

Guiding metaphors of nationalism: the Cyprus issue and the construction of Turkish national identity in online discussions



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ABSTRACT This article is a study of three major metaphors organizing nationalistic discourse about Cyprus in two online forums for Turkish university students. The analysis suggests that discussants symbolically warranted their constructions of the future of Cyprus and Turkish Cypriots with metaphors of blood and heroism that emphasized their personal and collective memory of sacrifice. Sports metaphors were used predominantly to convey a sense of the strategic importance of Cyprus. In addition, discussants employed gender and sexual metaphors to structure the tension between nationalist feelings associated with motherland Turkey as a pure, virgin female, and the geopolitical demands of the nation-state, portrayed as a father faced with uneasy choices.

KEY WORDS: *archetypal metaphors, blood, Cyprus, Greece, nationalism, Turkey*

1. Turkish nationalism and the Cypriot problem

Like most pieces of land with contested ownership, Cyprus has many national histories as a function of who tells the story. Just as Greek and Turkish Cypriots, as well as Greece and Turkey, interpret the history of Cyprus differently, so too their perspectives differ on the distribution of the blame for the ongoing conflict between North and South Cyprus and the adequate ways to solve their political disagreements (An, 2002; Dodd, 1999a; Richmond, 1999; Sonyel, 1999; Stavrinides, 1999). Leaders' frequent references to 'a lasting and just solution' rarely accommodate any understanding of what constitutes a fair outcome according to the other side (Stavrinides, 1999). On the one hand, the Turkish side, which has had relatively less control over the operation of the state, has been concerned with possible threats to self-determination rights of the minorities in case of a united Cyprus with two semi-autonomous units

of administration (Ertekun, 1999; Richmond, 1999). On the other hand, the Greek side has been concerned that the idea of creating two fully autonomous states may jeopardize the territorial integrity of the island (Richmond, 1999). The overwhelmingly negative Greek Cypriot referendum against uniting with the Turkish Cypriots of the North and the subsequent accession of only the Greek part of the island have only set additional hurdles to an already vexingly slow process of reconciliation.

Although the extent to which mainland Greece and Turkey identify themselves with the Greek and Turkish Cypriots' position respectively is a matter for discussion (An, 2002; Bryant, 2002; Dodd, 1999a, 1999b; Ertekun, 1999; Mavratsas, 1997; Papadakis, 1998; Stavrinides, 1999; Stefanidis, 1999), there is no question that Cyprus is a contentious issue prone to focusing nationalistic discourses in both countries.¹ Recent political developments have turned Cyprus into an even more powerful catalyst for nationalistic discourse in mainland Turkey: the increasingly vocal international calls for a united Cyprus; the great number of Turkish Cypriots applying for a passport issued by the (Greek) Republic of Cyprus; the increased prominence of Cypriotism as a noteworthy alternative to nationalist ideals of *enosis* (union) on the Greek side and *taksim* (partition) on the Turkish side; finally, with the accession of Turkey to the EU still unclear, the accession of only the Greek part of Cyprus.

Many historical accounts of how the Cyprus issue has been incorporated into Turkish nationalist discourse represent this process as an opportunistic top-down project motivated by Cyprus's geopolitical importance. In particular, accounts emphasize the importance of the 1950s press campaign in Turkey and the subsequent involvement of the Turkish government with the cause of Turkish Cypriots. The extensive press campaign started in the 1950s when *Hurriyet*, a private newspaper, brought back to public memory the Turkish Independence War. This press campaign helped mobilize youth groups such as the Turkish National Students Federation (An, 2002; Stefanidis, 1999) and created the 'Cyprus is Turkish' party (Hitchens, 1997). While the international political situation after the Second World War initially prevented Turkey from publicly adopting an official position on Cyprus, the Turkish government was nevertheless more lenient than before with nationalistic groups such as the Council of Turkish Cypriot Associations (CTCA) and the Students Federation (Stefanidis, 1999). Rumor manipulation by both the CTCA and the Turkish press regarding a possible attack on Turkish Cypriots by Greek Cypriots in August 1955 was a clear sign of an attempt to diffuse the pro-Turkish-Cypriot movement to the general population (An, 2002). An (2002) goes even further to contend that the date of the attack disseminated by those rumors, 28 August, was by no means arbitrary, as it coincided with the anniversary of the final four-day battle against Greek armies during the Turkish Independence War in 1922. The heightened patriotism accompanying the annual ritual celebration of victory made rumors very effective in encouraging the general population to draw the connection between the nationalist cause and the Cyprus issue. Moreover, in a speech about Cyprus on 24 August, the Turkish Prime Minister reinforced the same concerns and connections that were already circulating

through the grapevine: ‘That the same methods utilized by Greeks that caused the fall of Crete have resurfaced in Cyprus reminds us of the Greek expansionism . . . [And we want to ask]: what was the reason that made you come to the vicinities of Ankara in 1922?’ (Adnan Menderes, cited in An, 2002: 59).

