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Conceptual Analysis

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Nationalising Politics: opting “intra-racial” for “civil” war in Greece

Yannis Sygkelos*

This conceptual analysis investigates the context within which the term “intra-racial” to describe civil wars in Greece was coined and its effect upon Greek nationalism.

Keywords: civil war, Greece, nationalism

Introduction

In Greek, the term *εμφύλιος πόλεμος*, that is, *intra-racial war*,¹ has been coined to describe the armed conflict that is called *civil*² *war* in English, *guerre civile* in French, *guerra civile* in Italian, *guerra civil* in Spanish, *Bürgerkrieg* in German, *război civil* in Romanian, *гражданская война* in Russian, and *гражданска война* in Bulgarian. Drawing on and adopting the Latin *bellum civile*, that is, a Roman term implied a war not fought against external enemies, most Indo-European languages have accorded a political/legal meaning to a subset of armed violence conducted among insiders to a polity; exceptionally, in Greek this subset of armed practice has assumed racial and nationalist connotations. Notwithstanding a term selectively applied, contested and complex by itself³, *civil war* translates to an armed strife among *civilians or citizens* within a single state or polity; the Greek concept of *intra-racial war*, however, literally means an armed strife among *members of the same race*. Despite a cursory remark raised by Close that

*“the word εμφύλιος is more expressive than its equivalent English word and conveys the strong sense of ethnic identity...”*⁴

and in spite of the huge literature on the Greek civil war of the late 1940s, there is no study interpreting such distinctive an approach to this type of warfare. This short article intends to shed some light on the archaeology of such peculiar a

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¹ Throughout this article, the literal translation of the Greek term εμφύλιος πόλεμος (*emfylios polemos*), namely *intra-racial war*, is used.

² Equivalent to πολιτικός or αστικός in Greek.

³ For a genealogy of the concept of civil war, see Armitage, David. 2017. *Civil Wars: A History in Ideas*. New York: Penguin Random House.

⁴ Close, David. 2004. *The Road to Reconciliation: The Greek Civil War and the Politics of Memory in the 1980s*, in *The Greek Civil War: Essay on a Conflict of Exceptionalism and Silences*, edited by Carabott, Philip and Thanasis Sfikas. Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 271.

framing of this subset of armed upheaval as well as to consider its impact upon Greek nationalism.

Ancient Greek authors did use the word “ἐμφυλος” (lit. within the same tribe or clan) for the purpose of describing conflicts or strifes among individuals of the same lineage or kinship, but Herodotus who only once⁵ used this word as it is, more or less, currently used in Modern Greek, that is, to describe a potential war among Hellenic cities. Nevertheless, in *Oedipus Tyrannus*, Sophocles used the word “ἐμφύλιος” for people of the same kin.⁶ Furthermore, in *Politeia*, Plato used the same word for ‘people of the same locality’.⁷ Ironically, the first war that has plainly been narrated as “intra-racial” in the Greek national historiography, that is, the Peloponnesian War, was nowhere described as such by his original author, Thucydides. The very first line of his *Historiae* reads as following:

“Thucydides, an Athenian, wrote the history of the war between the Peloponnesians and the Athenians”⁸

Nevertheless, in his translation of Thucydides’ *Historiae* in the first half of the 1920s, the prominent statesman and Prime Minister of Greece in several cabinets between the 1910s and the 1930s, Eleftherios Venizelos, used the word “ἐμφύλιος” (intra-racial) over 20 times.⁹ Interestingly, Venizelos had already himself headed the pro-Allied political grouping during the so-called “National Schism” in 1916-1917, which divided Greek citizens into two political camps as regards Greece’s alignment in the First World War.

