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BEYOND BORDERS: UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENT DYNAMICS OF THE CYPRUS CONFLICT¹

Abstract

Abstract: This article aims to engage with the intractable conflict in Cyprus and the changes in many Cypriots' lives after the island was divided into two parts. Building on insights from political and social psychological studies, this article analyzes the Cyprus conflict durability, the different countries' role in conflict management and the role of education, politics, culture, and nationalism in the continuation of the conflict. In order to gain a better insight into the people's experiences with the conflict and its effects on their lives, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 Greek Cypriots and 10 Turkish Cypriots (mean age=45.4) through reaching out to different networks and narrative thematic analysis is used to interpret the responses. Analyzing the interviews with the various conflict transformation theories, the purpose was to understand the ethnic conflicts through the lens of social identities, social belongings, and establishing inter-communal interactions. Responses showed that people who had more contact with the other community and less connection with the motherlands showed more eagerness to live with the other community. The research concludes that while the motherland countries' involvement in the conflict, borders, the education system and the cultural elements deepen the divide, there is a huge potential of intergroup contact in bringing the communities in conflict together and constructing an alternative and a more collaborative future.

Keywords: Cyprus, Peacebuilding, Conflict transformation, Intractable conflict

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1. Introduction:

Many researchers have attempted to answer why the Cyprus problem, one of the world's most intractable conflicts, remains unresolved. When we look at the conflicts in the world from a broader perspective, the Cyprus conflict has much in common with other conflicts based on religious, cultural, socioeconomic and language differences, population shifts, territory claims, and decolonization/globalization process.

Cyprus is a divided island in the Mediterranean Sea with Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots living in separate territories. After Cyprus gained its independence in 1960 from the UK, the bi-communal government was formed which lasted only for three years. The question of how to share power and sovereignty between the two politically equal communities of Cyprus determined the start of the main conflict today. Archbishop Makarios, a long-standing Greek Cypriot leader, was made the President and ratified a constitution that provided for a Turkish Cypriot vice-president and a division of the civil services in a 70-30 split between the Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, respectively. However, Makarios' proposed amendments to the constitution were viewed as an assault on the Turkish Cypriots who had broken away to establish a parallel administration in the north (Dodd, 2010).

The period 1963 to 1974 has no agreed historical interpretation: While the Greek Cypriot narrative has been that in 1963 the Turkish Cypriots mounted an insurrection, the Turkish Cypriot narrative claims that after EOKA-B (a paramilitary group) led by the Greek junta overthrew Makarios with the aim of enosis (the political union of Cyprus and Greece), the conflict took another shape. In July 1974, citing the 1960 Treaty of Guarantee as a legal basis for its intervention, Turkey sent troops to Cyprus with security concerns and took control of the northern 36 percent of the country. As a result, about 180,000 Greek Cypriots fled from their homes in the north and came south as refugees; 45,000 Turkish Cypriots were similarly uprooted (Yilmaz, 2005). Since then, Cyprus has been divided into two parts, and the intercommunal violence eventually led to the formation of the UN Peacekeeping Forces in Cyprus (UNFICYP).

While the Republic of Cyprus has been recognized by the UN, the separation of the northern territories by the Turkish forces has subsequently been recognized only by Turkey but condemned by the UN Security Council and other international organizations. Talks with Turkish Cypriots continued during 1999 and 2000, but progress remained stable because the parties were unable to agree on future constitutional arrangements. While Greek Cypriots, with the support of the international community, were seeking a return to a bi-communal independent federation with a central government, Turkish Cypriots were insisting on a confederation of two equal states. With the resumption of peace talks in 2008 and the pause in the negotiations between the leaders of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, there has been a need to set up Working Groups on several issues to assist negotiations and pave the way for a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation in Cyprus. As a result, confidence-building measures related to several matters have been initiated (Panteli, 1984).

Alienation is a basic aspect of a culture of violence, which derives from the preservation of social structures in Cyprus that maintain perceptions and attitudes against basic human values, such as acceptance of diversity, intercultural respect, reconciliation, and solidarity. This research's imperative is to recognize the problems in order to construct bridges across the

existing divides and barriers (physical, psychological, mental, etc.) Understanding of conflict can happen once we understand where it comes from and what the main reasons are.

This research paper aims to answer the following questions: 1) How is the Cyprus conflict justified by the different political actors and how does existence of borders affect the durability of the Cyprus conflict? 2) How do people culturally construct their identities and express themselves in Cyprus? 3) To what extent do education and cultural elements affect the perceptions of people and the durability of the conflict? 4) What is the role of intergroup contact in creating a common platform in conflicts, and bringing people from diverse communities together, and what are some challenges? Since this research work doesn't only aim to reveal narratives from local people who have been affected by the separation but also aims to understand the durability and complexity of the conflict itself, the research draws on social psychological, sociological, political, and ethnographic studies.

