NATIONAL IDENTITY, CYPRUS AND GLOBAL CONTEXTS

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Abstract

Debates about media globalisation increasingly recognise the significance of national identity for an understanding of both the national exploitation of global media and resistances to them. This paper focuses on the issue of national identity and seeks to clarify its nature and ways in which it has been conceptualised in order to more precisely understand its relationship to media globalisation. It draws attention to distinctions between national identity, national culture and nationalism whilst noting continuing themes, and points to the importance of television in the construction and maintenance of these notions. Using examples from China, Israel, Malaysia, Pakistan, Singapore and Canada, the paper discusses links between national identities, the policies of national governments and the television landscape. Particular attention is drawn to the role of language in the formation and maintenance of national identity. This is examined in the context of Cyprus and provides a basis for a discussion of the relationship between television and national identity in Cyprus elsewhere in that collection of papers.

What is National Identity?

In a world often characterised as postmodern, with its multiple social connections, varied and fluid social stratification systems and the option of multiple identities, national identity remains one of the central tenets of an individual's sense of self. National identity is often regarded as a fixed, stable reference point in a world where all is changing and much is uncertain. But the supposed stability, firmness and predictability of national identity is open to question, partly as a result of challenges to the autonomy of the nation state brought about by the creation of supra national organisations, but also by the expansion of global media over which national governments are able to exercise only limited control.

National identity is one instance of an appeal to the value of the collective self, to a sense of belonging, of being 'inside' rather than 'outside'. As Smith (1991) remarks "Of all the collective identities which human beings share today, national identity is perhaps the most fundamental and inclusive .... other types of collective identity - class, gender, race, religion - may overlap or combine with national identity but they rarely succeed in undermining its hold" (p. 143). A further reason why national identity is not a fixed entity, is because it is built both on fact and fiction, which together constitute the basis of our sense of who we are, and, equally who we are not. As Thomas (1997) states "Myth, tradition and invented tradition are systematically employed towards the making of a common ancestry, the basis for shared belongings and a distinctive identity vis-a-vis the identity of other nation states (p. 3)."

National identity refers in its most simple sense to the process of identifying with the nation, which is above all else in Anderson's (1983) famous phrase "an imagined community", a focus of loyalty and a source of identity, providing a sense of belonging to something bigger than one's immediate community. In the sense of being 'imagined' nations are, therefore, more than political or geographical entities. Hogan (1999) proposes that "national identity is a discursive imagining asserting the common values and shared history and way of life of the people it addresses. This discourse is in constant flux, remaking itself in response to changing social conditions" (p. 150). Hall (1993) has characterised this type of discourse as the 'narrative of nations' (p. 293) and Fry (2000) has suggested that the question of national identity is never finally answered but always contested. In this sense changing conceptions of national identity can certainly be explored but never defined because of the shifting patterns of discourse and competing textual articulations of national identity.

Nationalism and National Identity

Despite the fluidity of national identity suggested in these arguments, particular articulations of a national identity may not always accord with the interests and positions of all members of society. Quite often national identity is based on elitist or majoritarian interests, whose symbolic power lies in identifying the nation as the natural political and cultural unit and where appeals to join are often strong and alternative definitions strikingly absent. It is here that processes of creation and recreation of national identity are significant matters of renegotiation between the nation and the people; between the state and the citizenry; between the centre and the localities; between the majority and minorities; and between official and unofficial culture. When majoritarian discourses about national identity are challenged it is then that the 'blood, roots and soil' arguments are deployed. This position as- serts that there is a naturalness to national identity, where belonging comes from a

line of descent. In this instance appeals are made to an 'authentic' national identity, coupled with appeals for protection from 'impure' blood and threats from others. This notion of national identity is closely tied to what Billig (1995) has called 'hot nationalism' and Easthope (1999) 'the bad excesses of nationalism' (p. 229). Nationalism in this sense has particular and narrow concerns, it ignores complexities and complications in order to elicit loyalty and commitment, for, as Mcloone (1995) has pointed out, complexity breeds doubt and scepticism. But nationalism and nation- al identity are complex phenomena and academic study is quite properly concerned with exploring those complexities and the social phenomena that 'feed' them.