The determining Romantic times (1830-1880)

The first instance of wars that have been defined as “intra-racial” (ἐμφύλιοι) took place during the so-called “War of Independence” of the 1820s. In essence, they were armed conflicts for power and money between political and regional factions in a time when a Greek ethnic identity had hardly been forged and dissipated among the masses. The official Greek historiography has identified two “intra-racial wars” roughly lasting from the autumn of 1823 to the beginning of 1825.¹⁰ Nevertheless, similar incidents of local, bloody skirmishes and assassinations among the insurgents had not been unusual at all before the period labeled as “intra-racial war”; what is more, mob riots, intrigues, harsh and bloody confrontations between factions led by military chieftains and/or primates (local

⁵ Herodotus. *Histories: Book 8, URANIA*, 8.3 (accessed: 22. June 2021). It is striking that his English translator translates the word ἐμφυλος [literal meaning: intra-racial] as “internal”, in Rawlinson, George. 1942. *The Persian Wars by Herodotus* (accessed: 22 June 2021).

⁶ Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannus*, 1406 (accessed: 22.06.2021). Not accidentally, “ἐμφύλιος” is translated into incestuous by Johnston, Ian. 2007. *Oedipus the King* (accessed: 22 June 2021).

⁷ Plato. *Politeia*, 565e (accessed: 22 June 2021). Taking, presumably, into consideration the administrative division of ancient Athens, the English translator Paul Shorey, translated “ἐμφύλιος” into ‘tribal’. See: Shorey, Paul. *Plato, Republic* (accessed: 22.06.2021).

⁸ Thucydides. *Historiae*, para 1 (accessed: 22 June 2021). See, also, its translation: Thucydides. 1910. *The Peloponnesian War*, trans. Dent, J. M. New York: E. P. Dutton. 1910.

⁹ Venizelos, Eleftherios. 2019. *Thucydides: History of the Peloponnesian War [Thucydides: Istoría tou Peloponnesiákou Polemou]*. Anoikti Vivliothiki.

¹⁰ See, for instance, the single and obligatory history textbook which is taught in year three of the secondary school and has been endorsed by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, Louvi, Evangelia and Dimitrios Ksifaras. n.d. *Modern History [Neoteri kai Sychroni Istoría]*. Athens: Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs (accessed: 26 June 2021).

Christian notables) had been routine and endemic since the very beginning of the “War of Independence”. For instance, local armed strifes between local notables and local rebels backed by Peloponnesians occurred in the island of Hydra in May 1821. One month later, in the camp of Vervena, military chieftains incited mob to riot against Peloponnesian notables.

It was in romantic times when the term “intra-racial” [instead of civil] wars was established by both the protagonists in the “War of Independence”, who wrote and published their memoirs in that times, and scholars of Greek national history. “Intra-racial” filled what we might call a conceptual lacuna in denominating this type of warfare in Greek, since there was no alternative to contest this term. More specifically, the first of the abovementioned incidents of violence was called just “war” by Fotakos in his memoirs¹¹, while the second one was simply narrated without having been labeled at all.¹² It might be argued that the concept of “intra-racial”, at that time, reflected that the memoirists of the “War of Independence” conceived fellow insurgents, who had risen against the Ottoman Empire and strove for secession, of as belonging to the same “fyli” (race)¹³. For religious, parochial and kinship identifications and loyalties of that time made a sense of belonging to the same “genos” (gens) or “fyli” able to include different populations, interests and motivations, necessary and overwhelming.

In the romantic times, “fyli” or “genos” became coterminous with the Greek-Orthodox “millet”, which non-Greek-speaking populations, such as Albanian-speaking (Arvanites) and Vlach-speaking (Koutsovlachs), constituted membership.¹⁴ Oikonomos, a Greek-Orthodox clergyman, used “genos” interchangeably with millet: he claimed that two “geni” were subjugated to the Ottoman dynasty, one was Orthodox and the other heterodox.¹⁵ In this sense, “fyli” and “genos” were concepts wider than nation. On the other side, Zampelios, ardently influenced by the German romantic nationalism, used the concepts of “fyli”, “genos” and nation alike,¹⁶ as numerous Greek scholars have done ever since. All in all, in the romantic times, “fyli” was proved to be a porous and malleable concept contributing, one way or the other, to the forging of the Greek nation.