This brief summary of an important moment in the history of Turkish nationalistic discourse reminds us that the adoption of nationalism may follow many paths. There is no universal blueprint prescribing how nationalist ideas are invented, disseminated and consumed (Kapferer, 1988; McClintock, 1991). However, while the top-down approach offers a likely, albeit partial, account of the diffusion of the Cyprus–Turkish connection among the general populace, the approach fails to explain the symbolic and persuasive potential of the Cyprus issue in concentrating Turkish nationalistic feelings, then as well as now, among ‘elites’ and ‘masses’ alike. How is the issue of Cyprus used strategically to amplify the rhetorical potential of Turkish nationalistic discourse? This article addresses this question.

This article is a study of three major themes organizing nationalistic discourse about Cyprus in two online forums for Turkish university students studying in Turkey and abroad. Because the accession of Southern Cyprus to the EU occurred after the data collection process was complete, our data do not pertain to the students’ reaction to the event per se, but do include their anticipative discussions triggered by the great number of Turkish Cypriots – according to some estimations, over 20,000² – willing to give up their Turkish Cypriot passports and become citizens of the (Greek) Republic of Cyprus. These statistics indicate a resurgence of the Cyprus issue in a nationalistic context.

Michael Billig (1995) famously argued that the distinction between ‘patriotism’ (presumably positively valued) and ‘nationalism’ (presumably equated with extremism and negative feelings) can actually be mapped on the implied distinction of ‘us versus them’. Nationalism, argues Billig, is always the discourse of the ‘others’ (1995: 55–9). In this article, we do not make any normative assertions about the differences between patriotism and nationalism. Rather, the focus of this article is the utilization of these constructs in individuals’ attempts to communicate their connection to the community that is named as ‘the nation’.

We begin with a brief description of how the Cyprus issue became a matter of national concern for Turks and Greeks. Then, we discuss some of the major theories pertinent to nationalism and how it is communicated by elites and non-elites. Following a brief overview of the method used to collect and interpret data, we identify several metaphors that the participants in two different online forums used to communicate nationalism while discussing the Cyprus issue.

2. Brief historical background

Cyprus, situated between mainland Anatolia and Egypt, was captured by Ottoman Turks and colonized in 1571. Greek and Turkish populations (*millet*) lived without significant interethnic contact until the early 19th century, when friction emerged between the Greek Cypriot Orthodox community and the

Ottoman power during the Greek struggle for independence from the Ottoman rule. Britain annexed Cyprus after the First World War. Especially after the early 1930s, frustrated by British oppression, Greek Cypriots demanded union with Greece (*enosis*). At the same time, Turkish Cypriots demanded the separation of the island along ethnic lines (*taksim*) if the British decided to relinquish control (Dodd, 1999a).

During the Second World War, Cyprus was not a priority for Turkey, but it became so with the increasing number of calls for *enosis* on the Greek Cypriot side (Dodd, 1999a). Following heightened interethnic fights, a coup d'état by the Greek Junta, and the subsequent declaration of *enosis*, Turkey invaded Cyprus in 1974. While Greeks and Greek Cypriots construed the incident as illegal intervention and as an attempt towards ethnic cleansing, Turkey and Turkish Cypriots claimed that the intervention was an unavoidable result of the continuing victimization of Turkish minorities in Cyprus (Dodd, 1999a).

Alternative constructions of history shape the public memories of the nations involved by blocking out past events that might contradict official ideology. Greeks and Greek Cypriots, who are still convinced that the presence of the Turkish military in Cyprus was against international law, appear to have only a vague memory of the inter-communal relations in Cyprus that have triggered the intervention (Stavrinides, 1999). Similarly, the tendency of the Turkish side to see the intervention as purely defensive ignores statements by Turkish officials, such as that of Melih Eşel (Turkish Prime Minister in 1975) that 'Cyprus is the first step in Aegean', statements which might have easily reminded its neighbor of former Ottoman imperialism (quoted in Zambouras, 1999: 114).

The military intervention in 1974 did not only bring about the polarization of the two communities in Cyprus, but also crystallized the intra-community differences with respect to what it meant to be a Cypriot. The shift in the conceptualization of Cypriot identity was indicated also by the apparition of Cypriotism among Greek Cypriots as an increasingly acceptable alternative to what Stavrinides (1999) calls 'Hellenistic Nationalism' (Dodd, 1999a; Mavratsas, 1997; Sonyel, 1999). After 1950, Hellenistic nationalists emphasized their unity with Greece, created a Doctrine of United Defense Space with Greece, and voiced their dedication to *enosis* even when lobbying for an independent state abroad (Sonyel, 1999; Stavrinides, 1999). However, a temporary marginalization of Hellenistic Nationalism, as well as the rise of the Cypriotist ideology, followed the Turkish intervention in 1974.