National Identity and National Culture

National identity has become a central concept in debates about the relationship between the production and consumption of culture in the nation state. The key features of a national identity can be promoted and spread by a wide range of institutions, events, symbols and ceremonies Smith (1991) points to the importance of such varied phenomena as flags, anthems, parades, coinage, passports, war memorials, folklore, museums, odes, popular heroes and heroines, fairy tales, national recreation, legal procedures, educational practices and military codes in the construction of national identity. Hall (1996) has argued that cultural identity, so closely attached to national identity, is increasingly fragmented and fractured in the modern world, and therefore constantly in a process of construction and reconstruction, and should not be seen as essentialist and unified. The clearest perspective on collective identities, he suggests, can be achieved by situating debates about identity within those practices and developments which are seen to disturb the relatively settled character of populations and cultures, particularly in relation to the nature and consequences of globalisation. Identities he believes are the result of using the resources of history and language in order to become, in order, there- fore, to be.

Identities are, as I have argued, structured within discourses and are produced within particular sites and contexts. They frequently emerge from the exercise of power, and indeed, are implicated in it, as well as being central to the marking out of difference and the justification of exclusion. In this sense, identities are to do with our relationships to the other, whereby we make sense of ourselves by reference to something or someone else who is not us. Indeed within all collective identities there are unities constructed through the exercise of exclusion and closure (Bhab- ha, 1994; Hall, 1993). But, national identity as a specific form of collective identity is not necessarily co-terminus with one single cultural identity. It is not fixed, it changes, it is open to resistance and can be challenged and support for and ad- herence to a national identity has to be won within systems of social relations and representations. As a consequence a sense of identity, whilst perhaps experienced

in a personal manner, only becomes meaningful through acts of social communication and the acceptance of agreed language(s), symbols and rituals. In the construction of national identity, cultural nationalism provides these in abundance and the mass media are eager mediators of them.

National Identity, Cultural Production and Television

The cultural production of a national identity, which attempts to obliterate different social interests and positions of individuals and groups in order to unite them within a common national framework, is frequently fostered by television. Television provides a shared social experience which is important in the formation of any type of collective identity based on a common symbolic reference system, in which sameness and difference can be identified. Television plays a significant part in winning the hearts and minds of members of nation states through the shared experiences it offers to audiences across numerous social divides, linking them to a shared sense of background and purpose. If national identity is fostered by the circulation of significant symbols, television has become the means par excellence for achieving this as part of a complex, effective, technological interface which reach- es millions of people. As Anderson (1983) puts it "an American will never meet or even know the names of more than a handful of his fellow Americans. He has no idea of what they are up to at any one time. But he has complete confidence in their steady, anonymous simultaneous activity" (p. 16).

Many national governments have recognised the importance of television in national development, but have feared the consequences of a cultural and media imperialism as potential threats to their power, and have often clamped down on the purchase of the technology that delivers cross border television. Equally, many have used television to promote notions of national identity. This has often been achieved through the promotion of a cultural elitism that hides the identities and his- tories of most citizens. Bhabha (1990) has suggested that the continuing renewal of national identity requires a form of forgetting past origins, ethnicities and places, and television has often been implicated in denials and suppression of the past, as well as in extracting preferred features of national identity and using them to recon- stitute the present and its relationship to the future.

To some extent it is relatively easy for national government to achieve this when they have control over a monopolistic broadcasting context. The difficulty for governments occurs when national terrestrial and new trans-border services are bound together in a potentially volatile relationship. This situation has produced a variety of models of response which range from virtual suppression, to suppressive openness, to illegal openness and to regulated openness (see Chan, 1992). French, Richards and Thomas (2000) have suggested that some governments, especially

1n Asia, are reasserting national development and strategies to maintain cultural distinctiveness by using protectionist policies which deny audiences access to the technology which would facilitate cross border services. However, a more general response of national governments, particularly those which see the impact of trans-border flows as a threat to political and cultural stability, has been to increase state terrestrial services, to improve viewer satisfaction with programming and to provide regulatory legislative and financial incentive for private services to provide effective competition for trans-border television. Often these local private services have had the advantage of being able to deploy local languages which is significant in the relationship between television and national identity because of the importance of language in the process of establishing and maintaining nationhood. Even in the absence of single unifying national language, the use of local languages and dialects in programming can be important in mobilising a sense of national identity. The importance of local languages and dialect is enhanced by the fact that programmes using them seem popular with audiences which national governments recognise and often foster as an important expression of tolerated difference within a given national identity.