Memoirists of the “War of Independence” made different uses of the concept of “intra-racial war”. To begin with, Germanos III, the bishop of Old Patras, perhaps the only one memoirist who had his memoirs authored during the “War of Independence”¹⁷, recounts that in the late 1822, he was asked to intervene in the dispute between the ‘factions’ of Kolokotronis and Deliyannis in order to

¹¹ Fotakos (Chrysanthopoulos, Fotios). 1996. *Memoirs on the Revolution of 1821 [Apomnimoneumata gia tin Epanastasi tou 1821]*. Athens: Vergina, 106-109.

¹² Trikoypis, Spiridon. 1860. *History of the Greek Revolution [Istoria tis Ellinikis Epanastaseos]*. London: Taylor and Francis, 307-308.

¹³ Interestingly, Kolokotronis uses the phrase Greek race [φυλή] in the title of his memoirs.

¹⁴ Fotakos. *Memoirs*, 53, calls the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople “Fylarchon” (leader of the fyli).

¹⁵ Oikonomos, Konstantinos. 1862-66. *The Extant Ecclesiastical Texts [Ta Sozomena Ekklesiastika Syggrammata]*. Athens: F. Karampinos, 358.

¹⁶ Zampelios, Spryridon. 1857. *Byzantine Studies [Vyzantinai Meletai]*. Athens: Ch. N. Philadelfeos, 575.

¹⁷ He most possibly authored his memoirs before 1823 to be firstly published in 1837. Germanos III died in 1826.

stave an “intra-racial war” off.¹⁸ Theodoros Kolokotronis, the pre-eminent military leader of the “War of Independence”, made a considerably limited use of the term “intra-racial war” without yet applying to it a value-laden meaning. He presents his own ‘party’, that of military chieftains, and the ‘party of primates’ as the rivals in the ‘intra-racial wars’; he also defines “intra-racial war” as a civil one, that is, ‘by the people against their administrations’.¹⁹ Fotakos, Kolokotronis’ adjutant, deploys a twofold understanding of “intra-racial war”: in a macro-scale, the war that turns against and ruins ‘the spirit of the nation’ and in a micro-scale, the armed conflict between rival local factions.²⁰ Ioannis Makriyannis, a general in the “War of Independence”, a prominent post-independence political figure and a romantic nationalist, highlights the calamitous repercussions of intra-racial wars for the nation and the fatherland, while fiercely criticizing those who ‘were engaged in intra-racial wars for the sake of their own individual, selfish interests’.²¹ Articulating an ardent nationalism, Makriyannis underscores that he fought for ‘fatherland and religion’ and, hence, resists and openly castigates ‘factions’ who competed for power, offices, or even, women.²² All in all, memoirists defined armed clashes between insurgent factions as “intra-racial” in one way or the other; however, only a few of them in effect resisted the development of armed confrontations between fellow insurgents and the description of these armed, bloody clashes as fratricidal or ethnocidal are extremely rare and quite subsequent to the 1820s.

It was, also, in romantic times that primordialist scholars committed to narrate the history of the Greek nation from the mists of ancient times up to modernity, rested on the term “intra-racial war” in order to explain out military confrontations among populations calculated to be of a Greek ethnic identity. This perspective smoothly accommodated uncomfortable wars and infightings to the project of the so-called three-thousand-year of seamless evolution of the, allegedly natural and fixed, Greek nation. An emblematic proponent of this project and founder of Greek national historiography, Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos,²³ put substantial efforts into integrating anomalies of armed clashes among populations understood as Greek into the national narrative, by interpreting them as intra-racial and fratricidal wars. It is worth focusing on how Paparrigopoulos describes what Thucydides had called ‘war between the Peloponnesians and the Athenians’:

“The state of Athens was not destined to be completed through the unity of the entire Greek nation under Athenian hegemony... [the Greek nation] had never acquired political experience necessary to constitute such [big a] state... Yet material damages, no matter how great they were, they were small in comparison with the terrible moral deterioration that the Greek nation was sunk

¹⁸ Germanos, Palaion Patron. 1996. *Memoirs [Apomnimoneumata]*. Athens: Vergina, 120-21.

¹⁹ Kolokotronis, Theodoros. 1846. *Narration of Events relating to the Greek Race from 1770 to 1856 [Diigisis Symvanton tis Ellinikis Fylis apo ta 1770 eos ta 1856]*. Athens: Nikolaidou Filadelfeos, 124-40 & 190.

