colonial policies with which they transformed the island (Pollis 1973; Varnava 2005, 175).

As the British settled in Cyprus, they found in their new and exotic Mediterranean colony two heterotopias that would guide their colonial administration and lay the grounds of today's Cypriot conflict. The first was the glory of ancient Greece that their philhellenic imperial upbringing had taught them to idealize. The second was an orientalist vision of Ottoman Turks that had been taking shape in Britain since the times of Shakespeare (Vitkus 1999, 224; Ross 2012, 7). It is worth emphasizing that, although the British set foot in Cyprus at a time when every corner of Europe seemed to belong—and was certainly being reclaimed—by a Romantic project of

nation-building, Cyprus was isolated from this nationalist trend sweeping the European continent. In the absence of a Cypriot national project that no one had yet cared to invent, the British cavalier identification of Cyprus' inhabitants as an extension of already existing nationalities flourished unimpeded: they saw Greeks and Turks instead of Cypriots and their misperception went unchallenged (Pollis 1973; Varnava 2005, 175).

The British philhellenic imagination imprinted an ironic duality on Cypriots: it invested them with the grandeur of yore yet simultaneously justified their colonisation. The first impressions of Robert Hamilton Lang—a leading British diplomat at the time—articulated the ambiguity of this colonial gaze: “There are no modern wonders in the Cyprus Court [...] but things of which you read in ancient Greek literature [...] which seems to tell us how little has been the progress in such arts in Cyprus during the past two thousand years [...] But the clouds are breaking, and British rule will soon dispel them altogether” (Lang 1887, 186–187). As these lines reveal, as far as the Victorian colonial elite was concerned, nothing had changed in Cyprus since the times of Aristotle. Paradoxically, the very patina of ancient venerability that made Cypriots part of Antiquity's unsurpassed pinnacle of intellectual sophistication also made them primitive people in need of enlightenment. The British felt uniquely qualified to civilise Cyprus and by extension ancient Greece—of which they thought it was a relic—the cradle of the European civilisation which they fancied themselves leading in the nineteenth century (Byron 1823; Mikhail 1979, 107–108; Ross 2012).

The ambiguous philhellenic yet orientalist overtones of this British imperial gaze were also captured by an old image published in the *Illustrated London News* of 1895 (see [Figure 2](#)). The British are depicted as sophisticated surveyors and aloof guards who scrutinize their Cypriot subjects from positions of authority. In contrast, Cypriots are portrayed as an arrange of stereotypical mannequins inhabiting a museum's showcase. Their dress, actions and artefacts suggest some sort of primitive rural eccentricity set against a background strewn with exotic minarets and oriental decorative elements. Cypriots are exposed to the dissecting stare of British colonial officers—and, by extrapolation, to the eyes of the British public to which this publication was addressed. Overall, this representation makes Cypriots seem “quaint” and less modern, perhaps even less refined than their British masters: they are rendered as colourful but simple people from a remote island's countryside.

This picture's composition condenses the main interpretation that the British made of Cypriots at the time: rural, corporate people with an uncivilized loyalty for their kind—a character that the British assumed was a hindrance to their development (Bryant 2003, 247). Stemming from their “popular anthropology of Cypriots' nature”, the British enshrined in law what they saw as Cypriots' tribal barbarism by introducing a legal system

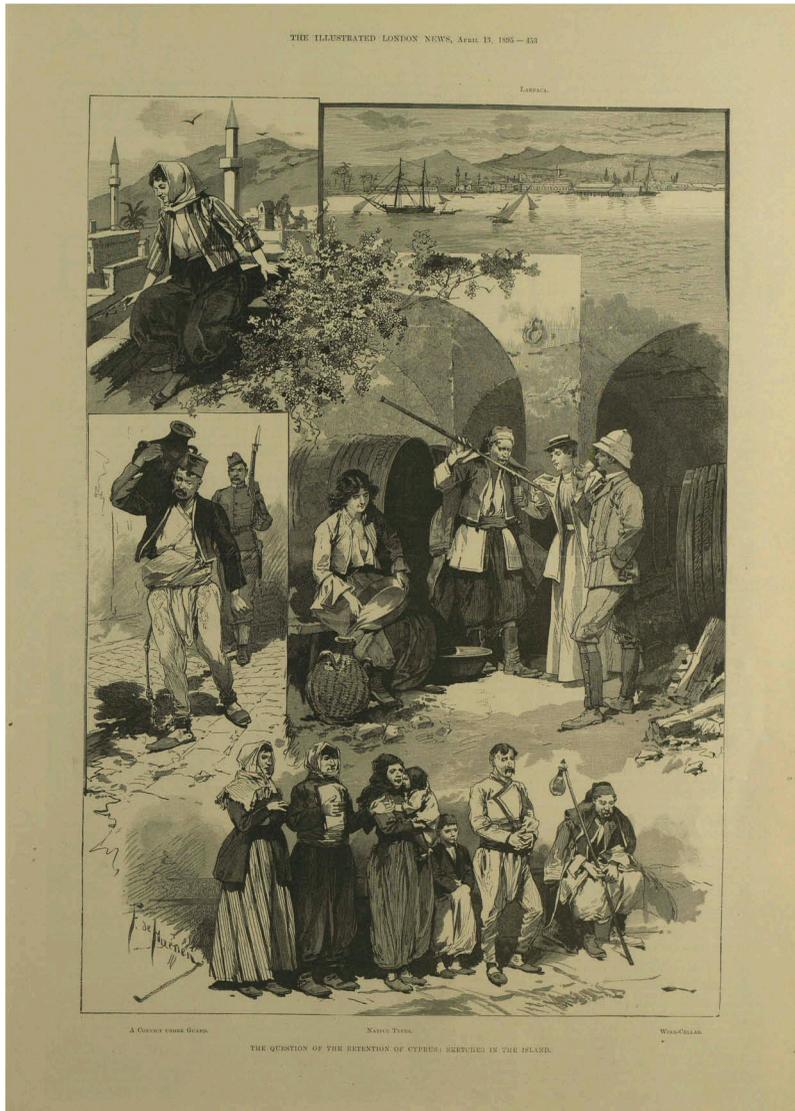


Figure 2. Cypriots through imperial eyes: “Native Types of Cyprus”, image of Cyprus from the Illustrated London News of 1895. Source: Illustrated London News Historical Archive: http://find.galegroup.com/iln/start.do?prodId=ILN&userGroupName=acd_iln&trialParam=PcaUEOQ22QvXwa0Z8Knerby2NagyHDpZ

that made the Turkish and Greek ethnic groups the basis of public administration and legal redress. They “civilized” Cypriots by replacing what they dismissed as a cumbersome system of Ottoman village authorities with a clear-cut system of island-wide ethnic leaders (Bryant 2003, 261). This modernization ripped apart multi-ethnic and multi-confessional village politics, thus provoking an island-wide political reconfiguration that is still felt today: in their ambition to simplify Ottoman complexity, the British bordered and ordered Cypriots according to the *mainly Turkish* and *mainly*

Greek populations that they thought to “recognize” in the island (van Houtum and van Naerssen 2002). The British colonial administration broke down a Cypriot society that had been slowly brewing over centuries of intermingling and replaced it with a new managerial reality of spatial, political and legal order (Scott 1998).

Before the British reorganized Cypriots along Greek and Turkish ethnic lines, Christian Orthodox and Muslim Cypriots inhabited the same neighbourhoods and homes without the intercommunal hatred later found during the twentieth century (Brambilla 2009, 123; Pollis 1979, 49–50; Nevzat 2005, 69–72). However, the British re-oriented Cypriots’ local allegiances and placed them in the hands of their ethnic representatives (the “ethnarcs”). Everyday problems that in Ottoman Cyprus had been solved by non-ethnic village politics became matters to be treated by mono-ethnic, island-wide representatives. Muslim–Christian syncretism gradually unstitched as the administrative—and later territorial—border imposed by the British started to pull apart newly invented groups of “Turkish Cypriots” and “Greek Cypriots”. Ironically, rather than breaking down corporatism, the British manufactured it (Bryant 2003, 263).

Language was another crucially divisive border carved by British imposition. A common set of languages was already spoken by both Muslim and Christian Orthodox Cypriots when the British arrived (Pollis 1973, 586–587; Hobsbawm 1990, 110–111). However, the rapid proliferation of newspapers and schools that followed the British occupation dealt a fatal blow not only to the common Cypriot languages—for multilingualism was a common feature of Cypriot life for most of its history (Hadjioannou, Tsiplakou and Kappler 2011)—but also to other symbolic commonalities that could have served as the foundation of a proto-national and unhyphenated Cypriot identity (Pollis 1973, 586–587).