Globalisation, Television and National Identity

The globalisation of broadcast media has become a significant factor in understanding television's role in the creation and maintenance of national identity. Globalisation has been seen as an opportunity for change, for the creation of new ideas and new identities. Robins (1991) argued that globalisation fractures the association between cultural and geographical territory and brings with it the potential for developing new identities and the forming of new global communities with common interests, even though geographically widespread. Similarly, Hall (1991) has suggested that globalisation can increase awareness of the local and its characteristics in contrast to national and global perspectives which come from the 'outside'. There is opportunity for new cultural landscapes which Schlesinger (1991) has called 'identity by choice' when new types of communities can be created based on shared values such as consumption, ethnicity, religion or gender. In this new landscape individuals can choose their own identities and the communities to which they wish to belong.

A further development which has cast doubt on the ability of nation states to impose senses of national identity has been the notion of the active audience and of the television text as polysemic. This, together with a growing recognition of the role of gender, ethnicity and other variables in media reception, have been used to suggest that audiences are able in some senses to construct their own meanings from media messages and thus 'resist' media representations of national identity.

The notion of resistance is not unproblematic of course, but when related to Gramsci's notion of hegemony, may have more explanatory power than the Althusserian construction of ideology. For Althusser, the ability of the text to constitute people as "subjects in ideology seems to be so great that resistance is almost impossible", whereas Gramsci's theory of hegemony "characterises social relations as a series of struggles for power", where "the dominant ideology working through the form of a text can be resisted, evaded or negotiated" (Fiske, 1987, pp. 40-41). But, as Shohat and Stam emphasise "resistant readings, for their part, depehd on a certain cultural or political preparation that primes the spectator to read critically .... Whilst disempowered communities can decode dominant programming through a resistant perspective, they can do so only to the extent that their collective life and historical memory have provided an alternative framework for understanding" (Shohat and Stam, 1994, p. 354).

In addition to the notion of resistance, the concepts of heterogeneity and hybridisation have been used to suggest that globalisation can sometimes generate a cultural backlash, in turn leading to the resurgence, or perhaps even the invention, of new local traditions and identifications. This position highlights the tension between the global and the local, which has emerged as an important issue underpinning theories of glocalisation and cultural hybridisation. Hogan (1999) has suggested that an understanding of this is crucial to the analysis of the transformation of national identities under conditions of globalisation. Indeed, Robertson (1995) sees globalisation precisely as a synthesis of the global and the local, and Friedman (1994, 1995) similarly, has suggested that the global, local, dynamic opens up new possibilities for identities as balances of power shift, and, echoing Schlesinger (1991), where there is an increasing diversification of identities worldwide.

The State, Broadcasting and National Identity: Some International Comparisons

Before discussing the relevance of these issues to Cyprus I want to provide a broader empirical context by exploring some of the tensions between central control, determination, direction and resistance in other parts of the world. A particularly interesting example is China, a country with diverse cultural orientations, dialects and ethnicities, and where national identity and cohesiveness has been a key issue in the development of a Chinese sense of self. According to Pan and Man Chan (2000), in recent decades the use of television to strengthen national cohesiveness and to promote cultural heritage has become a key issue for policy makers, broadcasters and intellectuals alike. Indeed, they argue, China's television system, since its birth in 1958, has been structured as an integral part of the communist political system and has been an important means by which a political and cultural discourse has been created to reproduce national identity. However in the en-

vironment of a global television market, policy makers and broadcasters in China clearly recognise that Chinese television has two specific tasks. One is "to protect their own turf by resisting the invasion of foreign television" by providing their own high quality programmes, and the other is to export Chinese programmes to the world, "to introduce China to the world and to establish a positive image of socialist China" (Yang, 1997, p. 54). These two aims are at odds with the forces of marketisation and the emergence of a global television economy (Ran Wei, 2000).