²⁰ Fotakos. *Memoirs*, 390-93.

²¹ General Makriyannis. n.d. *Memoirs (Apomnimoneumata)* (accessed: 25 June 2021).

²² Makriyannis. *Memoirs*, 113-26.

²³ On the role of Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos as regards the romantic formulation of the Greek historiography, see Özkirimli, Umut and Spyros Sofos. 2008. *Tormented by History: Nationalism in Greece and Turkey*. London: Hurst; and Politis, Alexis. 1998. *Romantic Years: Ideologies and Mentalities in Greece of 1830-1880 [Romantika Chronia: Ideologies kai Nootropies stin Ellada tou 1830-1880]*. Athens: EMNE-Mnemon.

to... In that time, two sorts of intra-racial wars prevailed in Greece: one general, that is, between the Athenians with their allies on the one side and the Spartans with their allies on the other, and one particular, or rather an infinite number of this kind of wars, almost in every single Greek city, that is, between aristocrats and democrats... Thucydides described the symptoms of this moral malady, which was destined to deal a heavy blow to the ancient Greek nation...²⁴

All in all, although he makes a limited use of the term “intra-racial war” in his account of the Peloponnesian War, Paparrigopoulos assigns this concept the meaning it has acquired in modernity: a war among Greeks that happens against “national normalcy”, since it endangers and eventually shatters the inseparability of the nation.

The civil war of the late 1940s

The civil war of the late 1940s was fought between the pro-U.S and pro-U.K. royalist and conservative, being called “monarcho-fascists” by their rivals, and the pro-Soviet communist Left, being called “bandits” by their rivals. Both sides strove to seize power after the retreat of the Axis troops from Greece in order to apply their own ideology, rules and political program. Each side framed the protracted armed violence on its own way aiming to justify its own politics and delegitimize its rival.

To begin with, the Communist Party of Greece (*Kommounistiko Komma Elladas*, KKE), which led the National People’s Liberation Army (*Ethnikos Laikos Apeleutherotikos Stratos*, ELAS) and, since October 1946, the Democratic Army of Greece (*Dimokratikos Stratos Elladas*, DSE), adopted the term “intra-racial war” in order to place the onus of blame for war and national division onto the Right.²⁵ Interestingly, in the Resolution of 29 September of 1946, the KKE stated that “monarcho-fascists are inflicting intra-racial war on Greece... by which only the Anglo-Saxon imperialism is to make gains”.²⁶ In the same vein, the DSE’s general, Markos Vafeiadis, pointed out that the patriotic intentions of the DSE to stop the tragedy of the intra-racial war proved futile because of the rancor and rejection of the Anglo-Americans.²⁷

The partisan newspaper of the KKE, *The Radical* (O Rizospastis or Monday’s Rizos), either used this concept as a rough definition of the existing political circumstances or emotionally charged it to underline the devastating policies of

²⁴ Paparrigopoulos, Konstantinos. 1886. *History of the Greek Nation from Antiquity to the Modern Times [Istoria tou Ellinikou Ethnous apo ton Archaiotaton Chronon mechri ton Kath’ Imas]*. 2nd ed. Athens: Konstantinidou, 535 & 601-602. It was originally authored and published between 1860 and 1877.

²⁵ The Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the KKE. 1946. All Join the People’s Democratic Front [Oloi sto Pallaiko Dimokratiko Metopo]. *Rizospastis*, 8 June 1946, 1; *Rizospastis*. 1946. “People’s Reconciliation” [Simfiliosi tou Laou]. 19 June 1946, 1; *Rizospastis*. 1946. “Genuine Referendum” [Gnisio Dimopsifisma]. 25 June 1946, 1.. Also, Nikos Zachariadis, the General Secretary of the KKE, argued that the referendum on the maintaining of monarchy would provoke “intra-racial war”, in 1946. “Political and Internal Issues” [Politika kai Esoterika Zitimata]. 16 May 1946, 3.

²⁶ Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the KKE. 1946). The Political Situation and the Thesis of the KKE [I Politiki Katastasi kai i Thesi tou KKE]. *Rizospastis*, 27 September 1946, 1.