The national identities of Greece and Turkey were inculcated into Cypriots’ minds through an educational system set up by the British who “began to encourage the importation of teaching personnel from Greece and Turkey” (Pollis 1973, 589). As consequence of these policies, the print cultures of mainland Greece and Turkey became the print cultures of Cypriots, who began to acquire a collective consciousness of themselves as either Orthodox Christian, Greek-speaking Greeks or Muslim, Turkish-speaking Turks. By extension, they learned to see Cyprus not as the land of Cypriots but as the incomplete, adulterated, even contaminated version of an unfulfilled M/Otherland corrupted by the presence of either Greek or Turkish neighbours, who they learned to regard not as compatriots but as a misplaced national community.

These caveats about the emergence of modern Cypriot consciousness are critical for the analysis and resolution of the Cypriot conflict. Contrary to what often has been claimed, the Cypriot conflict did not acquire “significant

international dimensions” after the Turkish invasion of 1974 (Nugent 1997). Although Cyprus was an isolated province of the Ottoman Empire, international politics has shaped today’s Cypriot conflict ever since the British occupied it in 1878. Their colonial policies dug a trench between Christian Orthodox and Muslim Cypriots with the import of foreign sensibilities. A telling imperial cartopolitical artefact evoking the ideology that percolated all spheres of life in the island as a result is the British colonial map of Cyprus (see Figure 3).

This was the first detailed modern map of the island—made by Herbert Kitchener, a senior British army officer. The scrupulous mapping of a new colony belonged to the standard procedure that the British colonial administration used to turn the unknown complexity of faraway colonies into manageable subjects (Given 2002). The British imperial obsession with the demarcation of space (maps, surveys and censuses) created a colonial knowledge that not only cast light on topographical details but which also invented sociopolitical realities that were later taken as incontrovertible facts by the bureaucracies who relied on them to govern the island. British governmentality surveyed, drew, codified and ultimately invented a Cyprus where ethnicity and religion were the main politico-territorial divisions (Constantinou 2007). Maps and their borders took

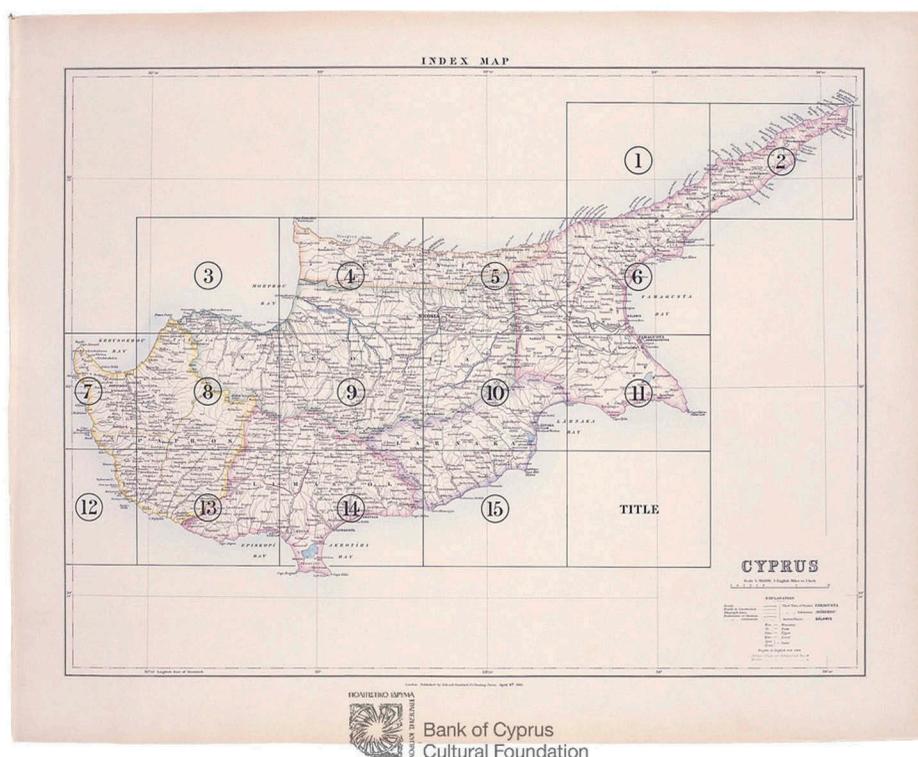


Figure 3. Herbert Kitchener’s map of Cyprus, 1885. Source: Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation, <http://www.boccf.org/museums-and-collections/cyprus-map-collection/collection-items/C/001-100/C-085/>

power away from communities and deposited it in a state that had little knowledge of the population it set itself to manage (Bryant 2003).

This cartocolonialism laid the basis for the future understanding of Cyprus' internal borders, which were replicated until they found their most dramatic expression in the establishment of the Green Line—the product of crude British military conflict resolution after Cyprus became an “independent” country. The process that led to the conflict that remains unsolvable today has recurrently relied on the British colonial presupposition that the island is naturally divided in two ethnic groups. This simplistic assumption—whose continuity can be traced from the British colonisation of Cyprus in the nineteenth century to today—persuaded Major General Peter Young, a British military officer leading the peace forces deployed to appease the inter-communal clashes of 1963, to draw a line with a green chinagraph pencil on a map as a sensible measure to quench the interethnic strife between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. Although intended as a temporary *cordon sanitaire*, this cartographic sketch would prosaically become known as “the Green Line”, the border that still separates Turkish and Greek Cypriots today (Harbottle 1970, 67; Grundy-Warr 1994, 74–75). The imperial intrusions that have followed the British colonisation of Cyprus, from the end of the nineteenth to well into the twenty-first century, have relied on the invented ethnic infrastructure that the British laid down. To this we turn now.

Imperial Clash: Hellenic and Ottoman Antagonism

Encouraged by the British Hellenization of Cyprus—which squarely fit within their increasingly ambitious nationalism—Greek political leaders seized the opportunity to culturally dominate the island. Through the British unedited import of Greece's educational system, the idea of “the Ottoman”—and by extension of “the Turk”—as an intruder found a firm anchorage in Cyprus. Greek Cypriots learned to find their place within a national narrative that extolled the liberation from Ottoman-Turk domination as the Greek nation's date of emancipation (today, Greek Independence Day is still celebrated as a national holiday in Greek Cyprus too). Orthodox Cypriots began to be pulled towards a national community beyond their borders (Bryant 2003, 263), the distant dream of nineteenth-century Greek irredentism.

Greek irredentism was a rare symbiosis of territorial expansionism inspired by a Romantic historiography, a sort of “imperial nationalism” (Kumar 2017, 15–24).⁷ It ambitioned to restore the territorial glories of classical Greece and Byzantium by encompassing within Greece's national borders all the Greek-speaking populations along the eastern Mediterranean (Kitromilides 1990, 6; Peckham 2000, 77). Such yearning to create a “Greater

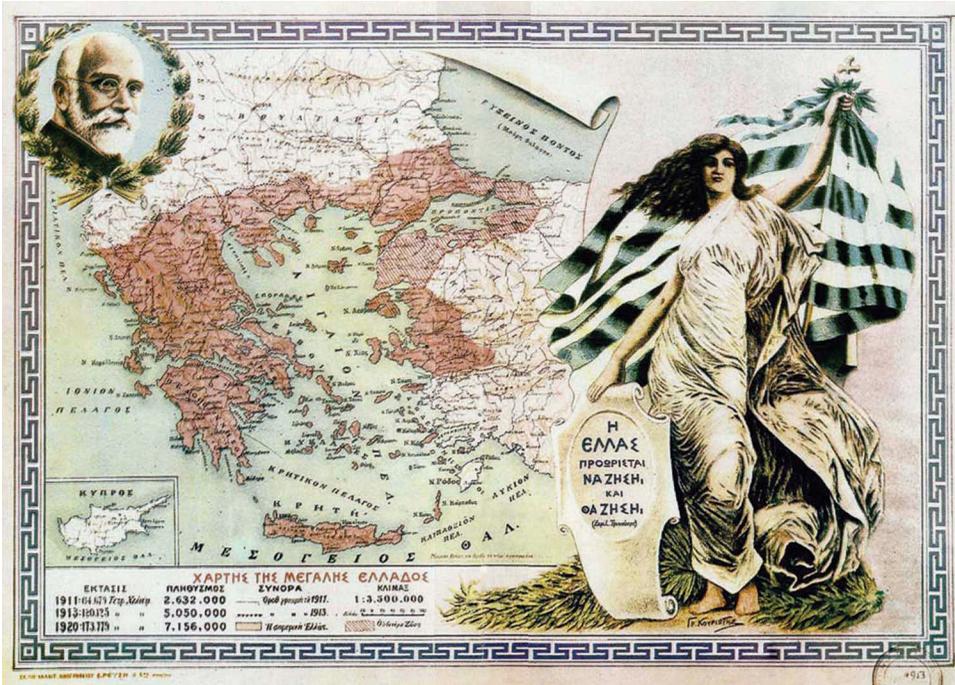


Figure 4. Map of Greater Greece, circa 1919. Source: National Historical Museum of Athens.