1.1. Peace Negotiations:

Intractability of the Cyprus conflict is due to its complexity: involving several parties, existential fears, ethnic victimization, unaddressed historical traumas, economic differences, and structural inequalities. Because of its complexity and internationalization of the conflict, the United Nations established a peacekeeping force on the island, and it has been involved in the peaceful settlement process. The Security Council Resolutions has defined the UN's position on Cyprus in the framework of political equality of the communities and searching for a federal solution. Mediation is identified as one of the tools for conflict management by the UN which has been accepted as a third-party mediator by both Cypriot communities since the establishment of UNFICYP (United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus) in 1964. The UN's strategy became to stabilize the situation on the island with its peacekeeping force and prevent any inter-communal violence (Erhürman, 2010).

Various opinions have emerged about how to bring peace to the island life after 1974 and the perspectives on the intervention of the Turkish military have differed between the two Cypriot communities. While the common Turkish Cypriot narrative argues that Turkish army is a peace force and a protector, the Greek Cypriot narrative argues that military intervention is an invasion, and the presence of the Turkish military power is a threat to their sovereignty. In 1975, the return of refugees and demilitarization were discussed, and the UN supported this process by stating that "all refugees should return to their homes in safety" and called upon the concerned parties to undertake urgent measures to that end. Also, both communities accepted to discuss their proposals regarding the territorial and constitutional aspects (Solomonides, 2008).

The main disagreement was about the territorial borders and the federal state. During negotiations, Greek Cypriots have insisted on the elimination of territorial borders and aimed to create a federal state with a strong central government whereas Turkish Cypriots focused on the decentralized federal solution with territorial boundaries. In fact, Greek Cypriots were in support of "multi regional federation" which would guarantee the return of all refugees and create conditions for a harmonic co-existence between the two communities. However, suspicion between the two communities made the bi-zonal federation necessary which was suggested by the Turkish Cypriots to provide the communities living in their own areas a sense of security (Aksu, 2018).

On the constitutional issue, there were also contradictory opinions: The Greek Cypriots advocated a strong central government with a communal proportional representation and argued that the federal government would be headed by a president and a vice president from each of the communities, acknowledging the fact that it was more likely that the president would be a Greek Cypriot because of their majority. Regarding the federal structure, the Turkish Cypriots advocated a loose federation with equal power sharing and suggested a rotating federal presidency that would have representative powers (Erhürman, 2010).

After the failed negotiations, in 2002, the UN Secretary Kofi Annan presented a settlement plan for the conflict which aimed to resolve disagreements about the level of governance of the federation and which aimed to establish a united Republic of Cyprus. The initiative was connected to the European Union's enlargement process which aimed to integrate a reunified Cyprus into the EU. Annan's strategy had several important approaches. The United Cyprus Republic (UCR) would be comprised of two equal states; the Greek Cypriot State and the Turkish Cypriot State, with a single international personality; one government with two nations. Federalism would be based on single Cypriot citizenship, as well as on "internal constituent state citizenship". The federal government would have equal representation of Greek and Turkish Cypriots in the Senate, and proportional representation in the Chamber of Deputies (Asmussen, 2004).

The Annan plan was different from the other proposals in a way that it integrated the EU in the settlement process which would serve as a source of security, and as a guarantor for Cyprus bi-communal federation. The plan had three major advantages: it addressed the refugee and property issues, demilitarization, and lastly the structure of the government. However, despite the hope that Annan Plan would solve the problem, the referendum results failed the plan where Turkish Cypriots voted for yes and Greek Cypriots voted for no. Uncertainty about Turkey's insufficient troop reduction, territorial adjustments, return of refugees, and workability of the state were the main reasons for the Greek Cypriot community to vote for no. Additionally, Greek Cypriots had been mostly skeptical and uneasy about federalism and bi-communal "equality" due to the belief in their numerical superiority, and their sense of being the indigenous inhabitants of Cyprus (Asmussen, 2004).

As a result, the UN has failed to come up with innovative strategies and faced with several problems. Different perception about "sovereignty" was the biggest problem in the UN-sponsored negotiations. Moreover, the lack of mutual trust and direct contact between the communities made it hard for two parties to negotiate.

2. Methodology

2.1. Participants

The participants for this study were 10 Greek Cypriots and 10 Turkish Cypriots who were recruited through reaching out to different networks in Cyprus such as civil society organizations, universities, and bi-communal choirs and groups. At the time of the interviews, the people were aged between 23 and 75 (mean age=45.4) and they were diverse regarding age, educational level, employment status, and religion.