At the end of the day the Chinese television viewer probably experiences a more common symbolic environment than viewers anywhere else in the world because of the continued communal narrative of the Chinese as a nation. For example, television news remains highly controlled partly by the additions of previews and post-broadcast reviews but is mainly facilitated by the news monopoly of Central China Television. According to Pan and Chan (op cit) there are two problems; time and language. China's territory extends across three time zones and when CCTV starts its nation-wide news broadcast at 7:00 p.m. Beijing time the western regions are still in the late afternoon. Further, whilst all CCTV programmes are in Mandarin about 10% of the country's population do not speak Mandarin as well as living in regions that are one or even two time zones away from Beijing. CCTV overcomes this difficulty by broadcasting from Beijing towards these regions which local stations then transmit at the same time as in Beijing. In some areas the news and other programmes are then later re-broadcast with voice-overs in local languages at more appropriate times, but no local news programme can be broadcast during the Beijing news time slot. It is in this way that the 'core' of the Chinese nation, partly fostered by CCTV's monopoly, is able to co-exist alongside local identities. Pan and Chan (op cit) suggest, however, that the so-called "national audience" whilst having some empirical basis probably masks the heterogeneity and pluralism of the television audience in China, particularly in the regions. Even in China acceptance of a national identity has to be won.

In Israel, the media have been seen to be a major factor in shaping national identity and, in this respect, played a crucial role in the aftermath of the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin in November 1995. Peri (1997) argues that although Israel's me- dia had traditionally been seen as a central arena in which debates about national identity would be democratically played out, in this case, dominant groups used the event, and the media, to both reintegrate society and to reinvent it by broadening the hegemonic coalition through a deconstruction of Rabin's biography, and using martyrdom, to reconstitute the mainstream secular Zionist story (p. 436). His analysis of national media coverage of this event graphically demonstrates how the media, particularly television, however influenced, can play a major role in defining collective identity when societies are deeply divided. However, the suppression of public debate in this case produced only a temporary collective portrait of society

rather than the re-moulding of a whole collective memory and identity (p. 456).

In· countries that are multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious such as Malaysia, measures have sometimes been taken to promote integration and a sense of harmonious relations among diverse ethnic groups and in many cases this has seen a conscious effort on the part of governments to utilise broadcasting as an agent to achieve this goal. Anuar and Nain (2000) have argued that it is in this larger context of national development and national integration that broadcast me- dia, particularly television are perceived by the Malaysian state. They suggest that this policy has produced an emphasis on the Malayan language as the national lan- guage of Malaysia to the extent that other languages such as Mandarin and Tamil have become marginalised in nationa·l broadcasting. Television programmes are produced in the Malay language with a strong emphasis on the culture and religion of the Malays who are the majority and dominant ethnic community in the country. Anuar and Nain cite the perceived threats of western-originated programming, available through satellite sources, as having paved the way for even·tighter gov- ernment controls on reception with severe penalties for being in possession of satellite dishes which are powerful enough to receive forbidden channels. They ar- gue that government policy emphasises the importance of religious values to the extent that religion has become firmly entangled within the political and cultural as- pects of the country's national identity, helping to legitimise the actions of organisa- tions like the National Censorship Board, which acting on behalf of the government, has extensive powers to evaluate cultural products, not in relation to their artistic merits but, primarily, on the basis of the sensitivity of their contents. Clearly, in Malaysia there are important links between national identity and the role of broad- casting.

Similarly, religion, the state and national identity and broadcasting are also intimately connected in Pakistan. According to Tahir (2000), despite frequent changes in government and the general absence of a national media policy for Pakistan, broadcasting seems to embrace certain continuing themes. Firstly, and most importantly, is that programmes should not harm the ideology of Pakistan nor should they challenge Islam. These are enshrined particularly in the heavy control of news and current affairs broadcasting and in the codes of conduct that surround advertising on Pakistani television. But even in Pakistan, governments have not always been able to totally control broadcasting. Tahir suggests that about 20% of the population have access to foreign channels through satellite dishes which means that a quite significant number of probably quite influential viewers are in a position to switch sources if they do not like the fare of state terrestrial broadcasters. Indeed once private sources exist, national networks have to compete with them and, in a country like Pakistan, television is important because of the low levels of literacy. Radio and television have become major sources of news, information, entertain-

ment and views of the world since the number of people reached by broadcasting is far greater than the combined circulation of all newspapers and magazines in Pakistan. That is perhaps why to date successive governments have refused to allow any private terrestrial channels to produce their own news and current affairs programmes so that Pakistani based private channels have to broadcast what might be described as quite heavy doses of propaganda dished out by Pakistan Television (PTV). But Pakistan, like so many countries in Asia has responded to the growth of cross border television by launching language sensitive channels. For ex- ample in 1998 it introduced 'Inter-Asia TV' for the Urdu speaking population of the continent, and PTV World, Pakistan's informational television channel, is now avail- able to ex patriots in the Gulf region as well as in Europe.