²⁷ M. 1947. For People’s Survival [Gia tin Epiviosi tou Laou]. *Rizospastis*, 17 October 1947, 1.

the right-wing government²⁸ and the ruinous US intervention in Greece.²⁹ Moreover, the communist newspaper headed columns hosting excerpts from the press on armed conflicts in countryside as “intra-racial war”.³⁰ In parallel, the civil war of the late 1940s was described by the Left as “guerrilla war”³¹; struggle for freedom, independence, the fatherland, democracy, the people’s reconciliation;³² and people’s resistance to the monarcho-fascist violence.³³ In conclusion, nationalist arguments that foreign imperialists and their local agents had provoked a divisive and destructive “intra-racial war” were concomitant with the adoption and adaptation of nationalism by the international communist movement since the mid-1930s.³⁴

Other sides of the political spectrum used the term “intra-racial war” to describe the Greek civil war of the late 1940s as well. Themistoklis Sofoulis, the leader of the centrist Liberal Party (*Komma*), described the armed violence of 1947 as “ethnocidal or fratricidal intra-racial war” which breaks “the psychical unity of the nation”.³⁵ Sofoklis Venizelos, the leader of the centrist Venizelist Liberal Party (*Komma Venizelikon*), believed that the “intra-racial agony seriously endangers the national physical substance”.³⁶ Conversely, Konstantinos Tsaldaris, the leader of the right-wing People’s Party (*Laiko Komma*), preferred to call the armed violence a treacherous and anti-national “insurgency” or “conspiracy” aiming at the establishment of a totalitarian regime and jeopardizing the independence and the territorial integrity of Greece.³⁷

In the centrist and right-wing press as well as in the discourses of centrist and right-wing political figures of the late 1940s there is an overwhelming use of the term “banditism” (*symmoritismos*). This concept portrayed the communists as bandits and, thus, intended to delegitimize their political views and goals. Ultra-right political figures openly disparaged the term “intra-racial” as it allegedly implied a conflict between the Right and the Left concealing that it was a

²⁸ In 1947. “Love’s Alert” [Sinagermos tis Agapis]. 3 November 1947, 6, it is argued that the “intra-racial” agony had caused an endless bloodshed, countless refugees, hopeless exiles and prisoners.

²⁹ Kyriazidis, N. 1947. Mr Mc Gey on the Financing of the Intra-racial War [O k. Mc Gey gia tin Chrimatodotisi tou Emfyliou Polemou]. *Rizospastis*, 17 October 1947, 4; *Monday’s Rizos*. 1947. “The Government Shut down the Newspapers of the Left” [I Kivernisi Ekleise oles tis Aristeres Efimerides]. 20 October 1947, 1.

³⁰ See, for instance, *Monday’s Rizos*. 1947. “The Intra-racial War” [O Emfylios Polemos]. 15 December 1947, 4 & 7; *Monday’s Rizos*. 1947. “The Intra-racial War” [O Emfylios Polemos]. 8 December 1947, 4 & 7.; *Monday’s Rizos*. 1947. “The Intra-racial War” [O Emfylios Polemos]. 1 December 1947, 4 & 7.

³¹ M. 1947. Mr Kalampalikis [O k. Kalampalikis]. *Rizospastis*, 15 October 1947, 3.

³² M. 1947. Mr Kalampalikis [O k. Kalampalikis]. *Rizospastis*, 21 March 1947, 2. See, also, Vafeiadis’ responses to delegates of an U.N. Committee in March 1947 in Eudes, Dominique.1970. *Les kapétanios: la guerre civile grecque, 1943-1949*. Paris: Fayrad, 374-76.

³³ See Zachariadis, N. 1947. Over Altars and Hearths [Yper Vomou kai Estion] & Announcement of the 3rd Plenary Session of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Greece. *Rizospastis*, 8 October 1947, 1.

³⁴ Sygkelos, Yannis. 2011. *Nationalism from the Left: the Bulgarian Communist Party during the Second World War and the Early Post-war Years*. Leiden: BRILL, 19-24.