2.2. Procedure

The participants were asked whether they would want to participate in this research and the ones who agreed to be part of it received detailed information about the study which outlined

the scope, aims, duration, and confidentiality of the study. Informed consent was obtained prior to interviews. All the interviews were recorded with the participants' permission and were transcribed for further analysis (Rutakumwa et al., 2019). Data collection occurred between January and August 2018. A total of 20 semi-structured interviews were conducted which lasted approximately 40-60 minutes and were conducted in multiple places depending on the participants' availability: in their houses, at Home for Cooperation organization at the buffer zone, at a university or in a café. To protect the interviewees' privacy, pseudo names are used throughout the paper.

2.3. Interview

The research design was qualitative because this provides a space for people's voices to be heard which has the potential to enable people to tell their own stories in their own voices to make better sense of the conflict (Fox, 2009). Semi-structured interviews were conducted using an interview guide that was based on the specific aims of the research project (Adams, 2015). The interview was performed face to face and included open questions about people's engagement with the conflict and how the conflict occupies everyday life. Participants were encouraged to develop and express their own answers. Below is the guide of the interview questions:

- How do the conflict and the existence of borders occupy everyday life?
- What do you think about the sources of the ongoing conflict and why do you think the conflict still continues?
- What do you think about the education in both cultures?
- What is your opinion about the past/current peacebuilding efforts? Successes and failures?
- How is your interaction with the other community?
- Do you have any story to share which includes positive engagement with the other community?
- What do you think would be effective in the conflict management process in Cyprus?

2.4. On-Site Visits

In addition to the interviews, the research also includes qualitative on-site visits with the aim of understanding the conflict dynamics. The fieldwork consists of two months, visiting the buffer zone, doing a 5-week internship with the Association for Historical Dialogue and Research (AHDR) organization, being involved in Home for Cooperation activities which is a civil society organization working on peace and diversity issues, joining the bi-communal choir, and lastly visiting the museums on both north and south of Cyprus. Before the on-site visits, preparation has been made through background materials and doing research about the places to ensure that skills and knowledge in qualitative observation are acquired (Patton, 2015). During and after visit, the notes were taken about the important aspects of each place, and some photos were taken to illustrate the different aspects of the conflict.

2.5. Analysis

As a common method in qualitative research, a narrative thematic analysis was used to report the experiences of the participants (Butina, 2021). All the interviews were transcribed, and the transcribed interviews were read and reread to grasp the meaningful themes and topics. Next, the data were categorized, and the relations between the variables were analyzed. After examining the interviews with 20 people, the themes and categories were established, and these themes were analyzed with theories regarding borders, nationalism and conflict transformation and with the observations I made during the fieldwork.

3. Results

3.1. Borders and Durability of the conflict

The existence of borders affects some people's perceptions about the conflict. As Richard Hartshorne (1939) describes the process of demarcation, Cyprus shows two kinds of bordering: "subsequent borders" as those which were demarcated according to the existing settlement patterns and differences in cultures, reflecting the ethno-territorial patterns of the region and "superimposed borders" as those which were imposed by outside powers on a region under their control. Some people think that the conflict continues due to the several factors that created the borders: ethnic and linguistic differences between the Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots, and the involvement of the motherlands Turkey and Greece on the island. For example, Sevil from the Turkish Cypriot community says:

"As long as the borders exist, it is hard to understand each other but we don't speak the same language, we don't have the same religion, so it becomes easier for the motherlands to impose their ideas on the people and make them believe that borders are necessary, so the conflict continues. But I believe that borders are not natural, they are produced and maintained by the people in power."

Moreover, some scholars have focused on the "closed-open" nature of the border and its impact on the "borderland" (House, 1980). Especially the discussion of how to use the frontier region becomes very critical: Some countries may use the frontier region for military activities, some may use the area for infrastructure and settlement issues, and some may use it for integrative purposes. In his work, Oskar Martinez (1994) analyzes the borders, and the level of political and physical interaction and socialization in borderlands, interactions varying from "alienated" to "integrated". For example, closed borders imply a lack of interaction, increased tensions, and alienated borderlands whereas open borders mean cooperative and integrated borderlands. Costi from the Greek community describes the inclusive frontier regions as:

"Although the borders keep the conflict going, we have a buffer zone in Nicosia which is used for integrative purposes where both communities and other nationalities can easily spend some time with each other and enjoy the activities that are organized by the civil society organizations. I am happy that we can now use the buffer zone because in the past, the buffer zone was framed as the dead zone and it was inaccessible to civilians."