Although in many respects, worlds apart from Pakistan, television in Singapore both reflects and reinforces a strong national agenda. Hukill (2000) argues that the political environment of Singapore is a major factor influencing much of Singapore's television, especially its news and current affairs programmes where local news presentations systematically present a positive view of national government which he suggests is partly to do with the perceived duty of local television broadcasters to uphold the importance of good stable government. This is a situation which stands in sharp contrast to notions of independent checks and balances and the freedom of individuals and organisations to offer criticism of the state and its poli- cies professed by many western democratic societies. Hukill makes the point that, more so than the press in Singapore, television is regarded as particularly sensitive to the political agenda of what Singapore is to be a nation. While there is an ab- sence of direct censorship of television programming in Singapore, whereby pro- grammes are cut directly by government official censors prior to broadcasts, never- theless a set of "out of bounds markers" have been established which promote a high degree of self censorship and keep programme acquisition and production within 'safe areas'. However, he goes on to suggest, censors at local broadcast sta- tions do sometimes edit scenes from imported programmes which they believe may possibly overstep these boundaries and furthermore act as gatekeepers on locally produced programmes through the monitoring of scripts. But whilst there has been some acceptance of more issue-based programming, open discussion and debate of political matters directly relating to Singapore is still strictly 'out of bounds' except when promoting the government's official views and lines of reasoning (Hukill, **2000).**

Singaporian national culture draws clear distinctions between cultural identity (Chinese, Malay and Indian) and national identity (Singaporean). Normally the elements of cultural identity, ethnicity, language, religion, cultural traditions are given by birth and history but Singaporean identity had to be created and nurtured after it was forced to leave the Malaysian Federation in 1965. At that time Singapore had

no sense of nationhood and was forced to re-invent itself as a sovereign nation state. The role of language in this process has been highly significant particularly in language preferences in broadcasting. Mandarin has been promoted for many years as an official language in Singapore, but the use of English is growing as the lingua franca of this city state. Many ethnic Chinese now use or:ily English and in the Malay section of the population English and Malay are used interchangeably. Further, English has become the official language in many situations and is pre- ferred by younger educated people in social settings. Whilst there is also a local patois called Singlish, which is widely used by Singaporeans in casual conversa- tion, Singlish traditionally had a low status in broadcasting and for many years was forbidden although from about 1995 it could be heard in popular entertainment. Singlish is, however, significantly absent from news and current affairs, where only 'proper' English and Mandarin are used by presenters (Hukill, 2000).

Other languages can of course be heard on Singaporean broadcasting. But the domination of English and Mandarin is a striking instance of broadcasting following the national political agenda. Whilst cultural differences can be tolerated, even encouraged, national identity in Singapore is not co-terminus with cultural identity. National identity has much more to do with Singapore's place in the global and regional economy, with its desire to position itself as a major broadcasting hub in East and South East Asia. In which case it makes good sense to encourage the use of the two most politically and economically influential languages in that part of the world. Whilst on the one hand it may seem strange to promote a national identity through the old colonial language of English, on the other, Singapore's national identity is based on its economic and political identity in which language has no intrinsic value, but is an important utility achieving national goals.

In Canada, a country divided along a language barrier, where nine provinces out of ten are English speaking with Quebec being strongly Francophone, broadcasting has been shown to strengthen this linguistic separateness, rather than to contribute to developing one national cultural identity. Indeed, broadcasting in Francophone Quebec is so successful in reinforcing the collective (national) identity of the Quebecois citizens, that it has made the quest for a single Canadian identity unattainable. Canada serves as a striking example of how language preference defines choice of programmes and how, in particular in Quebec, the cultural strength of the French language has been reinforced by audiences' close identification with it through their broadcasting preferences (Filion, 1996).