Greece”—i.e., “a new Hellenic Empire that would encircle the Aegean Sea”—came to be known as “the Megali Idea” (or “the Great Idea”) (see [Figure 4](#)) ([Finefrock 1980](#); [Walker 1984](#), 477–478; [Kitromilides 1990](#), 3–17; [Stouraiti and Kazamias 2010](#), 11–34).

This grand geopolitical ambition found a favourable breeding ecosystem in the prevalent imperial ideology of late nineteenth and early twentieth century geopolitics. Shaped by the lens of evolutionary racism ([Hobsbawm 1990](#), 2), the eye driven by such imperial mindset perceived a landscape fractured by frontiers—which in the parlance of the time referred to places of natural confrontation between savagery and civilisation that justified the imposition of a colonising enterprise ([Kristof 1959](#); [van Houtum and Bueno-Lacy 2016](#)). These were times when imperialists mixed the “political principle, which holds that that the political and the national unit should be congruent” ([Gellner 1983](#), 1)—i.e., nationalism—, with an idea of the state that, drawing on evolutionary metaphors taken from biogeography ([Bassin 1987](#), 474; [Craw 1992](#)) justified the violent expansion of the nation state as the natural necessity of a “geographical-biological organism” ([Kristof 1960](#), 21–22). Whenever such organic notion of the state met the self-righteousness of the civilising mission, violent imperial expansionism and colonisation were justified as the inexorable fate of “better and lesser races” ([Turner 1920](#), 85). In a similar vein, Greek irredentism created a powerful narrative of ultimately tragic consequences.

Through a series of powerful geopolitical and historical metaphors carried by cartopolitical heterotopias and chronotopes—i.e., politically and territorially meaningful distortions of time and space—the independent Greek nation state came to combine “the appetite of Russia with the dimensions of Switzerland” (Peckham 2000, 85).

Greece’s political elites found in the Romantic Hellenic nostalgia the geopolitical force to turn scattered Greek-speaking populations throughout the eastern Mediterranean into the possible borders of their grandiose imperialism (Kitromilides 1977, 3–17). As for Greek Cypriots, this Hellenist utopia—a cartopolitical imagination that placed them within the Greek state and its Hellenic and “turkophobic” historiography—exerted a seductive appeal. It created a path for a self-righteous identity-politics. As far as nineteenth century Greek Cypriots were concerned, the Megali Idea turned the characteristics that for centuries had made the Christian Orthodox majority of Cyprus subservient to the Ottomans into a legitimization to exercise their dominance over Turkish Cypriots—i.e., the Ottomans’ successors.

Through chronotopes that anchored them to classical Greece and Byzantium, Greek Cypriots nurtured geographical imaginations of a greatness injured by Turkish affronts. They learned to recognize themselves as a group different from Turkish-speaking Muslims in comparison to which they made up a sizeable majority. It was thus, at the end of the nineteenth century, that Greek Cypriots acquired not only a sense of self-identification as an ethnopolitical collective but also the hazardous moral superiority that chauvinism draws between friends and foes and right and wrong (on the friend/foe dichotomy see: Schmitt 1932). In congruence with the imperial nationalism of their contemporary irredentist Hellenic discourse (Kumar 2017, 23–36; 2000, 2003, 30–35), Greek Cypriots learned to feel that their Ottoman and British rulers owed them a redress that should be delivered in the shape of political union with Greece (aka *enosis*), the “fatherland” that the Greek Orthodox church and Cypriot schools modelled on Greece’s had taught Greek Cypriots to “remember” and “long for” (Walker 1984).

Greek Cypriots’ yearning for a “return” to the Hellenic world intensified as consequence of the war that broke out between Greece and the Ottoman Empire in 1897. In its aftermath Crete gained its independence and in 1913 succeeded in annexing to the Greek nation state. The Cretan experience gave Greek Cypriots a cartopolitical blueprint for *enosis*: a Mediterranean island with a Greek-identifying majority showed them that it was possible to vanquish the Ottomans, expel the entire Turkish minority and join Greece. Crete’s *enosis* turned the Greek Cypriot dream—and Turkish Cypriots’ anxiety—into a very real possibility (Dimitrakis 2008, 377).

Textbook Nationalism

One could say that when Greek Cypriots first approached the national myth of Greece through its schoolbooks and publications, they read in Greek nationalism and prints an archaeology into their own selves where they found ancient sensibilities that previously had been largely unimportant to them. Since then, the textbooks used by Greek Cypriots have followed what in Cypriot historiography is known as the “Hellenization thesis”. This posits that, in spite of the many conquests that the island has experienced over the centuries, its inhabitants have recurrently managed to preserve its “original” Hellenic character until today—ever since the Mycenaean culture settled Cyprus in the 12 century BC. It is a discursive strategy that turns Turkish Cypriots into an artificial ethnic group while simultaneously denying them whatever belonging they might claim to the Turkish national history and state (Papadakis 2008).

Before their reform in 2004, the textbooks used by Turkish Cypriots used to be no better. According to them, the history of Cyprus began with the Ottoman conquest in 1571, which ushered a period of progress only interrupted by ungrateful revolts against Ottoman tolerance. These textbooks used in Turkish Cyprus made reference to “Our Motherland Turkey” and Turkish Cypriots were referred to as “Turks of Cyprus”, thus making them a mere extension of the larger Turkish nation. At the same time, Greek Cypriots were belittled as *rum*, a nomenclature used during Ottoman times to refer to the Greek Orthodox subjects within the empire, different from Greeks, and thus a term intended to deny Greek Cypriots the connection to continental Greeks that inspired their push for enosis (Papadakis 2008, 134–137).

Until 2004, when Northern Cyprus reformed its textbooks to tell a more reconciliatory history of Cyprus, Cypriots to both sides of the Green Line grew up reading textbooks that promoted some of the most powerful heterotopias and chronotopes through which the antagonism between Greek and Turkish Cypriots infiltrated entire generations (Vural and Özuyanık 2008). The textbooks worked as cartopolitical artefacts that taught Cypriots to find their geo-historical location not in the common past and fate of a Cypriot political community but rather in the histories and fates of either Greece or Turkey while portraying “the other” as a cruel adversary (Christou 2006).

Religious Antagonism

The Hellenization of Cyprus also brought about religious tensions. The religious freedom allowed by the British Empire after 1878—which overlapped an older Ottoman tradition of religious tolerance (Dietzel and Makrides 2009)—gave way to a multiplication of voluntary associations dedicated to the “Hellenization” of Cyprus. This development would later

promote intolerance towards Turkish Cypriots as the Orthodox Church—a pillar of modern Hellenism—politicized throughout the twentieth century (Dietzel and Makrides 2009, 80–81). The relatively easy religious coexistence that had prevailed since 1606—when the Ottoman Empire forcibly settled a small Turkish minority in Cyprus—up to the end of Ottoman rule in 1878 (Brambilla 2009, 121)—collapsed when the multi-confessional Ottoman empire was replaced with the bi-nationalist colony manufactured by a British imperialism that, unsuspectingly, became a vessel for Greek ethno-religious irredentism.