The roots of Cypriotist ideology can be traced back to the Communist Party of Cyprus in 1920s and AKEL, which was founded as a descendent of the Communist Party in 1941. However, it was only after 1974 that the Cypriotist ideology gained prominence as a response to the authoritarian Ethniki Organosis Kypriakou Agonos (EOKA) regime that was increasingly being associated with the 1974 events (Mavratsas, 1997). The Cypriot flag became publicly displayed, replacing Greece's flag. Moreover, Greek Cypriots, despite not being successful in appealing to the Turkish Cypriots, increasingly emphasized that 'the Turks of Turkey are strangers to the Turkish Cypriots . . .

[The Turks are] of a different ethnological composition than the [Turkish Cypriots], who are our kinsmen' (Kyrikiias Chatziannos, quoted in Bryant, 2002: 33–4).

Despite lagging behind its counterpart in Southern Cyprus, a similar movement that prioritizes Cypriotism in Northern Cyprus has been gaining prominence in recent decades. This movement includes political parties such as the Republican Turkish Party (CTP) which was founded in 1970 as a response to the authoritarian, top-down governance in Northern Cyprus. Other examples of this developing movement are the Patriotic Union Movement (YBH) whose party program emphasizes the importance of joint sovereignty on a unified Cyprus and the recently founded Peace and Democracy Movement (BDH) which, according to its leader Mustafa Akıncı, responded to the increased demand on the side of the Northern Cypriots to unify the pro-solution and pro-European Union factions in North Cyprus. The results of elections held in December 2003 clearly demonstrate the increasing prominence of this movement in Northern Cyprus: the CTP and BDH secured more than 50 percent of the votes, an amount which, for the first time, was more than the share of votes secured by Turkish nationalist parties such as the ruling National Union Party (UBH) and Democrat Party (a moderate descendent of UBH).

3. Communicating nationalism

Classic works on nationalism as a modern project emphasize the emergence of nationalism as a top-down process of diffusion of national ideas enabled by momentous social developments. For Gellner (1983), for example, national culture surfaced with the advent of industrialization as a break from pre-modern 'low cultures', and was communicated through central institutions like state-controlled schools. While assigning the growth of nationalist ideas to capitalism rather than industrialism, Anderson (1991) nevertheless uses a similar model to explain that capitalism and printing technology combined to create an 'imagined community' which enabled the formation of national consciousness.

These modernist schools of thought proponents emphasize the strategic activity of central institutions in constructing national identities. For them, nationalism is grounded in the ritual 'invention of traditions' (Cannidine, 1983; Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983) which transforms everyday legends of people into national myths (Kapferer, 1988; Smith, 1999, 2000), and it is championed by elites and elite institutions (Eley and Suny, 1996) who articulate and defend the grand narratives of a nation. Once formulated, these narratives become a powerful and malleable source of identity not only among elites but also among the general population (Smith, 2000, 2001). Mosse (1990) for instance, argues that the educated elite, volunteering as soldiers, elaborated nationalist ideas and communicated them through the Myth of the Fallen Soldier in poetry and prose. Even seemingly 'objective' facts, such as placement on the world map, may serve to reinforce nationalisms. For example, while Greek Cypriot official

publications emphasize the horizontal proximity of Cyprus to Crete, some official Turkish Cypriot publications such as the *North Cyprus Almanac* depict Cyprus vertically, thereby showing its proximity to the southern shoreline of Turkey (Papadakis, 1998).

Nationalism, however, is not just an imposition 'from above' resulting in the adoption of nationalist ideas among the general population of a country through mysterious processes of persuasion and assimilation. Although it is possible to identify critical events that may trigger the ferment of nationalist feelings, nationalism is also renewed continuously at the level of everyday life in countless subtle and unremarkable habitual ways. The 'banal nationalism' (Billig, 1995) of bumper stickers, the customary 'us versus them' divisions ingrained in people's habits of speech, or the never-questioned and ever-communicated beliefs about the glory of a nation's past reproduce national identity at the level of people's discursive experience: '. . . an identity is to be found in the embodied habits of social life. Such habits include those of thinking and using language. To have a national identity is to possess ways of talking about nationhood' (Billig, 1995: 8).

Nationalism is more than talk about the nation. What is specific to nationalistic discourse and speaks to its persuasive appeal is the degree to which dialogues involving one's country always engender emotional reactions in both the speaker and the audience. One cannot talk with indifference about one's nation. Not only does the public of that discourse expect affective involvement with the topic – indicated both at a rhetorical level, as well as in the pathos of the delivery – but the speaker him/herself, whether a consummate orator or not, will find his/her discourse resonating with intimate ontological zones that define his/her identity and his/her place in the world. To what do we attribute this extraordinary impact of nationalistic discourse?