³⁵ Empros. 1947. *Yesterday’s Parliamentary Session [I Chthesini Synedriasi tis Voulis]*. 25 April 1947, 3, [Greek Parliament’s Minutes. 1946-1967](#) (accessed: 28 April 2022).

³⁶ Empros. 1947. *Address of S. Venizelos [Diaggelma tou S. Venizelou]*. 1 January 1947.6.

³⁷ Empros. 1947. *Review of Government’s Policies [Apologismos tou Kivernitikou Ergou]*. 24 January 1947, 1; Empros. 1947. *A Very Important Address of Mr K. Tsaldaris in Thessaloniki [Varisimantos Logos tou k. K. Tsaldari is tin Thessalonikin]*. 22 April 1947, 3; Empros. 1947. *A Radio Message of Mr K. Tsaldaris to the Greek People from the U.S.A. [Radiofoniko Minima tou k. K. Tsaldari ex Amerikis pros ton Ellinikon Laon]*. 29 October 1947, 6.

“foreign-driven communist campaign”.³⁸ The term “bandit” or “anti-bandit” war prevailed in the circles of political and military elites for a long time after the end of the civil war in 1949.³⁹

Establishment in law of the concept of “intra-racial war” in the late 1980s

To name armed strife conducted for power or in the name of political principles and ideals “intra-racial”, proved to be significantly conducive in the process of national reconciliation between the Right and the Left. For at least two generations, Greeks were deeply divided between the victorious Right and the defeated Left; left-wing rank and file were substantially discriminated against as well as partisan veterans, both suffered from persecution until the mid-1970s. Remarkably, the KKE was legalized just in the mid-1970s.

More importantly, the reconciliation process of the late 1980s was marked by a landmark ministerial decree,⁴⁰ which ordained the incineration of personal files, having been kept so far by police authorities, on the political beliefs and acts of left-wingers. Concurrently, the *Act of Parliament on removing the effects of civil war*⁴¹ reads:

Article 1. The period from the withdrawal of Occupation troops until 31.12.1949 is recognized as ‘period of intra-racial war.’

Article 2. It is intended the term ‘intra-racial war’ (εμφύλιος πόλεμος) to substitute for the term ‘bandit war’, wheresoever in the underlying legislation is referred to, and ‘Democratic Army’ for ‘bandits’ respectively.

In that way, it was intended that the Greek civil war be neutralized and depoliticized and the political passions of the past to be put to rest. This political climate was heralded by the then newly-formed coalition cabinet between the right-wing New Democracy (*Nea Demokratia*) and the leftist Coalition of the Left and Progress (*Synaspismos tis Aristeras kai tis Proodou*), of which the KKE was a partner.

The impact of the term “intra-racial war” upon Greek nationalism

The term “intra-racial war” has a twofold impact upon Greek nationalism: on the one hand, it delegitimizes non-ethnic wars; on the other hand, it inculcates the Greek ethnic identity with quasi-racist elements. To begin with, the term “intra-racial”, instead of civil, generates the impression that armed strife for political manifestos, ideologies, or regional interests are aberrations in the Greek national history; such armed strife *ought to have not happened and to never happen again*. On the contrary, ethnic wars are natural and ineluctable. Therefore, killing fellow Greeks is absolutely inexcusable, while killing the ethnic other may be justifiable. Such an apprehension of “intra-racial war” is blatantly reflected in the film *A Soul So Deep* (*Psychi Vathia*) by Pantelis Voulgaris, released in 2009, which unambiguously aims to depoliticize the Greek civil war of the 1940s by presenting it as fratricidal, irrational, and futile. In one

³⁸ Greek Parliament’s Minutes.

³⁹ Greek Parliament’s Minutes.

⁴⁰ *Common Ministerial Decree 8504/7-14668* of 28 August 1989.