Competing Imperial Cartopolitics

A powerful testimony to the growing Hellenic and Ottoman antagonism amidst which Cyprus got entangled at the beginning of the twentieth century can be found in the iconological comparison of competing Greek and Turkish cartopolitical discourses from the time (see [Figures 4 and 6](#)). These maps can be seen as illustrations of the larger cartopolitical discourses that shaped the ethnic antagonism of the island in the early twentieth century. Their cartopolitical significance lies in the extent to which they splice into the political, cultural, social, historical context in which they were made. Their visual composition condenses geopolitical imaginations of Cyprus that organize it as an extension of either the Greek or the Turkish national myth (Van Straten 1991, 11; Collini 1992).⁸

Let's first focus on the Greek poster (see [Figure 4](#)). This is an illustration of the dominant geopolitical discourse that circulated in Greece after the signing of the Treaty of Sèvres in 1919. It is perhaps the most popular version of the Megali Idea ever to have circulated. The borders of Greater Greece depicted on this cartopolitical artefact represent neither the only nor even the main vision of Greater Greece—a flexible notion of which different versions existed at the time—but merely the borders that Greece was able to agree upon by diplomatic compromise after World War I (Stouraiti and Kazamias 2010, 30). On the upper left corner appears Eleftherios Venizelos, the respected Greek statesman who took the Megali Idea as close as it would ever get to its consummation. His dignified expression looks over the territorial ambitions that he held to “restore” the Greek nation's greatness. His face is surrounded by the laurel wreath that ancient Greeks awarded their victors. On the right flank of the map stands a black-maned Athena reminiscent of the one imagined by Eugène Delacroix in his *Greece on the Ruins of Missolonghi* (1826) (see [Figure 5](#)): the personification of the Greek nation. She is defiantly coming to the fore brandishing a Greek banner crowned with the cross of Christian Orthodox faith. On her other hand she holds a parchment with the legend “Greece is destined to live and shall live”. Although Cyprus is not coloured as part of the territories ambitioned by

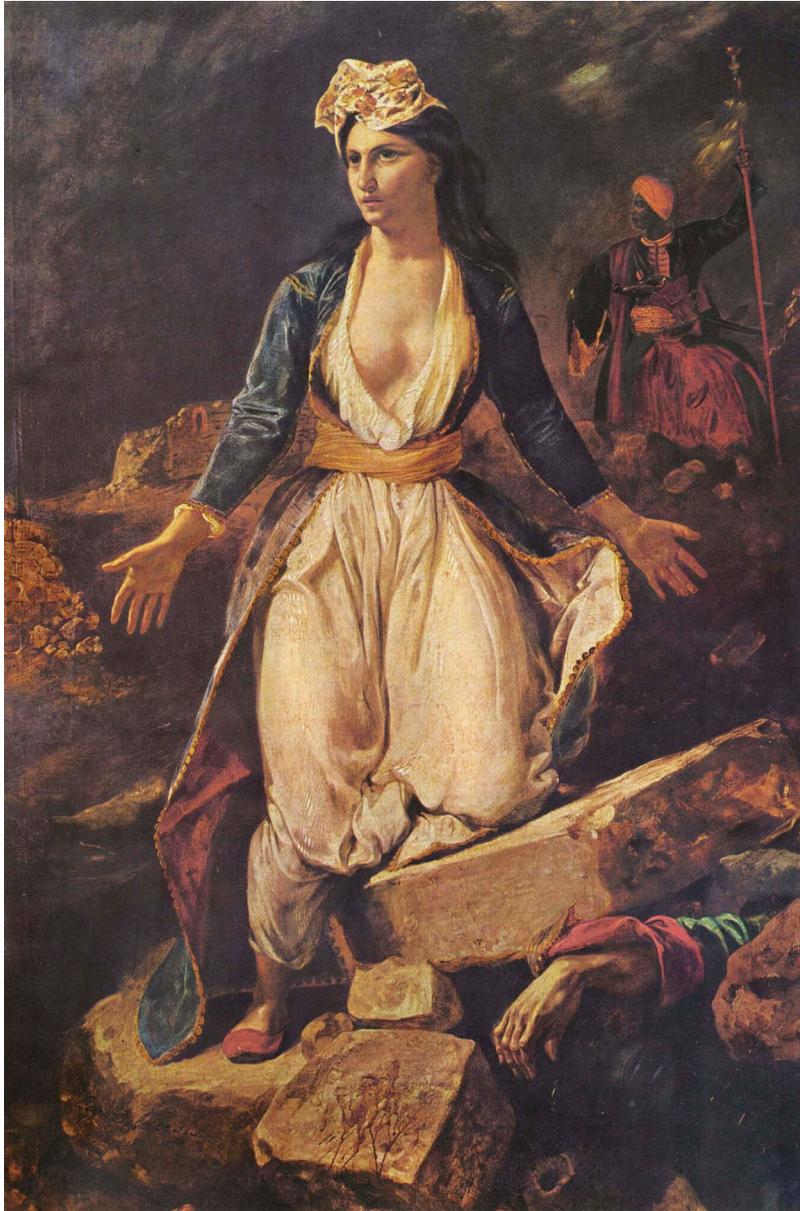


Figure 5. The Romantic embodiment of the Greek nation. *Greece on the Ruins of Missolonghi*, by Eugène Delacroix (1826), Musée des Beaux-Arts de Bordeaux.

Greece, it is alienated from its proximity to Anatolia and displaced to a location closer to the core of the Greek state. There is a reason for this. Although Greeks considered Cyprus to be indisputably theirs, they were also aware that they could not realistically claim it yet as part of their expansionist ambitions, for the British were unwilling to give it away during the Paris negotiations of 1919 (Helmreich 1974, 40). Perhaps as a recognition of this international reticence, this map is careful about appropriating Cyprus by

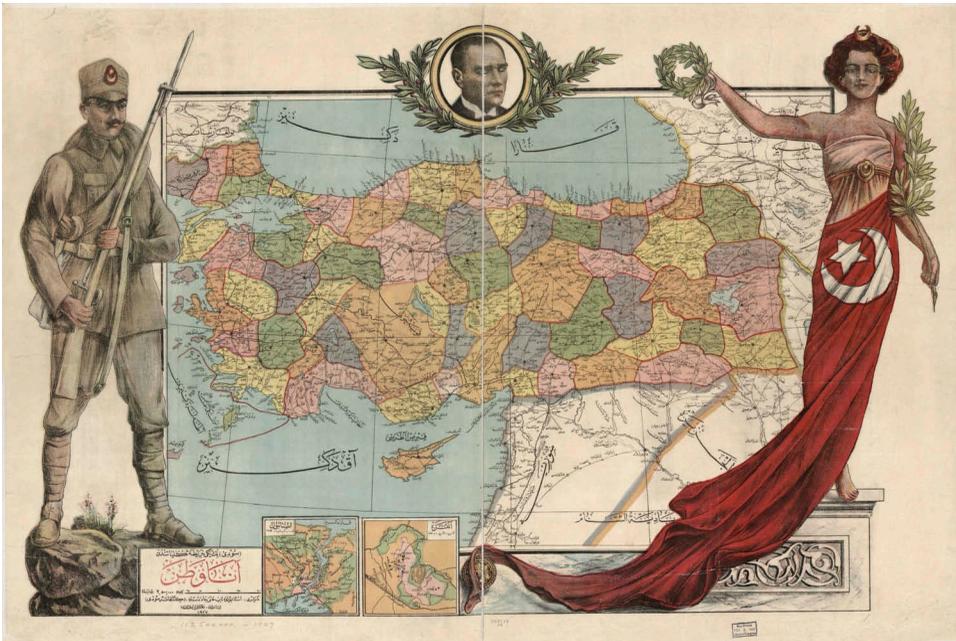


Figure 6. The other side of the Megali Idea. *Map of the Turkish Republic* (1927), by Kitaphane-yi Sûdî. Source: Library of Congress: <http://www.loc.gov/item/2010593205/>

blatantly colouring it as part of Greater Greece. Instead, the territorial claim is surreptitiously made by detaching Cyprus from its Anatolian context and placing it to the left of the Balkan peninsula: safely within the space of the Greek state.

The counterpart to the previous map is a Turkish map by Kitaphane-yi Sûdî dating from 1927 (see Figure 6). A fascinating aspect of this map is that it shows both how closely Turkish nationalism came to mirror Greek nationalism and in which important aspects it differed. Its centre top depicts Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, whose military and political leadership to defend and found the modern Turkish state is lauded by a wreath of laurels surrounding him. This emblem is granted to him by the Turkish nation which, mirroring the Greek map, is embodied by a woman. She is crowned with the golden crescent of Islam and stands on a pedestal; her body draped in an Ottoman/Turkish flag stamped with the star and crescent, symbols reminiscent of the Ottomans' Byzantine heritage—curiously, the same heritage claimed by Hellenic irredentists (Ridgeway 1908). This Turkish map prominently portrays an explicit military component which the Greek map only indirectly suggests through the colouring of the lands Greece ambitioned to conquer. The Turkish territory is chaperoned by a soldier holding his rifle ready across his chest (perhaps a nod to the central role played by the army in fending off the Greek invaders that allowed Atatürk to rally the Turkish nation around his leadership). The cartopolitical claim upon Cyprus

is unambiguous: the island is represented as an integral part of the Turkish territory even though the Ottomans had definitely relinquished Cyprus over to the British in 1922, 5 years before this map was drawn.