National Identity and Language in Cyprus

So far I have discussed some of the theoretical and conceptual approaches to the study of national identity, nationalism and national cultures. I have argued that

acceptance of a national identity has to be won and that discourses of identity are crucial to this process. I have further suggested that the media, particularly television, continue to play a significant part in these struggles sometimes because of the influence exerted by national governments on national broadcasters, but always through the representation of national symbols, goals and ideals. I briefly discussed some of these issues in relation to a small number of countries in other parts of the world, and suggested that they have a global significance. I contend, therefore, that the interplay between television and national identity in Cyprus, whilst to some extent having its own distinctive features, can be seen to be reminiscent of patterns found elsewhere in the world. In the contexts I examined a continuing theme was the importance of language in the construction of national identity. This is no less true of Cyprus and it is to a discussion of the relationships between language use and national identity in Cyprus that I now turn.

Language is important in the mobilisation of the feelings that underpin national identity in two important ways. Firstly, it itself is a symbol of national identity, Greeks speak Greek, the French speak French and so on, but secondly it is the carrier of most other symbols of national identity. Of course some of these, most notably a national flag are essentially visual rather than verbal symbols, and are sometimes ambiguous or the result of compromise. For example Tzermias (1994) has suggested that the flag of Cyprus, which according to its Constitution had to be neutral, was not the expression of a unified national consciousness but a makeshift solution (p. 84). Verbal language, by contrast can, according to Van den Buick and Van Poeke (1996), fulfil the double function of serving as a means of affirming oneself as a group or community in respect to others, as well as strengthening its unity and bridging differences within it (p. 220). For example, they demonstrate that in Flanders, the Netherlands and German speaking Switzerland, traditional public service broadcasters, were explicitly involved in the nation building projects of their communities through the language policies they adopted (p. 229).

National identity is a complex matter in Cyprus and the deployment of languages is testament to this. The study of language use in Cyprus provides some insights into the tensions that are inherent in the creation and maintenance of a Cypriot national identity. This section deals with two related issues. Firstly the influence of English and its dominance in Cyprus and secondly the interplay of language and identity in Cyprus.

The issue of the use of English language in Cyprus is concerned with understanding colonial legacies and the way these influence conceptions of national identity. Papapavlou writing in 1997 considered the extent of English language use in Cyprus and its implication for national identity. He argued that the lexical influence of the English language seemed prevalent in areas such as sports, entertainment

and fashion, a trend which is reported as happening in several other languages, for example in Italian, where Pulcini (1997) demonstrated that a large proportion of English borrowings in Italian are found in broadcasting and the written mass media, particularly in popular literature and the fields of sport, music and entertainment. English is of course the lingua franca of international communication and media strongly underscored by the Hollywood film industry and US television productions which are marketed globally. Indeed, without recourse to dubbing or subtitling Eng- lish can be heard practically throughout the world, and the status of the English lan- guage within a given national context can be gauged by the extent to which pro- grammes are bought from English speaking nations and transmitted in non-English speaking countries without translation. (For a discussion of English language pro- grammes on Cyprus television see Roussou in this volume.)

Papapavlou argues that in Cyprus language has acquired an important role in defining the identity of Greek Cypriots which is not to say that the problem of national identity is solely related to language use but rather that language is an important feature of the creation, maintenance and negotiation of national identity. Panayiotou (1996) further argues that in the Greek world, language change has indicated deep crises in values and that language issues often become sensitive indicators of struggles being fought against enemies or adversaries. In particular she suggests that the crisis of values amongst Cypriots originates from their attempt to acquire a western European identity. In an earlier study Papapavlou (1988) identified two factors that appear to be particularly important and significant in an openness to the English language, these were positive feelings that Cypriots have towards foreign people and towards foreign languages per se.

If English is conceived as a global language then there is no doubt that the global meets the local in broadcasting in Cyprus and that both co-exist side by side. For example Pavlou (1992) examined the use of the Cyprus dialect in radio commercials and found that products that are typically Cypriot, like the halloumi type of cheese, or products that are locally produced for example traditional pastries, or products that reflect some traditional values of Cypriot society, for example dowry items are usually advertised using the Cypriot local dialect. On the other hand where advertisers wish to create a sense of sophistication, elegance or modernity, the use of standard modern Greek or even, occasionally English is to be found. Not everyone welcomes this and Christofides (1993) criticises the media for introducing loan words and foreign expressions and argues for the use of 'proper' and 'correct' Greek. Further, Pavlou (1993) argues that the Greek language in Cyprus is sup- pressed by those who use English in their official and daily activities and that to some extent this is reinforced by media practices who use, in his view, 'unneces- sarily' so many foreign words in their reports. The implications of this may be seri- ous according to Babiniotis (1993) who has argued that it is not merely the pres-