Similarly, Tulay from the Turkish Cypriot community explains how she is grateful for the use of the buffer zone which increases the intergroup contact: Established in 2003 by a group of young Cypriots, the Association for Historical Dialogue and Research (AHDR) has enlisted members from various ethnic, linguistic, and professional backgrounds working at different educational levels in Cyprus. In 2005, the AHDR came up with the idea of establishing an inter-

communal educational center at the buffer zone. They established the Home for Cooperation organization by converting an old building into an integrative place, aiming to break the common perception of the buffer zone by turning it from a dead zone to a zone of inter-communal cooperation and dialogue. The building hosts a couple of non-governmental organizations which work to promote peace, including the AHDR. Moreover, Home for Cooperation organizes panels, conferences, walking tours, musical, poetry, and sports activities for everyone from every background.

Figure 1: Home for Cooperation building at the buffer zone

The buffer zone in Nicosia is a long street where there are police controls at two sides of the street, one side being the Turkish Cypriot police control and the other side being the Greek Cypriot police control. Across the Home for Cooperation building, there is an old historical hotel called Ledra Palace which is not used as a hotel anymore but used by the UN and for peacebuilding activities like hosting the bi-communal choir or some other events. Although buffer zone promotes peace, at the Greek Cypriot police control before entering the zone, there are two illustrations at the entrance wall which are about the violent events in the past and which remind people of the conflict. When you exit the buffer zone from the Turkish Cypriot checkpoint, it's written: "Welcome to the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus". There are two flags, Turkey's flag and Northern Cyprus's flag, which make people feel like you are entering a new country. It is the same case for the Greek Cypriot side.

Figure 2: Two illustrations at the Greek Cypriot checkpoint before entering the buffer zone which are about the violent events in the past

For example, Maria from the Greek Cypriot community says:

“With the existence of the buffer zone and integrative activities, people have started to learn about each other’s culture more. However, despite the buffer zone, having borders create inequality between the two regions and makes it hard for people to accept each other.”

Moreover, some scholars argue that borders are not just political boundaries on a map, but they are also an expression of the fears, phobias, and expectations of the societies that enforce them (Carr, 2012). Boundaries create symbols and become signs of power relations and social institutions which shape social and cultural activities, and practices of the society, impose norms and values, and lastly form legal and moral codes (Paasi, 1996). Since state boundaries are not only physical constructs like walls or fences but also social, political, and cultural constructions, the dichotomy of “here-there” and “us-them” also becomes imagined and is constantly narrated by the societies. Therefore, people define themselves as belonging to a different social, ethnic, economic or religious group, and create social and cultural boundaries in their heads separating their own selves from the other (Newman & Paasi, 1998).

For example, Ayse from the Turkish Cypriot community says:

“Since 2003 when the borders were opened for the Cypriot citizens, both communities can easily cross the borders and go to the other side by showing their identification cards. However, it is not the same case for the Turkish and Azerbaijani citizens. Greek Cypriots are very strict about the border rules since they see the Turkish Cypriot region as occupied areas by Turkey and not an established country. So, everyone from Turkey and Azerbaijan is seen as potential danger and is not allowed to go to the Greek Cypriot region without a visa.”

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Moreover, although the Cypriots can cross the borders easily, the existence of borders still creates the narratives of “here-there” and “us-them” because the two communities can’t live together anymore. In their own lands, the education, media, and other entertainment platforms remain highly cultural and exclusive where people create boundaries in their heads and feel more attached to their motherland cultures. Ayse from the Turkish Cypriot community continues her statement by saying that she has fears about the Greek Cypriot community, and she thinks that the borders are necessary for the safety and threat issues:

“Turkish Cypriots who like Greek Cypriots are the people who don’t like Turkish people and their influence on the island. And Turkish Cypriots who don’t like Greek Cypriots are the people who associate themselves more with Turkey. But I don’t understand people who support Greek Cypriots because we have the same language, religion and race with Turkish people so to be on the Turkish side seems more logical to me. I know that there are a lot of military troops on the Turkish Cypriot side but that’s how we feel safe. I personally want them to exist because I don’t trust the Greek Cypriots.”

Therefore, as Carr points out, the fear and phobia become very visible in people’s opinions about the necessity of the border. However, despite the fear that still exists, the opening borders and the activities that take place in the buffer zone still provide people a chance to interact with the other culture and overcome their fears and prejudices.

3.2. Cypriot Identity Construction

Considering the different dimensions of the Cyprus conflict, one should ask “What does it mean to be a Cypriot?”, “For islanders, to what extent does history and language matter?”, and “Was there a Cypriot national identity before the separation?” To find answers to these questions, it is worth looking at different theories about nationalism.

Many scholars have different understandings of what constitutes the nation, how nations are defined, and the relationship between states and nations. According to Gellner (1983), two men are of the same nation if and only if they share the same culture, where culture, in turn, means a system of ideas and signs, ways of behaving and associations, and ways of behaving and communicating. He further claims that two men are of the same nation if and only if they recognize each other as belonging to the same nation.