A significant aspect shared by the Greek and Turkish maps alike is that they reproduce the mutually constitutive struggle between the Greek and Turkish nation states at the beginning of the twentieth century (Özkırımli and Sofos 2008). The year of the Greek map's production, 1919, represents the peak of Greece's enthusiasm for the Megali Idea. It was in this year that, spurred by the nationalist hubris that followed World War I, modern Greece carried out its most "inopportune, ill-advised, and suicidal" expansionist attempt. Under the excuse of protecting local Greek minorities in Anatolia, the pan-Hellenist government of prime minister Eleftherios Venizelos—one of Crete's enosis main architects—found support among the vanquishing powers of World War I to invade the Anatolian town of Smyrna (now called Izmir). However, rather than expanding the Greek nation's borders, the incursion of the Greek army in Smyrna "fanned to flames the smouldering fires of Turkish nationalism and gave Mustafa Kemal his chance" to rally the Turkish army behind his command (Penn 1938; Buzanski 1963; Finefrock 1980, 48–49; Helmreich 1974, 44; Millas 1991, 22). In a historical paradox, modern Turkey came to find its foundational drama in Greek post-colonial imperialism—one century after the Greeks had found theirs in their struggle against the predecessor of the Turkish state, i.e., the Ottoman Empire. Ironically for Greek imperialists, the disastrous attempt to resurrect a glorious Byzantine past through force backfired prodigiously. The mutually agreed Greek-Turkish population exchange that followed the Greek invasion of Smyrna amounted to a reciprocal ethnic cleansing that rooted out three millennia of continuous Hellenic existence in Asia Minor (Petropoulos 1976, 135).

The tragic fate of Greek irredentism is crucial to understand the Cypriot conflict. The adversities of the 400,000 Turks that were expelled from Greece as well as the plight of the 1,100,000 Greeks that were forced out of Turkey during the population exchange of 1923 remain latent memories for Greeks and Turks alike, both in the mainland and in Cyprus. Their recollections of mutual animosity produced a resounding echo in 1974, when Cyprus' own Greek and Turkish populations underwent a similar odyssey and both the Greek and Turkish states saw a renewed threat posed by their foundational foe. The slow identification with the national identity of either Turkey or Greece that Cypriots had been cultivating since the nineteenth century made them part of the memories of Smyrna, a conflict they had never experienced yet an international trauma that their ethnic clashes repeatedly evoked.

The reciprocal Greek/Turkish ethnic cleansing that followed the disaster of Smyrna reverberated beyond the borders of Greece and Turkey: it foreshadowed the collapse of one of the most influential multinational European

empires and its dissipation from a territory it had controlled for over four centuries. Today, the Ottomans' geopolitical losses in the Balkans still give credit to the anachronistic cartopolitical fantasy that the Bosphorus constitutes a civilizational gap separating East from West, Turkey from Europe and Islam from Christianity. And yet, much of the current instability in the Middle East can be interpreted as a prolonged aftermath of the Ottoman Empire's collapse, which has been characterized by relentless European and American attempts to seize what the Ottomans lost (Fromkin 2009). In what follows we will further zoom into the process that led to the war in 1974, a conflict that has stood fossilized in the Green Line that still stands today.

Decolonisation and Further Glocalisation of the Conflict

After World War II, the cause of self-determination movements was propelled by the wave of anti-imperialism that washed away whatever was left of colonial legitimacy. Encouraged by this international atmosphere, in 1950 the Cypriot Orthodox Church organised a referendum on enosis in which 95% of Greek Cypriot voters favoured union with Greece (Emilianides 2014, 11–13). This result alarmed Turkish Cypriots who, suspecting the revival of enosis, lobbied Turkey to officially state that, should Cyprus head towards independence, Turkey would safeguard Turkish Cypriot interests by partaking in any such settlement (Stefanidis 1999, 211).

Turkish Cypriots' apprehension was not unfounded. The politico-cartographic imagination that bound Greek and Greek Cypriot nationalists was surreptitiously resuscitated in 1953, when their political and military elites secretly gathered in Athens to set up an underground Liberation Committee tasked with enosis. The Greek Cypriots' ethnarch, the archbishop Makarios III, was designated as the movement's political leader (Emilianides 2014, 20), and Georgios Grivas, a retired Greek colonel, became his military counterpart (French 2015, 46).

Once a diplomatic solution to the Cypriot conflict was summarily discarded by the UK and the UN (United Nations 1954, 11; Xydis 1968; Newson 2001, 84). Georgios Grivas, "a fanatical supporter of Enosis" funded and organised by the Greek government and Makarios (French 2015, 88–89; Dimitrakis 2008, 386) disembarked in Cyprus at the end of 1954 to organise an armed rebel group: the National Organisation of Cypriot Fighters (EOKA) (Dimitrakis 2008, 377). While EOKA yearned to emancipate a nation, it envisioned no Cypriot nation. Rather, its glorification of Hellenism envisioned a Greek Cyprus that would join Greece and thus conjured the Greek irredentism that seemed to have perished at Smyrna more than two decades earlier.

A fervent Hellenist and former Nazi collaborator (Katsourides 2013, 570; Markides 1977, 19; Von Kogelfranz 1985), Grivas modelled EOKA after the fashion of right-wing ultranationalist parties and made the sanctity of EOKA's mission justification enough to trample upon whomever might get in its way (Gunther and Diamond 2003, 181). In a replication of the historical irony that befell Greek nationalism in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Greek Cypriot struggle for independence became an anti-imperialist yet colonising enterprise. While EOKA rebelled against British rule, it simultaneously aimed at imposing enosis upon the Turkish Cypriot population (Walker 1984; Pollis 1996, 77; Loizides 2007, 176; Dimitrakis 2008, 377–378). Faced with this prospect, Turkish Cypriots became ever more engulfed in the fear that they would undergo the same fate as Cretan Turks—i.e., deportation—should Cyprus become part of a Greek nation that would make no place for them (Bolukbasi 1993, 507).

The barrier between Greek and Turkish Cypriots grew taller when EOKA started targeting Turkish Cypriots. As EOKA infiltrated the island's security personnel, Greek Cypriots' collusion with the organisation—out of either sympathy for EOKA or fear of its ruthlessness—turned them into unreliable elements of colonial law enforcement (Grivas 1964, 149). To solve the Greek Cypriot infiltration, the British colonial government “started hiring Turkish constables en masse” and relying more heavily on Turkish Cypriots for the running of the island's everyday colonial administration (Dimitrakis 2008, 92). This drove a wedge between Greek Cypriots who fought for independence and Turkish Cypriots who supported the colonial government. More divisively still: in order to counterbalance Greek Cypriots' growing power, the British started to promote a *divide-et-impera* strategy that consisted in stressing the Muslim and Turkish identities of Turkish Cypriots in the hope that their preoccupation with enosis would build a bulwark against EOKA's liberation struggle.

In response to the incorporation of larger numbers of Turkish Cypriots into the colonial ranks, EOKA started to provoke clashes with Turkish Cypriots (Novo 2012, 416). As a result, the tension between Turkish and Greek Cypriots acquired an ever more violent dimension. Although Turkish and Greek Cypriots could have fought together against British rule for their own Cypriot nation, they fought one another instead. After decades of imagining themselves as part of nations beyond their borders, the intimate everyday familiarity of living together in the same island turned out to be less powerful than the imagination of belonging to distant nation states beyond their coasts.

Confronted with the growing chaos on the island and burdened with its own imperial decline after the Suez crisis of 1956, the British Empire finally accepted to let go of Cyprus (Wesseling 1996; Sutton 2017, 1–14). The imminent dissolution of British rule from Cyprus unsettled sentiments

among Turkish Cypriots and Anatolian Turks alike. Turkey feared that the UK's disposition to grant Cyprus self-determination would open the path for enosis, resurrect the Megali Idea and expose Turkish Cypriots to the brutality of another Smyrna (Bahçeli and Rizopoulos 1996/1997, 27). Protecting Turkish Cypriots in the 1960s and 1970s acquired the same urgency as defending Turks in Smyrna had in 1919. Meanwhile, Turkish Cypriots responded to the threat of enosis with the ambition of *taksim* (partition)—a project that received the official backing of Turkey in 1956 (Loizides 2007, 175; Attalides 1977; Bahçeli 1972, 60)—and EOKA's escalating violence with the creation of the Turkish Resistance Organisation (TMT), a counter paramilitary group founded in 1957 (French 2015, 258–259).