ence and use of English loans in Cyprus that matter, but rather the attitudes and feelings of supremacy, elegance and importance that Cypriots associate with the use of English. But at the end of the day, according to Papapavlou, all of this is not terribly significant because, as he argues, the lexical influence of English in Cyprus is small with less than 500 English loans used in the dialect. This is much smaller than those used in other languages, for example Japanese and Italian. Further, the impact of English loans is lessened by the fact that they appear relatively infrequently in print and in broadcast media and offer little threat to the Greek character of the Cypriot dialect. Nevertheless, as he acknowledges, there is a fear that this usage could grow as a result of globalisation and the internationalisation of television in Cyprus and turn into an Anglo-Cypriot idioma.

The significance of language use in Cyprus has also been explored by Sciriha (1995, 1996). She argues that languages act as depositories of indigenous traditions particularly where outside influences may pose threats. She points to the history of language use in Malta, an island with not dissimilar characteristics to Cyprus and shows how for the Maltese the indigenous language spoken there acted as a repository of all that was Maltese during long centuries of colonial rule (Vassalo, 1997, p. 232). She argues that in these situations language serves as a powerful symbol of national identity, but also works instrumentally in the hands of indigenous leaders in the construction of a national identity in the struggle for independence and freedom.

It is on this basis that she discusses the findings of a quite comprehensive study of language use in Cyprus and its relationship to senses of national identity. She finds overwhelming evidence that the Cypriot dialect is the language for the family and informal occasions and that it is in this context that the language is transmitted and learnt. By contrast, standard modern Greek is the language of education and official organisations such as government departments and the Church. Language use is related to social class in that whilst the use of the Greek Cypriot dialect is widespread in all social groupings, higher social classes are more likely to declare an understanding and willingness to speak this language than those in lower socio-economic groups. This relationship is also found in relation to English. For exam- ple in her study, 63% of respondents claimed a spoken competence in English and, most interestingly, nearly 19% claimed solely to understand this language. The association between social class and English use is extremely strong in socio-economic groups a) and b) where, in both cases, over 90% of respondents spoke this language. If English is a high-status language, closely followed by standard modern Greek what is the status of the Cypriot dialect? The findings of Sciriha's survey show that, although the Cypriot dialect is overwhelmingly the most common everyday medium of communication respondents' attitudes towards it are somewhat ambivalent. Rating exercises she carried out show that standard modern Greek holds

a very prestigious place when compared with the Greek Cypriot dialect. Yet, whilst the Cypriot dialect is very robust, and alive and well, the majority of Cypriots perceive its use to be declining, although the data generated by Sciriha show the exact opposite. This discrepancy can possibly be explained by an examination of the intricate relationship between politics, identity and language in Cyprus.

On the one hand since the Greek Cypriot dialect is so widely used it is unquestionably a very visible marker of Cypriot identity. Its vitality is guaranteed not by the institutional support of official organisations like schools, universities, government departments and the Church, but rather by its numerical dominance since, overwhelmingly, this is what most Greek Cypriots speak. So, on the one hand the Cypriot dialect stands for Cypriot national identity, but on the other hand it undermines the concept of *enosis,* unification with Greece which has been a significant feature of Cypriot politics since 1960. Sciriha argues that in choosing a language people are not simply selecting an instrument for understanding and communication but are also defining a world view and portraying a sense of their position in it.

Language Use, Television and National Identity

So what has all of this to do with television? There is a wealth of evidence from around the world to show that audiences tend to select programmes broadcast in their first or preferred language. Of course, this choice is sometimes limited by programme and language availability, but the issue becomes very interesting when audiences have a choice of programming in two or even more languages in which they are competent. For many people in Cyprus this is often the case. If globalisation, deregulation and competition bring access to multiple television channels, this has important implications for national identity. The language preference of pro- gramme makers and audiences provides an important means both for explaining choice and expressing identity. The languages we choose to operate with, and the context in which we choose to utilise them, say much about ourselves and this is no less true of the television programmes and the channels we choose to watch. If na- tional identity is in a constant state of renegotiation, and if audiences are to some extent active and choice-making, then their engagement with television is important in understanding processes by which this negotiation takes place and how national identities are, momentarily at least, secured.

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