Along similar lines with cultural explanations of nationalism, Karl Deutsch argues that “complementary habits” and “facilities of communication” are what form nations (Smith, 1994). These communicative facilities can include symbols, such as language, alphabets, writings, paintings, calculations, and most importantly, learned habits, preferences, memories, associations, events in history. Taken all together, they include specific elements that create “culture.” Deutsch specifically (1953) states that social communication does not necessarily include speaking the same language but rather belonging to a similar culture or having a complementary culture.

He further explains “ethnic complementarity” which suggests the difficulty to form a harmony within the members of the different professions who have the same ethnic background. According to Deutsch (1953), efficient communication among engineers, artists, or farmers is very limited due to the difference in their childhood memories, their perceptions of beauty, their habits of food and drink, their understanding of marriage, etc. Therefore, they become less close to their countrymen in terms of mutual communication and understanding than to their fellow specialists in other countries.

In both communities in Cyprus, these theories about nationalism can be observed where some people feel closer to the other community than their own community because of their cultural background, shared memories, and experiences. For example, Derya and her son Burak, from the Turkish Cypriot community describe themselves as Cypriots instead of Turkish or Turkish Cypriots. Derya, who is 72 years old and who attends the bi-communal choir every week, says that she supports peace although her husband was killed by the Greek Cypriots during the conflict because she believes that new generations should not experience such things and the only way to prevent violence is to work for peace in every means. Both she and her son Burak think that Turkish people who came to the island after the conflict assimilate the Cyprus culture and their culture doesn’t quite fit into the Cypriot culture. Burak says:

“We are afraid that after we die, the next generation won’t know anything about Cyprus. There is serious assimilation by Turkey. The Cyprus culture is disappearing. If the conflict is still not solved, Northern Cyprus will be a part of Turkey, a city in Turkey.”

As Deutsch (1953) says, social communication does not necessarily include speaking the same language but rather belonging to a similar culture. The people who don’t associate themselves with their motherlands think that Turkish and Greek cultures are different than the Cypriot culture. For example, some Greek Cypriots call Greeks “galamara” which is condescending. Similarly, some Turkish Cypriots call Turks “garasakal” which means barbaric, vulgar, uncouth, and uneducated.

For example, Lana, who is a Greek Cypriot, says, while she was working in the military, she had negative thoughts about the other community because she was brainwashed. However, after

she went to Greece to study sociology for her undergraduate, she realized that Greek Cypriots and Greeks were not very similar.

“We have many differences between Greeks and Greek Cypriots. People think that we are the same but we don’t laugh at the same joke, we don’t have the same culture. It’s not the same. We have our own dialect. If we don’t want Greeks to understand what we are saying, we can manage that. Despite Hellenism, there are differences between these two countries.”

Similar to Lana, Greg, who is also a Greek Cypriot, thinks that Greek Cypriots and Greeks are not similar, and he feels much closer to the Turkish Cypriots. Although he was born into a very nationalistic and close-minded family, he doesn’t share the same views with his parents. As a 24-year-old speaking Turkish very fluently, he has more Turkish Cypriot friends than Greek Cypriot friends because he feels closer to the Turkish Cypriots ideologically and culturally.

“My parents didn’t get angry when I took courses related to Turkish studies because they said that I should study whatever makes me happy and they would support it. But they get angry when I cross the border or when I shop from the Turkish Cypriots. My parents finally believed that I am crazy, and they stopped complaining. They remain silent now. For them, Turks are Greeks’ enemies because they took our properties, our houses. But I feel closer to the Turkish Cypriot community because I am culturally more similar to the Turkish Cypriots.”

On the other hand, some scholars approach nationalism in terms of “solidarity.” According to Renan (2018), common sufferings become more important than the common happiness or triumphs because they demand common efforts, responsibilities, and obligations. Thus, he claims that people feel closer to the ones with whom they share the history which includes sufferings and sacrifices. Considering Renan’s point about common sufferings, some people in Cyprus express that the reason they don’t feel close to the other community is mainly because their parents, relatives or friends were killed by the other community during the conflict. Especially, the old Turkish Cypriot men who fought in the war in 1974, and some of their children feel more biased than others and they can’t imagine living together again.

For instance, Ayse from the Turkish Cypriot community says that because her father fought in the conflict, the stories they have about the other community are mostly related to the sufferings they had. After her aunt and her grandmother were killed by the Greek Cypriots, she claims that she and her family felt even closer to the Turks and Turkish community because of the pain involved in the conflict. It is clear that in this situation, common sufferings become more important than the positive experiences they had with Greek Cypriots and fighting in the war creates solidarity among the Turkish Cypriots, especially among the old generation.