To start with, nationalism may be considered the civil religion of modernity (Anderson, 1991; Hayes, 1960; Marvin and Ingle, 1998; Mosse, 1990). As Carlton Hayes notes, '[s]ince its advent in [W]estern Europe, modern nationalism has partaken the nature of religion . . . Everywhere it has a god, who is either the patron or the personification of one's patrie, one's fatherland, one's national state' (1960: 164). In a similar vein, Anderson (1991) conjectures that nationalism has replaced religion as a system that brought meaning to fatality. Recent scholarship goes even further arguing that the symbolic structure of this modern form of religion derives its meaning, just like traditional religion, from engagement with the body. For example, Marvin and Ingle (1998) criticize Anderson for ignoring the role of face-to-face contacts, bodily communication, blood and sacrifice in the formation and communication of nationalism: 'ceremonies of nationalism are about death and not literature' (1998: 27). The authors also point out that both nationalism and religion are organized systems of rituals and beliefs based on a 'sacralized agreement that creates killing authority' (1998: 11). Indeed, it is the engagement with bodies, claim Marvin and Ingle, particularly the authority to kill bodies for the greater good of the nation-entity that confers nationalism's sacred meaning. To die for one's nation is to die a hero and have your death inscribed in the communicated collective memory of a country that

makes up its distinct national identity. As Rauf Denktaş, the President of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, stated in 1958, 'the dead are necessary to us; it is through them that the world will hear us' (quoted in An, 2002).

It is our belief that complementary to its symbolic system supported by body sacrifice, nationalistic discourse also makes use at a rhetorical level, perhaps more than other kinds of public discourse, of a special type of *topoi* akin to what Michael Osborn once called 'archetypal metaphors' (see e.g. Osborn, 1967; Osborn and Ehninger, 1962). Generally speaking, metaphors organize discourse both at rhetorical and cognitive levels by helping bridge 'private' imagery to a public motive: 'A perspective, or overall orientation, emerges from realizing the heuristic potential of a guiding metaphor; it leads to the formulation of motives or interpretations of how to act in specific circumstances and situations' (Ivie, 1997: 73). Not only do metaphors act as structuring principles in the inferential chains supporting our arguments (Lakoff, 1991), but also the metaphors we employ in discourse are related in a systematic manner to the concepts in terms of which we think (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). This is particularly true of archetypal metaphors, which are '... grounded in prominent features of experience, in objects, actions, or conditions which are inescapably salient in human consciousness' (Osborn, 1967: 116) and bring within the discursive field images readily accessible to any human such as light/dark, up/down, etc. Similar to archetypal metaphors, the metaphors deployed in nationalistic discourses connote areas of experiences in which bodies are engaged in the most fundamental acts, of which dying is but one. These acts are surrounded by culturally specific, symbolically dense rituals that help bridge individual to cultural identity. The associations these metaphors evoke are readily understandable cross-culturally, although the specific ways in which they contribute to the argument may be culture-specific. In what follows, we study the way in which three such activities, dying, playing and loving, are used metaphorically in connection to Cyprus in order to reinforce Turkish nationalism.

4. *Data and methodology*

The data were collected from online discussion forums about Cyprus that were posted on websites for university students in Turkey (www.akampus.com) and Turkish students abroad (www.mezun.com). The postings on these sites date back to October 2001. For the purpose of this research, all comments posted until 15 March 2004 were downloaded. A total of 109 discussants posted 377 comments, out of which 233 comments (about 62%) contained references to Cyprus.³ The first author, a native speaker of Turkish, translated all the messages about Cyprus into English. About one half of the messages about Cyprus contained metaphorical expressions. Both authors examined messages from each site independently and created a list of 'archetypal' metaphors (in the special sense discussed above) that organized the discussion about nationalism into families of related themes evocative of general, cross-cultural life experiences. The authors also recorded the frequency with which these organizing metaphors

appeared in discourse. Only those themes that made the top five on both authors' lists were selected for this discussion. Among the postings containing metaphorical expressions related to Cyprus, these themes were present in about 60 percent of the messages on www.mezun.com and in about 77 percent on www.akampus.com. The metaphors excluded from this analysis were generally used in connection to political leaders.

We recognize that the views of the limited group under study (self-selected university students with Internet access) may not be representative of the views of the entire Turkish population or indeed of the views of all students. However, we believe it is significant that two independent groups used similar metaphors to express patriotism and construct their collective identity. Rather than aiming to generalize, our analysis attempts to understand the way in which these metaphors function strategically to express deep-seated feelings about nationhood which very likely adds extra rhetorical power to nationalistic statements. In what follows, pseudonyms were assigned randomly to each discussant. The prefix indicates the forum from where the quotation was taken. For example, Aka5 is the discussant number 5 on www.akampus.com.