In 1958, violence between Greek and Turkish Cypriots broke out in earnest and by 1959 Greece, Turkey and Britain hurried to negotiate Cyprus independence in what became known as the London–Zürich Agreements. In 1960, diplomats of these three countries drafted a constitution for Cyprus that de facto divided its people in two communities on the basis of “ethnic origin”, while safeguarding its sovereignty by granting themselves a right to unilateral intervention as guarantor powers. These paternalistic provisions not only perpetuated the colonial division between Greek and Turkish Cypriots but they brought the rivalry between Greece and Turkey closer to an armed conflict by granting them a legal entitlement to intervene in the island's affairs (Adams 1966, 475–476). Paradoxically, Cypriot independence planted the seed of renewed imperial subjugation by giving the “motherlands”—which were supposed to safeguard Cyprus' independence—the very justification to undermine it.

To make it worse, the Cypriot constitution satisfied neither of the island's communities. In the eyes of Greek Cypriots, it granted disproportionate rights to a minority that represented 18% of the island (Theophanous 2004, 26); while Turkish Cypriots thought that the rights of which it deprived them turned them into de facto second-class citizens. In any case, the London–Zürich agreements and the constitution of the newly independent Cypriot state formalized the cartopolitical imagination of separateness that had been promoted by British rule and which had driven Greek and Turkish Cypriots apart, thus not only perpetuating the island's ethnic division but making it part of a broader Greco-Turkish geopolitical antagonism.

The Imperial Logic of the US

Making Greece and Turkey guarantor powers of a Cypriot polity divided along Greek and Turkish ethnic lines did not make Cyprus more stable but precisely the opposite. It gave Greece and Turkey an excuse to keep meddling in the internal affairs of an island whose communities sought their active

support to advance their geopolitical goals of hegemony or partition. Moreover, the Cypriot constitution formalized an international dispute between countries that considered each other the most significant national rivals in a history of postcolonial antagonism. Pulled to the island by communities who saw them as champions of their geopolitical objectives—i.e., either enosis or taksim—Cyprus became a heterotopic battlefield for Greece and Turkey to revive chronotopes of old rivalries and a chance to settle past grievances: an assemblage of antagonist memories and perceptions that arguably still constitutes the most solid foundation of the Green Line dividing Cyprus today.

In 1963, 3 years after independence, a combination of Greek hardliners and members of the Greek Cypriot leadership secretly devised the infamous Akritas Plan, which envisaged that a provocation by Turkish Cypriots would provide Greek Cypriots with the best excuse to subdue them into accepting enosis (Boyd 1966, 4; Sertoglu and Ozturk 2003, 58; Constandinos 2011, 18–19).⁹ In order to trigger this plan, Makarios made a 13-point proposal to Turkish Cypriots on the assumption that they would reject it and this would give his government domestic and international legitimacy to “[reduce] Turkish Cypriots to minority status by force if necessary and [achieve] union with Greece at a later stage” (Faustmann 2004, 154–159). Inter-ethnic warfare ensued across the island (Adams 1966, 475), and Turkish Cypriots retreated into ethnically Turkish enclaves acting on Ankara’s advice (King and Ladbury 1982, 3). As the rumour of war between Greece and Turkey grew—two strategic NATO allies whose confrontation the US deemed “literally unthinkable”—their dispute over Cyprus became Washington’s concern (Johnson and Inonu 1966, 391). The US feared that, should Cyprus consummate enosis, Greece’s flirtation with the Soviet Union or its incapability to defend Cyprus from Soviet influence would put a strategic Mediterranean island at the brink of communism and thus turn it into a geopolitical liability for Turkey, the US and NATO (Dimitras 1985; Stefanidis 1999, 210). That fear was bolstered by a powerful cartopolitical allegory in the Turkish military that survives until today and which imagines Cyprus as a dagger threatening Turkey’s “soft belly” with the sharp blade of its pointy Karpass peninsula (Borowiec 2000, 114).

Although Makarios pursued enosis as leader of EOKA in the 1950s, the convulsions of the 1960s persuaded him that union with Greece had become unfeasible and he finally renounced enosis in 1968. As a consequence, he became a traitor in the eyes of Greek and Greek Cypriot irredentists who had supported him in previous years. Under the auspices of the Greek junta that had seized power in 1967 and revived the Hellenic irredentist goal of enosis (Pedaliu 2011), Georgios Grivas, Makarios’ former ally, returned to the island in 1971 as his enemy. He founded EOKA B—“the most extreme right-wing organisation Cyprus has ever seen”—to help Greece’s “extreme right-

nationalist military dictator” overthrow Makarios (Katsourides 2013, 571; Loizos 1988, 640).

With the help of EOKA B, Greece invaded the island in 1974 and, as foreseen, this move triggered Turkey’s invasion. The role of the US cannot be considered a mere footnote in this process. In the cartopolitical worries of the US foreign policy establishment, Makarios’ communist inclinations risked turning Cyprus into a “Mediterranean Cuba” that the Soviets could exploit to threaten American interests like they had done in the Caribbean during the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 (Kennan 1947, 575; Hitchens 1997; Constandinos 2011, 21–24). Since the US State Department had long favoured a partition of Cyprus to satisfy both Greece and Turkey with a piece of the island, some commentators have speculated that this is why Henry Kissinger, then the US Secretary of State, let Ioannides, the Greek dictator, go ahead with the coup in 1974—a hypothesis that seems supported by confidential documents from the US State Department published by WikiLeaks. Fully aware that Turkey would tolerate neither a Greek-led putsch nor enosis, Kissinger seems to have misled the Greek dictator Ioannides when he enquired about the US position regarding a possible Greek intervention in Cyprus. Instead of his explicit support, Kissinger seems to have given Ioannides an ambiguous silence only to give Turkey green light to invade Cyprus immediately after the Greek-led putsch had taken place (Hitchens 1997, 146; 2001, 77–89; US Department of State 1974). And so it seems that for a big empire like the US, the little island of Cyprus in the middle of the Mediterranean was a mere bargaining chip in a much larger play on the world map, which is exactly the kind of imperial logic that continued to haunt Cyprus after 1974.

The Green Line After 1974

In the aftermath of the Greek and Turkish invasions of 1974, “an artificial line cut through the island like a cheese-wire” (Grundy-Warr 1994, 79). Tourism, the island’s main industry, was severely curtailed and cooperation between the Greek and Turkish communities was brutally severed by the Green Line (Dikomitis 2005, 7–12; Webster and Timothy 2006, 168). In 1975, an independent Turkish Federated State of Cyprus was established and in 1983 the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) declared its independence—to this day recognized only by Turkey (Nugent 1997, 55–56). Since the partition of Cyprus, each side started to demonize the other through governmental propaganda (Spyrou 2002; Zembylas and Karahasan 2006). The nationalist indoctrination that has taken place in both Turkish and Greek Cyprus since 1974 is, quite literally, a “textbook” case of ethno-nationalist cartopolitics (Papadakis 2008, 135). The textbooks used by Turkish Cypriots have told the story of Cyprus as an extension of Turkish

history while depicting the Ottoman rule as a time of prosperity and freedom that was disturbed by the ungrateful Greek Cypriots' struggle for enosis and then made right by the "Happy Peace Operation" carried out by the "Heroic Turkish Army" in 1974 (Papadakis 2008, 136). For their part, Greek Cypriot schoolbooks have lumped together Turkish Cypriots with Turks not only as the aggressors of 1974 but also as the ones responsible for the interethnic violence of the 1960s. Since 1974, subsequent generations of Greek and Turkish Cypriots have been socialized by an educational system that already at an early age instils a cartopolitical grievance: to remember their lost homes in the other side, thus inheriting the affront of murder and occupation as well as a politics of vengeance against the other Cypriots (Christou 2006, 286). One of the most striking illustrations of this self-victimizing approach is the popular cartographic politicization of the conflict that has been consistently imprinted on Greek Cypriot history books since 1974: the "bleeding island" (see [Figure 7](#)).

The long-standing cartopolitical conditioning that has taken root in Greek Cyprus—epitomized by its bloody iconography—can be discerned in the student maps produced a few years ago for an artistic competition organized by the Cypriot Embassy in Greece in collaboration with the Greek Ministry of Education. The title of the competition, "Cyprus 40 years. I don't forget. I struggle. I create", encapsulates the Greek Cypriot exclusionary ethno-nationalism: an unforgettable grievance and a heroic endurance to remember in a commendably peaceful manner. On this map (see [Figure 8](#))—which is but one among many showing a similar cartopolitical composition—a Greek student has reproduced the most emblematic cartopolitical account of the conflict made by the Greek Cypriot side. Cyprus stands in the middle of a sea inscribed with legends speaking of the persistence of the imperial ethno-nationalist bond linking Greece and Cyprus: "We will never forget this betrayal. Black pages were written with this story. As time keeps passing by the memory keeps growing stronger. We tell you loudly: CYPRUS YOU ARE NOT ALONE". In this cartopolitical rendition of the Cypriot conflict, Northern Cyprus, occupied by Turkey since 1974, is bleeding into the Greek Cypriot side: an allegory of the Greek Cypriot blood spilled during the Turkish intervention of 1974 and a very graphic reminder of the Turkish North's violence towards the Greek South. The tenacity of this geopolitical image is encoded in the movement inherent to the visual motif of dripping blood as well as in a legend right below it: "I don't forget".