Considering all these different perspectives about the common Cypriot identity, there is a variety of efforts in Cyprus by the civil society organizations to alleviate the pain that different communities feel because of the conflict and to bring these two communities together. However, despite these efforts, education systems and cultural elements in both communities make it harder for people to feel close to the other community.

3.3. Education and Museums

Some scholars have been arguing that nationalism emerges only when cultural differences are present, and when the ruling class has access to the educational systems (O’Leary, 1997). When we look at the Cyprus history, we can see how some events prevented to form a Cypriot

identity. In July 1956, the British government appointed Lord Cyril Radcliffe, British Constitutional Commissioner, with the task of forming a constitution for Cyprus. The Radcliffe Proposals mainly focused on creating a political process that both groups could be involved in. For example, the proposals included standardized education, technical schools, English as a common language, and mass communication. The intention was to include all cultures in the governing process which would allow society to understand the differences, transcend those and create a common narrative. He envisioned a common education system which would allow students to share a cultural experience (Fisher, 2001).

However, although the Greek and Turkish Cypriots communities lived together, on some occasions, they remained separate from each other. This was the main problem Radcliff faced, especially the limited shared sovereignty due to the differences in language, religion, and cultural preferences (Pappas, 2012). Radcliffe's power-sharing plan was doomed by the British government's redefinition of its self-determination policy: "the power should be exercised equally by both Greek and Turkish communities and that for the first time the policy should include partition as a solution."

When Greek and British governments could not agree on a system of self-government, Radcliff's plans failed, and Macmillan Plan was put forward. Unlike Radcliffe's proposals which recommended a single legislative assembly, Macmillan's plan supported the concept of separate communities with each community having its own House of Representatives which decreased the possibility of creating a unique cultural narrative. Most importantly, there was no mention or effort for the development of a standardized educational system in the new plan (Fisher, 2001). Separate educational systems directed by individuals of Greek and Turkish heritage prevented the concept of being a "Cypriot."

For example, the curriculum of the Greek schools focused on the Greek national history and justified the Greekness of Cyprus while the curriculum of the Turkish schools focused on the concept of Turkish nationalism as formed by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. Unlike the nationalist theories which claim that state educational institutions promote a shared culture and are an essential element in sustaining social cohesion, Cyprus showed an example of how education was used to sharpen the differences (Pappas, 2012). For example, Nicos, from the Greek Cypriot community, says:

"Until I finished the elementary school, I didn't know that the Turkish Cypriots existed on this island. In 1974, I was imagining that Turks came to invade without any reason because they taught us wrong things in our history classes. They taught us how to hate Turks who are described as enemies of Greeks."

Similarly, Demetra, who is also from the Greek Cypriot community, states:

"We spent a lot of time learning Great Alexander, Ancient Greek and how bad the Ottoman Empire was. But we spent very little time learning the Cyprus problem. Actually, our history books are all about Greek history, not Cypriot history. We don't learn anything about it. Textbooks come from Greece."

The nationalism ideas started to emerge under the British colonial and became more visible during the period of rising modernity and waning colonialism. Enosis (the desire to unite with Greece) was an extension of Greek irredentist nationalism while Turkish Cypriot nationalism was imbued by Kemalism which took root in Cyprus after the 1930s and 1940s. Through

education socialization, young Turkish Cypriots started to define their group identity against the spread of Hellenic irredentism. Most importantly, the British administration created social, political, and economic changes which fostered the idea such as secularist separation of state and church, and alienation of the church from the governing process. As a social movement, enosis became essential for the traditional elite to gain back their authority and legitimacy (Pappas, 2012).

Some people in Cyprus also addressed the importance of leaving Cyprus and living abroad for a while to look at the situation more objectively. Costas talked about the suggestions he gives to his students:

“Greek Cypriots prefer to keep the land divided rather than sharing power with the Turkish Cypriots. The Greek Cypriots want the entire island but without any Turkish in it. Unfortunately, the church is very much involved in the education system. And from a very young age, the students are taught lies. It is very difficult to change people’s opinions after a certain point. It is not impossible, but it is very hard. I advise my students to leave the country and go somewhere else either to study or do whatever. It’s when they realize all the lies. When they come back, I hope they will be different and think differently.”

Besides education, the museums on both sides of Cyprus also trigger nationalism and prevent to form a common Cypriot identity. On the north part, there are two museums called “Museums of Barbarism” and “National Struggle Museum” and on the south part, there is one museum called “National Struggle Museum.”

Figure 3: Remembrance Wall in the Museum of Barbarism

The Barbarism Museum is set in the house where the family of Dr. Nihat Ilhan was murdered during 1963’s inter-communal attacks. The house has a single floor and has 6 rooms in it, with a bathroom and a toilet room where the members of the Turkish Cypriot family were killed by the Greek Cypriots. Each room has a photo display of the violent events that occurred in the 1960s-70s. As you reach the end of the house, there is a display of the clothes that children were wearing before they were murdered. The bathroom and the toilet are the only places which are locked where the murders happened, but one can look at them through the glass door and can see the bullet traces in some places of the room.