5. Reproducing Turkish nationalism in discussions about Cyprus

5.1 'NATION IS BLOOD': HEROISM, SACRIFICE, AND BLASPHEMY

The patriotism required by the modern state entails both identification with a common polity and willingness to sacrifice oneself for the sake of it (Taylor, 1998). Nations emerge from a long history of sacrifices: '... one loves in proportion to the sacrifices to which he [*sic*] consented, and in proportion to the ills that one has suffered' (Renan, 1996: 52). It is precisely this unquestioning willingness for periodical sacrifice of a nation's soldiers that gives modern nationalism its religious character (Hayes, 1960; Marvin and Ingle, 1998). Nationalism, like any other religion, creates myths that appeal not only to the intellect but also to the imagination of its followers, thereby building 'an unseen world, around the eternal past and the everlasting future of one's nationality' (Hayes, 1960: 164). Myths of liberation, myths of a presumably 'golden age' and myths of restoration of former glory all point to the need for sacrifice from voluntary agents (Smith, 1986). It is only through these myths that the nation will be conceived as an eternal entity whose undying glory can only be assured through the willing sacrifice of its loyal children.

Blood shed from fighting for the country is one of the most powerful metaphors that give meaning to patriotic feelings: 'One can appreciate the value of one's country and its flag only after s/he has fought for them' (Aka16, December 2003). Not only is having shed blood in the past a prerequisite to knowing the value of one's homeland and becoming the worthy subject of a nation, but blood sacrifice also mandates one's right to have a say in the future of Northern Cyprus:

We accepted Cyprus as our Young Homeland (Yavruvatan) and shed our blood without any hesitation to protect its independence . . . and how come we can't even say what we think? There are many [Turkish] veterans of Cyprus known to me on

this forum and it is very wrong for you to say 'it is not up to you [Turks]'. (Mez3, January 2003)

Moreover, the rhetorical force of past sacrifice has all the more legitimizing power when presented in quantitative terms, so that only the ones having shed the most blood have a right to a final say on the matter: 'I guess these decisions [of Turkish Cypriots] cannot be made simply on the basis of self-determination (*istege ve genel arzuya*) . . . Indeed, the blood shed was ours, Turks from Anatolia's blood, more than theirs' (Mez10, February 2003).

A central rhetorical strategy used to bring into focus the issue of blood sacrifice is the invocation of emblematic figures of the past who, through their acts, serve as models of heroic behavior and veritable blueprint lessons on exemplary social goals. Unsurprisingly, Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk), the founder of the modern Turkish Republic, Rauf Denktaş, the president of the unrecognized TRNC, and Fatih Sultan Mehmet, the Ottoman Emperor during whose reign the Ottomans conquered Istanbul, are the most frequently invoked names.

The invocation of these names widely known in Turkey usually takes place in the context of a moral narrative or narratives reminiscent of a 'messianic ritual'⁴ such as Istanbul's conquest or more frequently the Turkish Independence war after which the modern Turkish Republic was founded. Since the role of the moral narrative is to remind the audience of the perennial values a hero stands for, it is also significant that some of them are retold in the present tense, although they happened in the past:

During the British rule in Cyprus, an incident breaks in front of the courthouse in Nicosia. Two British soldiers are roughing up a Greek Cypriot youngster. A young prosecutor appears at the courthouse's window and warns off the British and says that he would tell [the incident] to the authorities. The British soldiers are not interested. The young prosecutor does what he promised and the British soldiers are found guilty. This is a significant sign of courage under the colonial rule of the British. The name of the young prosecutor: Rauf Denktaş. The one some of you have been calling fascist and dictator. (Aka28, February 2004)

Along with the invocation of emblematic names, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier is one of the most effective symbols for communicating the myth of willing sacrifices (Anderson, 1991; Hayes, 1960). The reason for its appeal lies with the rhetorical value of the equalizing anonymity of the metonymy of one common grave symbolizing a mass of fallen bodies. Discussants also made frequent references to the anonymous Turkish soldiers by using their generic name Mehmetcik (a metaphor that is generally used to describe military conscripts, frequently without any reference to their rank) to provide exemplars of loyalty and willingness to sacrifice oneself for the nation, as in 'the Mehmet of Anatolia who shed their blood', and became 'martyrs and veterans' (Mez10, January 2003, Mezun.com).