EU's Imperial Conflict Resolution

Recently, yet another imperial power made its entrance into the Cypriot stage. In spite of Cyprus' unresolved division, in 1990 the European Community (EC) accepted the Greek Cypriot application for membership



Figure 7. Examples of Greek Cypriot history books with a cover based on the “bleeding island” theme. From left to right and top to bottom: Cyprus is not. I am, by Georgiades Stavros; Cyprus, by Dimitris T. Anallis (2000); We were once shooters, by Nikolaos Skarlatos (2000); The Cypriot Tragedy, by Panayiotis Nastos (2017). Source: <http://www.skroutz.gr/books/c.1687.kypros-istoria.html>

in representation of the whole island. Aware of the exclusion of the TRNC that this implied, the EC originally conditioned Cypriot membership to the island’s reunification. However, in 1995, Greece threatened to veto the entire EU’s eastern enlargement should such condition be imposed on the Greek Cypriot government. Pressured by Greece’s blackmail (Bryant 2003; Boedeltje, Kramsch and van Houtum 2007, 132; Bourne 2003, 394), the EU

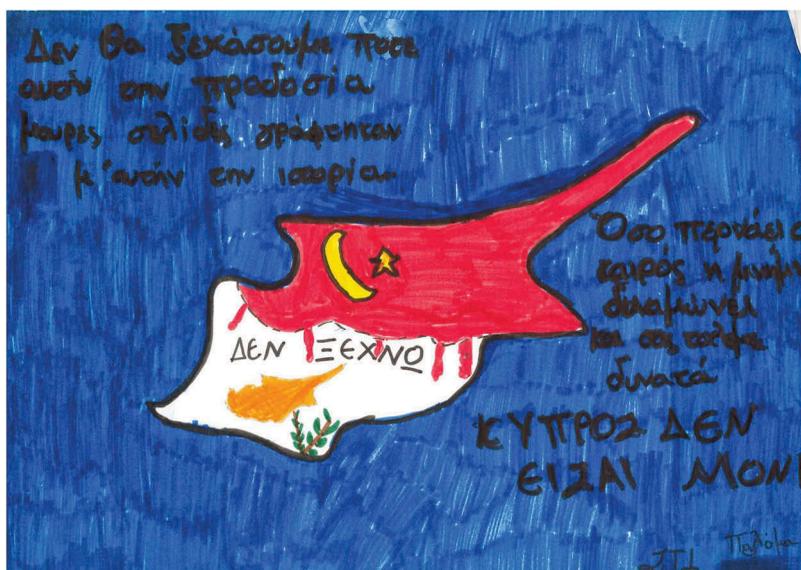


Figure 8. A bloody cartopolitical imagination. Source: <http://taksh mou.blogspot.nl/2015/02/1974-2014-40.html>

dropped the condition and accepted the Greek Cypriot membership application. Since the TRNC and Turkey had been the most adamant opponents of reunification since 1974 anyway (Çarkoğlu and Sözen 2004, 130), the EU tried to lure Turkish Cypriots into a peace settlement with the prospect of prosperity that has characterized much of the EU’s power of attraction during its successive enlargements (Christou 2002; Sahin 2011, 586). This coincided with the arrival to power of the Justice and Development Party (JDP) in Turkey which, led by prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, saw the partition of Cyprus as a major hurdle in the way to its craved EU membership and speedily repudiated a decades-long stance of obstruction regarding Cyprus’ reunification and replaced it for a pro-EU course instead.

With the support of the EU and Turkey, the UN took over the peace process and aimed at securing the island’s reunification before it was granted EU membership. Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary-General at the time, orchestrated what became known as “the Annan Plan”, which provided a blueprint for the reunification of Cyprus and was put to a referendum right before Cyprus accession to the EU (Thompson, Karayanni and Vassiliadou 2004, 283). The result of this concerted action to change the minds of Turkish Cypriots paid off and, in 2004, 65% of them voted for reunification. Although the peace process seemed to have gained an unstoppable momentum, Tassos Papadopoulos, the Greek Cypriot leader, took the EU and UN by surprise when, a couple of days ahead of the referendum, he advised Greek Cypriots against supporting the Annan Plan—which they opposed by an overwhelming 75%. This abrupt change of mind came unexpectedly to the EU and the

UN, who saw the Greek Cypriot last-minute turnaround as a betrayal of the entire peace process (Spiteri 2004).

And yet, when one reads about how the Annan Plan was negotiated and what it stipulated, it is hard to understand how its failure could have come as a surprise to either the EU or the UN (Boedeltje, Kramsch and van Houtum 2007, 130–135). The plan proposed concessions long regarded with suspicion by many Greek Cypriots and its unwieldy 9000 pages were inexplicably drafted mainly by Annan and his foreign consultants without taking into account Cypriot leaders and their communities (Yilmaz 2005). This made Greek Cypriots deeply uneasy. Considering the depth to which the Cypriot conflict had already been studied by 2004, it is staggering that neither the UN nor the EU suspected that Greek Cypriots would find the procedure, content and haste of the Annan Plan unacceptable (Kyriakides 2004).

Tellingly, the EU and the UN expressed outrage after the referendum (Wright 2004). They blamed the fiasco on what EU officials characterised as the deceitfulness of Greek Cypriots instead of taking a hard look at their own ineptitude. Their impatience to push a plan that had been so scantily negotiated with the local population betrayed a patronizing imperial attitude: the expectation that Greek Cypriots would be satisfied with whatever the EU and the UN thought was best for them. This colonial infantilization of Cypriots has been the recurrent cartopolitical attitude towards Cypriots since the times of the British occupation and it goes to the core of the failed attempts brokered by imperial meddlers to solve the island's inter-communal conflict, from the London–Zürich agreements to the referendum of 2004.

The biggest misjudgement should perhaps be attributed to the EU, who held all the cards in the negotiation of Cyprus EU accession and thus in its reunification. By granting membership to the Greek Cypriot side without conditioning it to a settlement with the Turkish Cypriot northern half, the EU froze both the Cypriot conflict and, indirectly, also Turkey's EU membership (Tocci 2007, 2–3). Although the EU Council and Turkey agreed to start accession negotiations even after the controversial incorporation of a divided Cyprus to the EU,¹⁰ by the time the negotiations were set to begin, Turkey's incentive to extend the Ankara Agreements—the customs and trade agreements between the EU and Turkey—to Cyprus had been offset by a German change of heart towards Turkey. The election of Angela Merkel to the German chancellorship in September 2005 represented an inflection point in both the EU's mood towards Turkey's accession and, consequently, also in Turkey's negotiation strategy regarding EU membership (Ugur 2010, 981). Already as a candidate in 2004, Merkel had proposed to downscale the EU's offer to Turkey: from the long-standing prospect of membership to a mere “privileged partnership” (Deutsche Welle 2004). An unsolvable Cypriot conflict turned into a conveniently unworkable hurdle for an EU that was no longer interested in offering Turkey a prospect of EU membership.

The EU's insistence on Turkey to extend the Ankara Agreements to Cyprus—notwithstanding the unresolved partition of the island that the EU itself had aggravated—became a handsome excuse to justify the growing opposition to Turkish membership across the EU (Ugur 2010, 979). The EU's hostility towards Turkey (particularly from France, Germany, Greece, Cyprus and Austria) was further aggravated by the EU Commission's recommendation to block the opening of eight crucial chapters in the accession negotiations with Turkey in 2006 (Schimmelfennig 2009, 419), and later by the election of Nicolas Sarkozy to the French presidency in 2007 (Idiz 2010). The foreseeable refusal of Turkey to extend the Ankara Agreements to a divided Cyprus gave the EU a dignified justification to replace Turkey's prospect of EU membership for a privileged partnership—in open contravention to the EU's long-standing international commitment to eventually admit Turkey as a Member State. By insisting on Turkey to extend the Ankara Agreements to Cyprus, the EU was demanding Turkey to fulfil its commitments to the EU even as the EU was increasingly suggesting that it would honour its commitments towards neither Turkish Cypriots nor Turkey. What can hardly be described as anything other than the EU's poorly concealed bad faith towards Turkey's accession left a void in what had been both one of Erdoğan's most successful electoral promises and Turkey's biggest geopolitical ambition since 1963—when the Ankara Agreement between the European Economic Community and Turkey was signed. In the absence of a prospect for EU membership, Erdoğan saw an electoral opportunity to dramatically change the geopolitical strategy of Turkey and ever since he has drifted to an increasingly Islamist-based authoritarianism to cement his base and power (Özbudun 2014).