Figure 4: Display of the children's clothes that they were wearing before they were killed

By displaying the children's clothes and using very nationalistic narrations in the information bullets, the museum aims to remind the brutal and violent years in the past. Most importantly, the word "genocide" is used in narratives, and the museum provides other sources like foreign newspapers and their perspectives on Cyprus conflict. In addition, the museum doesn't only focus on the murder of Dr. Nihat's family but also displays photos of Turkish Cypriots who were murdered in the villages of Agios Sozomenos and Agios Vasilios.

The other museum "The National Struggle Museum," displays events from 1571 to 1974 chronologically. The museum is designed in a way that the walls are mostly used to display photos and writings but also there are huge spaces in the middle to display things like tanks or weapons. When one enters the museum, the first thing they see is the writing of "How happy is the one who says I am a Turk" which immediately creates nationalistic feelings. The museum also displays violent pictures of killings and war, weapons, and newspaper articles.

The main narrative in the museum is that the 1974 invasion was necessary because from the 1960s to 1974, a lot of Turkish Cypriots were killed by the Greek Cypriots. The narrations aim to create the feeling that Greek Cypriots were the ones to blame because they killed the Turkish Cypriots to achieve their enosis goals. The word "genocide" was used again in some descriptions. There was also a section of "We Won't Forget" where they put all the martyrs' names who fought in the violent conflicts. However, there was a lot of missing information about after 1974 and how the division of the island still lasts and affects the Cypriots' lives.

Unlike these two nationalistic Turkish Cypriot museums, "The National Struggle Museum" in the south part of Cyprus where Greek Cypriots live was more about fighting against the British colonialism, the violence of British forces, and making the dream of enosis real. The museum portrays EOKA (the group who fought against the British forces and later fought against the Turkish Cypriots) and how they tried to achieve their enosis goals. The museum's design leads you to the upper level where there is a remembrance wall with candles.

Figure 5: Remembrance Wall

The most common narrative in the museum was the belief that the island always belonged to the Greeks, not to Turks who came later around the Ottoman Empire period and who remained the minority. The museum also displayed many texts about how the Greeks and Greek Cypriots share the same language, culture, and religion, and how Cyprus needs to unite with Greece because of these reasons. The word “self-determination” was used many times to justify the notion that Greek Cypriots feel closer to Greece so they should have a right to claim independence and unite with Greece. For example, Stelios from the Greek Cypriot community, explains this notion among Greek Cypriots in more details:

“There were Greeks coming to Cyprus but there were also Romans, Italians, Franks, Finish...Everyone passed from this island, not only Greeks. But Greek Cypriots think that Greeks colonized Cyprus and they settled the first. From then on, whoever came to the island, it was called an invasion. What they wanted was to unite with Greece because at that point, it would give Cyprus more security; we have the same religion, same language, similar culture... They thought that Greece as a motherland would help Cyprus to grow. Nationalists put pictures on Facebook; Cyprus as a little daughter begging Greece to ‘free me.’ It’s like a child was taken away from the mother. From the 1960s to 1974, they wanted to unite with Greece, and they brought guns from Greece.”

The narratives that are used in museums for both Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots show that the authorities need to prove to their communities that the past actions were correct and necessary with the purpose of creating a deep level of attachment to the motherlands. As a result, both education and the use of museums make the reconciliation harder for some people in both communities who are attached more to their motherlands.

3.4. Reconciliation and intergroup contact

Considering all the factors that cause islanders to feel less connected to the other community, it is important to understand how the conflicts move into destructive spirals. Deutsch (2006) suggests three factors: Competitive processes which lead to the idea that conflicts might be “won”, misperception and selective information that accentuate the contrast of oneself with the other side, and lastly cognitive and societal elements that heighten one’s commitment to engage in the conflict.

As an alternative to destructive conflict, he suggests the term “productive conflict” which means that although the parties might have different interests or attitudes, they resist the temptations to escalate the conflict and focus on the following aspects: Thinking creatively

about the problems, finding possibilities for mutual problem solving, and seeking to negotiate cooperation. Deutsch (2006) further discusses the ways how a conflict can become a “productive conflict” rather than moving in the destructive direction: A presence of honest communication, a prior relationship between the parties that is not antagonistic, an avoidance of rigidity, and a conscious focus on the objective aspects of the conflict. Regarding Deutsch’s points, Pavlos from the Greek Cypriot community, tells how important is to have a relationship with the opposing parties:

“If I could manage to be in peace with Turkish Cypriots as a person whose family is very nationalistic, I think everyone can manage it. The most important thing is to have the desire to be in peace. It is important to be close to the other community. Look at me, I have a lot of friends from the Turkish Cypriot community and, if everyone does the same thing, we get closer to the solution. Many people are afraid of getting closer because they don’t trust each other.”