The appeal to ancestors (*atarlarımız*) plays on a double blood reference: the blood that was shed for Cyprus connects private, identity-rich ties of blood to an all-encompassing collective identity established through sacrifice. Mentioning an actual ancestor who fought for Cyprus emphasizes not only the sacrifice that

is a conduit to collective identity, but also the responsibility that comes with it, even in the face of alleged betrayal:

What happens, if I, as a citizen of Turkey, start chanting as loud as I can . . . 'The whole income of Cyprus comes from Turkey, with the monetary aid we provided you [Turkish Cypriots] with, we could become rich ourselves, we could not become a developed country because of you, god damn you . . . go and become European.' I can't say this because my father and their comrades shed their blood in Cyprus. That blood was shed and that place became TRNC. (Mez70, December 2003)

However, most of the time the construction of the Turkish past involvement with Cyprus is presented as selfless blood sacrifice in sharp contrast to the allegedly selfish Turkish Cypriot current pursuit of pragmatic economic values. As Mez5 puts it when rejecting the right of the Turkish Cypriots to apply for a passport to the (Greek) Republic of Cyprus for economic reasons: 'I am talking about the place where our forefathers shed their blood and you are talking about money'.

Many researchers have suggested that the civic religion of nationalism is intolerant to dissent (Elshtain, 1991; Hayes, 1960; Mavratsas, 1997). Just like in any traditional religion, blasphemy and sacrilege to the national totem are considered heinous crimes susceptible to different forms of suppression including physical punishments (Elshtain, 1991; Hayes, 1960). By breaking down consensus, dissent exposes the fraudulent illusion of unanimous, unquestioning sacrifice promoted by the symbol of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier (Marvin and Ingle, 1998). Discussions about the willingness of Turkish Cypriots to give up their Turkish identity, a decision framed as heresy, treachery and worthlessness of ancestral sacrifice, engender the most violent and emotional dialogues, as manifested in the invectives and insults exchanged by the participants. In the symbolic economy of blame, the Turkish Cypriots are portrayed as the ungrateful, savage 'others' who bled and then betrayed the bodies of Turkish ancestors and will consequently betray their own families in the future:

Creatures like you are selling your citizenship for money . . . tomorrow you will betray your wives and daughters . . . Just like you sold your citizenship you will sell your soul . . . shame on you . . . I opt for the land . . . you opt for yourself you selfish man . . . my ancestors shed their blood on those lands . . . just for you to be able to live on it . . . not for you to sell it . . . if this is being racist, then I am a racist. (Aka37, January 2004)

5.2 NATION AND SPORTS: 'WE PLAY FAIR AND SQUARE'

Contemporary politics rely on a profusion of sport-related metaphors that compare political interaction to games of tennis, boxing and, as it has been noted with some concern with respect to election campaigns, horse racing (Beattie, 1988; Billig, 2000; Blain et al., 1993; James, 2000; James and Grimshaw, 1986; Merkel, 2003; Shapiro, 1989; Traugott, 1992). The sport pages of even the most liberal newspapers abound in symbols of flags waved with routine enthusiasm (Billig, 2000). Just as they are frequently used in discussions about domestic and international politics, metaphors related to sports are often used by soldiers

when they retell their experiences in war (Rosenberg, 1993). A brief survey of the sports pages would undoubtedly show that expressions such as 'heroic save by the goalie', 'well-deserved victory' and 'defeat with dignity' are used almost daily. This tendency is also visible in Turkish media coverage of international tournaments with Turkish participation and of Turkish athletes playing in foreign sports teams. For example, along with 'ambassador' or 'our honorable abroad', the term *legionnaire* (soldiers in the Roman Legion who used to serve as garrisons outside Rome) is almost invariably used as an adjective for Turkish soccer players playing in various European countries.

Sport occasions may be used in the reproduction of nationalism as either rehearsal of international politics and warfare or catharsis. On the one hand, it is easy to create a crisis that might lead to war between two nations, but it is considerably more difficult to induce people to sacrifice themselves willingly (Billig, 2000). Sports events provide the arena for the rehearsal of this willing sacrifice by teaching the participants their respective roles, as well as the values and the rules that they need to abide by, for example fair game and teamwork (Billig, 2000; Marvin and Ingle, 1998). For example, spectators painting their nations' flags on their face communicate commitment to one's nation as well as providing visual cues that are akin to borders that separate 'us' from 'them' (Tzanelli, 2006). Conversely, international sports events are also opportunities for a nation to reclaim its glorious past. As Tzanelli (2006) explains, for example, the association of the Greek national soccer team with Greek gods when Greece won the European Championship in 2004 suggested that the victory was being seen as an evidence that Greece had gotten rid of its 'tainted' identity of being under the Ottoman rule for several centuries until the 1820s.

On the other hand, sports may also be regarded as a way to transfer negative energy (Eriksen, 1993), contain 'men's inclinations to act violently' and prevent them from killing each other (Marvin and Ingle, 1998). For example, Fair (1997) explains that sports games in British colonies in Africa provided a temporary relief from growing ethnic tensions. This relief from tension, according to O'Donnell (1994), is also an important function of international tournaments, as they allow 'advanced countries' to act out their hostilities, their mythical scenarios and the stereotypes that they hold about each other.