Seen from the broader perspective of the Cypriot conflict, the EU's admission of a divided Cyprus and its partiality towards the Greek Cypriot government amounted to an oblivious backing of Hellenist irredentism: Cyprus membership to the EU with the exception of its Turkish north constituted an enosis of sorts. EU numismatics tell this story in small but telling visual allegories. On the 1 and 2 euro coins that were minted after the accession of Cyprus to the EU (Bueno-Lacy 2011, 57–58), the EU has emulated the geographical prestidigitation that was contrived by the cartopolitics of Hellenist irredentism (see Figure 9 and compare it to Figure 4). Cyprus has been moved away from Anatolia and placed near Greece as a statement of the island's "proper" civilisational belonging (Hymans 2004; Kaelberer 2004; Raento et al. 2004). The European Commission, the self-acclaimed "soft empire", moved the position of the island "hundreds of miles West" and erased Turkey from the map (Walters 2002). Times and forms may have changed, but the EU's approach to the Cypriot conflict shows that the blunt imperialist high-handedness that has fuelled it still exerts a powerful grip on the island.



Figure 9. Snatching Cyprus away from Anatolia. Source: Bank of Lithuania, https://www.lb.lt/n22978/2_eur_reversas.jpg

Today we see once again the imperial cartopolitical puppeteering of Cyprus; this time with the EU and Turkey pulling the most powerful strings. While the EU may have made an unsuspecting alliance with Hellenist irredentism by granting Greek Cypriots EU membership without requiring reunification, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Turkey's prime minister, has been using Turkish Cyprus to his advantage. Having found in religious authoritarianism an abundant source of political support (Kaja 2014), Erdoğan has been extending the Islamisation of Turkish society into Northern Cyprus. Today, Koran lessons are being forced upon school pupils in Turkish Cyprus while massive mosques like the Hala Sultan are being erected: the colonial imposition of a politico-spatial piousness that stands in stark contrast with otherwise remarkably secular Turkish Cypriots (Smith 2015, 2018; Yeşilada 2009). Ultimately, more than a century after British colonizers split Cypriots into Greek and Turkish national identities, their puppeteering by centres of power beyond their country's boundaries endures.

Conclusion

In this article, we have studied the persistence of the Cypriot Green Line through an analysis of the geographical imaginations that have framed the conflict between Greek and Turkish Cypriots since the end of the nineteenth century. Our analysis shows that geopolitical (mis)representations of history and heritage, culture and identity, geography and borders construct cartographically organized notions of territory (i.e., people as well as “their” space and culture) and that these notions can have the most dramatic political impact (Elden 2014). Perceptions of geographical closeness and distance organized within a material or imaginary cartographical framework create b/orders and thereby others. These notions have the power to (re)shape the interaction among large population groups. Cultural anxiety, apprehension about migrants and war are just some of the geopolitical phenomena steered by cartopolitical representations which may have no other basis than the representation that gives them credence (Baudrillard 1981). Yet, regardless how unstable or unfounded these ideas might be, they become real once they are accepted to be real by large numbers of people—in particular by political organizations like states that wield the power to turn these representations into a material reality (Branch 2014; Bueno-Lacy and van Houtum 2015).

In the case of Cyprus, a varied collection of centres of imperial power—from the British Empire to Greece, Turkey, the US, the Soviet Union, the EU and the UN—have modelled places and heritages in Cyprus after geographies and legacies that never existed as they were imagined by those who promoted them. They have created imperial perceptions of *distant closeness*—what was in fact far and unrelated, such as the colonial motherland, is constructed as close and familiar—and *adjacent remoteness*—what was historically close and familiar, such as the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot neighbours, is constructed as distant and alien. Thus, rather than a fracture dug by ancient ethnic incompatibility between Greek and Turkish Cypriots, the Cypriot Green Line should be seen not only as a UN buffer zone or as a territorial division but mainly as a set of borders built over the past two centuries by discursive bricks of global and local provenance. The divisive narratives, practices and representations have entrenched a perception of the Cypriot Self that can be either Turkish or Greek, but never both.

Spanning Ottoman and British empires to the modern states of Greece and Turkey and to international and supranational organisations like the UN and the EU, these imperial meddlers have imported, defined and reinforced the meaning of Turkish and Greek ethnicities in Cyprus. Moulded by the patient hands of ceaseless imperial intrusions, Cypriots have largely internalized otherwise external notions of their own identity and turned them into the chief dimensions of their geopolitical calculations. Thus, rather than an

exotic local play, Cypriot politics and ethnopolitical identities should be regarded as a much larger, global geopolitical drama. The scenario may be Cypriot but neither all the characters nor the playwright are native to the island—many of the puppeteers remain concealed behind the dark curtains of surreptitious international politics and the neglect of historical accounts suffering from methodological nationalism (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002). Ultimately, a strict local framing of the Cypriot conflict should be considered misleading—i.e., a cartopolitical *idée fixe*, a territorial entrapment (Agnew 1994). The Cypriot buffer zone made of dusty sandbags and abandoned houses dating from 1974 is in fact the result of imperial cartopolitical overstretch. The Green Line dividing the island of Cyprus may be real, but so are its international dimensions and unscrupulous imperial puppeteers. The Green Line is not a local division between two essentially and naturally antagonistic parties, a closer scrutiny makes clear that the line is made of a glocal web of imperial strings.

Notes

1. Convivencia (a word for “living together” in Spanish) is a historiographical term used to refer to the peaceful coexistence among Jews, Muslims and Christians during the Moorish rule of the Iberian peninsula (Al-Andalus), from its conquest by the Umayyad caliphate in 711 to the Reconquista by the Castillian Catholic kings in 1492.
2. European anti-Semitism has been characterized by an aversion to Jews as well as to a loose group of people who have been (derogatorily, more often than not) lumped together as “Muhammadans”, “Turks”, “Ottomans” or “Moors” without much regard for the ethnic accuracy of these misnomers.
3. According to Hobsbawm, nationalism is the principle that holds that the political and national unit should be congruent. This principle implies a duty that individuals of the same nation owe to one another. In turn, this duty overrides all other public obligations and, in case of war, all public obligations of whatever kind. On the basis of this definition, Cyprus cannot be a congruent political unit because it is not a congruent national unit. Although nationalism has earned a deserved disrepute on the pages of twentieth century history, in the nineteenth century it was considered a revolutionary idea capable of bringing people together by smoothening out their differences.
4. Empires and nation states operate according to completely different operatives and follow entirely different action logics. Although imperialism is hard to define, expansionism as well as the establishment and ruling of colonies seem to be their defining characteristics—especially in comparison to nation states.
5. Cartopolitics is a term that has been coined recently in the fields of critical geopolitics and critical border studies. We use this concept’s definition as a sort of “drawing-table politics”.
6. Such as La Hispanidad or La Francophonie, which, respectively, join Spain and France with their former colonies.
7. Although “imperial nationalism” might sound as a *contradictio in terminis*, it “is not as contradictory as it sounds”, for not only “many early modern states—those which later evolved into nation states—saw themselves as empires” but “most nation-states, or

what became nation-states, are, like most empires, the result of conquest and colonization”.

8. To be sure, we do not intend to argue claim that the following maps we present influenced the whole colonisation and resulting ethnic antagonism between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. Instead, we argue that these maps are the crystallization of the larger cartopolitical discourses that have shaped the ethnic politics of the island in the early twentieth century and still exert an impact. Although there is always the possibility of reading too much into iconography—its eternal pitfall as an essentially interpretive endeavour—our iconological analysis can be evaluated by the extent to which it splices into the political, cultural, social, historical context in which it was made.
9. Although there is no proof that Makarios was involved in such a scheme, in 1963, he proposed a 13-point constitutional reform that would have drastically curtailed the prerogatives enjoyed by Turkish Cypriots. After the Turkish Cypriot leadership refused to accept Makarios’ amendments, Greek Cypriot EOKA members started killing Turkish Cypriots in Nicosia.
10. Cyprus became an EU Member State on the 1st May of 2004. Afterwards, in December 2004, “the European Council decided that Turkey sufficiently fulfil[ed] the criteria to open accession negotiations”. See: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/enlargement/turkey/>.

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