⁴¹ *Act of Parliament on removing the effects of civil war 1863/1989* (accessed: 1 July 2021).

scene of the movie, the very popular actor, Thanasis Veggos, shows up at the local headquarters of the right-wing *National Army* to claim the dead body of his grandson by arguing:

*“what has happened to us is not a war, mister Brigadier. It is a shame: Greeks are shooting Greeks.”*⁴²

Following the leftist rhetoric of the 1940s, Evaggelos Yannopoulos, an influential MP of the centrist Panhellenic Socialist Movement (*Panellinio Sosialistiko Kinima*, PASOK) and a former ELAS officer, described the Greek civil war as ‘fratricidal and intra-racial’. More importantly, he argued that the civil war ‘halved the Greeks’ and ‘ruined the country for the sake of Greece’s foreign rulers’ [the U.K. and the U.S.A.];⁴³ in that way, he claimed that foreign, imperialist interests resulted in the outbreak of the civil war and disunited the Greek nation.

Another impact of the term “intra-racial war” upon Greek nationalism lies in the very naming of this war, as conducted among members of the same race (fyli). Entanglement of and reciprocity of determination between racism and nationalism depends on historical situations. As it has been argued, by virtue of its polymorphism and heterogeneity, racism may ‘contribute to constituting [nationalism] by producing the fictive ethnicity around which [nationalism] is organized.’⁴⁴ Within the 19th-century-discourse of Greek memoirists and scholars,⁴⁵ the ambiguous and multi-signifying term “race” [fyli] denoted an ontological category of people who share a common descent, common religion and, most importantly, common cultural traits; it implied that what had been invented as “Greek civilisation” was ideal and superior to any other of this kind. Furthermore, members of the Greek “race” were supposed to share pre-existing interests, common desires and collective goals. Hence, “race” has become coterminous with people sharing certain tangible elements; what is more, it has been considered to be an organizing principle around which the primordial ties of the Greek nation have been built. Such an apprehension of race entails a fixed milieu and irrevocably constructs the “other” who can never become a member of a certain race on the basis of descent and culture. In other words, a racial determination of the nation shapes clear-cut and uncontested conditions of inclusion and exclusion; in addition, a racial determination of the nation fosters ethnic nationalism.

Conclusion

⁴² *A Soul So Deep* [Psychi Vathia] (dir. Pantelis Voulgaris, 2009) (accessed: 2 July 2021).

⁴³ Yannopoulos, Evaggelos. 1999. *The National Resistance of Greeks against the German, Italian, and Bulgarian Occupiers 1941-1944 and its Recognition by the State (Act 1285/1982)* [I Ethniki Antistasi ton Ellinon kata ton Germanon-Italon kai Voulgaron Katachiton 1941-1944 kai I Anagnorisi tis apo to Kratos (Nomos 1285/1982)]. Athens: Tsiverioti, 699.

⁴⁴ Balibar, Etienne and Immanuel Wallerstein. 1991. *Race, nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*. London: Verso, 45-52.

⁴⁵ Gat, Azar and Alexander Yakobson. 2013. *Nations: The Long History and Deep Roots of Political Ethnicity and Nationalism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 21 & 27, have pointed out that it was since the late 19th century that the historical concept of race assumed a strictly biological meaning to totally lose its legitimacy with Nazism. By that time, race ‘denoted large communities of both cultural and “blood”-kin relatedness.’

Within this context, it could be argued that the term “intra-racial war” recurrently promotes racial perceptions of the Greek ethnic identity. On its turn, a racial perception of the Greek ethnic identity polishes ethnic approaches to Greek nationalism by reinforcing imagining of the Greek nation as natural, pre-determined, perennial, fixed, and inescapable. Projecting Greeks as of same kinship, common ancestry, and culture intends to mitigate or even ostracize any high-policy issue that may halve the national community. From a very young age, Greek pupils are informed of “intra-racial wars” as aberrations in the national past able to cause unprecedented cleavages in the solid, unified ethnic body.

Invocation of historical paradigms of fractionation that led to “intra-racial wars” with fatal repercussions for the Greek nation may be manipulated in order to delegitimize acute political claims, controversial manifestos, or tendencies toward civil disobedience and resistance. Elites interested in a pacified and obedient society as well as social actors interested in gaining appeal to the masses may take advantage of the concept of “intra-racial war”, since it entails the invention of a brotherly national community. Greeks would be wise to take lessons from the past and avoid politics that may provoke schisms and disunity.

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