Sports play an important role not only in cementing national identification, but also in providing a terminology for individuals to talk about international relations. For the discussants on the two forums analyzed, attending international sports events, which implies fulfilling an informal role of ambassador for one's country and being recognized as such, is an integral part of one's national identity. The impossibility of attending international sports events becomes thus a symptom of the uncertain, threatened national identity of Turkish Cypriots: 'Those living in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus for the last 20 years can't show themselves as citizens of a nation, they are not even allowed to enter international sport games' (Mez4, February 2004).

However, sport-related metaphors are more frequent in describing the relationships between the Greek and the Turkish side. For example, one

discussant, arguing that the new government in Turkey had made every move to show commitment to solving the problem, likens the issue of Cyprus to a tennis game where the ball is now in Greece's court (Mez8, January 2004). In a similar vein, another discussant, as a response to the fears that the Turkish Cypriots would again be subject to attacks from Greeks once Northern Cyprus joined the Republic of Cyprus, argues that the game has changed within the last 20 years, and given that the relations between the two sides would be regulated by a much fairer referee (the European Union) it seemed 'very unlikely that Greeks would score an own goal by repeating the same events' (Mez20, December 2003). Sport-related metaphors are also used to underscore the argument that the relation between Greeks and Turks has never been and will never be fair:

If we look at this issue realistically, the match in Cyprus is about to end, we are playing overtime . . . The notion that the game has been played according to the rules is ventured in the international arena, while Cyprus is slowly being taken away from Turkey. All these conferences and negotiations are just for show. (Mez14, February 2004)

Other remarks use sport metaphors to emphasize that one of the preconditions of success in international negotiation, just like in a game, is the willing cooperation between the 'audience' that constitutes the environment of the game and the would-be players:

. . . it would be fine if the score was close but the situation is becoming such that the whole world is turning against us and creating an environment that makes it impossible for us to win . . . Those we have always considered as allies, as friends, even other Turkic nations are not supporting us. (Mez38, December 2003)

5.3. NATION IS FAMILY: THE VIRGIN ANATOLIA

I have a special passion for this green island. I went there only once and without really wanting to go. How could I have known that my whole life would change? Because of a beauty (*güzel*) all my ideals, dreams, vanished in the salty waters of the Mediterranean Sea . . . Was it Cyprus that made me fall in love [with beauty]? Or was it the gorgeous girl that I met on the plane to Cyprus? (Mez57, January 2003, emphasis added)

In this comment, Mez57 uses a metonymy, *güzel* (meaning beauty, beautiful), to describe a female with whom he falls in love. In Turkish, the word *güzel*, when used metaphorically, refers to one's female beloved, just as *yakışıklı* (handsome) would be used as a substitute for a male beloved. Interestingly, the discussant left it deliberately ambiguous whether he fell in love with an actual girl or with the whole island. This is a paradigmatic example of the way in which gender metaphors conducive for expressing feelings of love are employed in the discourse about land and nation. Nations are frequently imagined with the help of family icons (McClintock, 1991). In Turkey, the state is called *devletbaba* (father state), the nation is called the *anavatan* (motherland) and Cyprus, historically 'younger' and not part of mainland Turkey – *Yavruvatan* (Young Homeland or Child Homeland).

Many authors note the phenomena of 'gendering' when talking about nations (Bock and Thane, 1991; Bridenthal et al., 1984; Bryant, 2002; Delaney, 1995; Eley and Suny, 1996; Herzfeld, 1997; Koven and Michel, 1993; Williams, 1987). As the Turkish example illustrates, the state is often gendered as male whereas the nation is gendered as female, thereby depicting women as the symbols of nations and men as their agent (Elshtain, 1991; Pettman, 1996). Nationalist discourse assigns men and women different roles, females being usually portrayed as nurturers and males as heroes, soldiers or agents who are responsible for the protection of the female-nation and its reproductive collective body, the women (Kandiyoti, 1991; Sluga, 1998; Williams, 1987; Yuval-Davies, 1993, 1994; Yuval-Davies and Anthias, 1989).

The ascription of a reproductive role to women and a protective role to men is often accompanied by attempts to regulate the reproductive functions of women and protect their purity (Kandiyoti, 1991; Yuval-Davies and Anthias, 1989). That is why, as Yuval-Davies and Anthias (1989) explain, metaphors assimilating the nation to a beloved, pure woman in need of protection are important tools in the rhetoric of nation and war. Bryant (2002) probably had this observation in mind when she argued that one should not be surprised to see that, starting with the Greek Cypriots' pre-Independence movements against the British, Cyprus was continuously depicted as both a mother who provides continuity and a pure maiden.

The perception of an external threat to Turkey, such as the idea that to concede to Greek demands for Cyprus will lead to a vicious cycle of new threats, results in a similar tendency to depict motherland as vulnerable in respect to its purity and in need of protection: 'The English and the others are glad that we "invaded" Cyprus. This way, they think, Turkey became pregnant' (Mez18, March 2003). An important aspect of the discussions about the possible consequences of allowing Northern Cyprus to join with South is the tendency of the discussants to see this change as opening the way to a new series of concessions that Turkey would make in international politics. Interestingly, such an event is also cast in term of an attack on purity: 'Those who ask for Cyprus today, will ask us to spread our legs for them if we really want to join the European Union. Would you be OK with that?' (Mez13, 23 December).

Another dimension of the relationship of family and gender metaphors to nationalism is the hierarchical nature of these metaphors. As McClintock (1991) explains, the subordination of the female to male and child to grown-up are deemed natural hierarchies within families. It is the perceived naturalness of these hierarchies that makes the use of familial metaphors a common way of communicating the naturalness of hierarchical social categories within and across nations. The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus *yavruvatan* (Child Homeland or Little Homeland) can be conceived as part of such a process of creating a hierarchy within which each group (mainland Turks and Turkish Cypriots) knows its position by default.

The assignment to a hierarchy via ascribed metaphors of family overrides the protest of Turkish Cypriots who find themselves so assigned. In fact, in several occasions, Turkish Cypriots participating in the discussion forums have stated

that they found this naming and the hierarchy it signified degrading and unfair. This reaction is by no means surprising, especially when Turkish Cypriots and Northern Cyprus are compared to a problem child bringing troubles to Turkey (such as economic sanctions and military embargo; the inability to join the European Union; and strain on the economy), a child who does not appreciate the sacrifices of the motherland and the father state, yet cannot be given into the custody of others (*viz.* Greece).

6. Discussion

Students are a vibrant source of social imagery. From the point of view of their power, expertise and control over the supply of ideological resources, students may be regarded as quasi-elites. Although not sufficiently influential to decide the course of public opinion, their potential nevertheless situates them halfway between 'elites' and 'masses' on a virtual spectrum of influence. In Karl Deutsch's terms (quoted in Eley and Suny, 1996), the attained status of the students and the status they have yet to attain firmly integrate this group into a developed communication system that bridges different levels of society. This study is relevant to the extent to which the main topics organizing students' nationalistic discourse may illuminate themes shared by both the 'elites' and the 'masses'.

Our analysis of online discussions about Cyprus among Turkish students confirms that Cyprus remains a powerful symbol for concentrating Turkish nationalism. Most accounts of the Cyprus issue have found that mainland Greeks and Turks construct the problem to represent the other side negatively. While our analysis does not contradict these findings, it also reveals that the deployment of all-encompassing metaphors of nationalism carries with it more ambiguous associations. Discussants achieved a rhetorical construction of the collective identity not only through the strategic deployment of the difference between the Turkish 'us' (heroic, selfless, responsible) and the Turkish Cypriot 'them' (vulnerable, selfish, betrayers), but also through the appeal to the powerful ties of blood and family that recognizes in Turkish Cypriots the lost sons of the same nation. Discussants relied on metaphors of blood, heroism, sacrifice as well as their negative counterparts, treachery and blasphemy, to emphasize the worthiness of the Turkish people and legitimize their right to have a say over the future of Cyprus. Gender and sexual metaphors were frequently used to construct motherland Turkey as a pure, virgin female whose purity would be increasingly jeopardized if the father state of Turkey conceded the whole Cyprus Island to Greeks. Family metaphors were also instrumental in the construction of the relationship between Turkey and TRNC as one between a loving father and a problem child. Sports metaphors conveyed a sense of Cyprus as a prize to be won or lost by Turkey and served as a function of fairness in the international relationships' 'strategic game'.

Such all-encompassing metaphors like dying, playing and loving seem to be among the most efficient rhetorical tools in conveying complex feelings and attachments. While we did not conduct a formal study of the reactions to

the messages containing such metaphors, informal observations suggested that the employment of archetypal-like metaphors in a message usually tends to produce strong emotional reactions of agreement or disagreement. It may well be that the deployment of such metaphors helps explain why many authors have seen a form of attachment to nationhood that tends to undercut reason. Perhaps a more profitable avenue of future research would be instead to ask the question of whether and under what conditions some metaphors frequently used in nationalistic discourse are more efficient than others in engendering a strong response from the audience.

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NOTES

1. A study of Turkish media found that the decision of Greek Cypriots to buy missiles from Russia and the subsequent perception of external threat resulted in an overabundance of nationalistic discourses (Yumul and Özkirimli, 2000).
2. 'Rum pasaportu izdihami . . .' [Greek passport stampede], *Milliyet*, 21 May 2003), available online at: <http://www.milliyet.com/2003/05/21/guncel/gun01.html>
3. Identical comments posted more than once were counted as one comment.
4. Messianic rituals are rituals that signify a new beginning and that have a regenerative power for the totem system (Marvin and Ingle, 1998).

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