Nadler (2008) argues that mutual trust and acceptance are two necessary tools for smooth and cooperative interactions between groups within a society where people are mindful of each other’s sense of security, dignity, and well-being. These are elements that are lacking in the relationship between identity groups in deep-rooted, intractable conflicts.

The distinction between socio-emotional and instrumental reconciliation becomes important in bringing diverse communities together: Instrumental reconciliation aims to change the adversarial relations into positive relations that would allow parties to co-exist in a conflict-free environment. It requires a long-term process in which the parties gradually learn to replace hatred with trust and replace negative perceptions with relatively positive perceptions of each other. On the other hand, socio-emotional reconciliation aims to work on the premise that recurring experiences of pain and humiliation create a threat to identity and ending conflict can be possible when a perpetrator accepts responsibility for past wrongdoings, expresses remorse, and is forgiven by the victim (Kelman, 2010). Therefore, a long-term relationship based on mutual respect and acceptance can’t be achieved without a peace agreement which addresses the fundamental needs and sense of justice that both sides need. For example, Mehmet, from the Turkish Cypriot community, says:

“There is no solution because the compensation problem is a big issue. The Turkish people buy and sell everywhere, like a gambler. And the value of the commodities in the past is not similar to today’s value. So how are they going to handle this compensation problem? I live in a Greek house and I am ready to pay whatever amount I have to pay. I have a guilty conscience.”

Similarly, the other people thought that the main reasons for the ongoing conflict was not only related to nationalistic thoughts, but it was also related to the money and property issues, and not having remorse about the past wrongdoings. Some Turkish Cypriots stated that after 1974, a lot of Turkish Cypriots took Greek Cypriots’ properties and owned them without any permission and most of the Greek Cypriots had to leave their most important and valuable belongings behind.

Reconciliation serves the best tool which goes beyond conflict resolution and having pragmatic relationships. It enables conflicting parties to internalize the new relationships and integrate them into their own identities. As the new attitudes become integrated into the groups’ own identity, they gradually replace the old attitudes (Kriesberg, 1982). Reconciliation requires different processes such as mutual acknowledgement of others’ nationhood and humanity,

development of a common moral basis for peace, and confrontation with history. Reconciliation does not require writing a joint history, but it requires admitting the other's truth into your own narrative. Reconciliation also requires acknowledgment of responsibility for the wrongs it has done to the other. Most importantly, reconciliation becomes successful when there are institutional mechanisms for cooperation. By establishing common interests and personal relations, cooperative activities can help stabilize a new peaceful relationship (Kriesberg, 1982).

Allport's (1979) intergroup contact hypothesis explains that simple contact between groups is not sufficient to improve intergroup relations. He argues that certain prerequisite features must be present for the contact between groups to reduce bias successfully. These characteristics include equal status between groups, cooperative (rather than competitive) interactions, opportunities for personal acquaintance, and supportive norms by authorities. However, it is argued that to meet all those conditions above can be very difficult although this formula becomes effective when those conditions are met (Pettigrew, 1998).

Considering this point, common in-group identity model proposes that the development of a group identity can be a common mediating factor to achieve the conditions identified by Allport (Pettigrew, 1998). With the process of re-categorization, members of different groups start to perceive themselves as single, more inclusive superordinate group rather than as two completely separate groups. It seeks to reshape group boundaries rather than dissolve them and aims to create "we", a common group identity in order to reduce the bias level (Hornsey, 2008).

Re-categorization can take two forms: Firstly, two different social entities can be combined to form a single superordinate category. In other words, representations of the groups can be transformed from two separate groups to one inclusive group. The second form of re-categorization occurs when the members maintain their initial identities in the group, but they do within the context of a superordinate category. This represents a "dual identity" or "two subgroups in one group" (Gaertner et al., 1993).

Considering all these arguments, Cyprus shows examples of re-categorization. The bi-communal choir for both children and adults meets once a week at the buffer zone where both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots sing songs in different languages and give concerts in different parts of Cyprus. Moreover, civil society organizations design programs, especially for children and young adults, to promote an education which prepares children and youth to live in a multi-cultural, multi-lingual, and multi-faith society in Cyprus. These programs consist of anti-racism workshops in schools, educational programs that prepare students to be in contact with the other community, and activities that provide chances to students of similar age to come together and collaborate with each other.

Some projects I observed included young Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot kids and youth coming together, learning each other's languages and cultures slowly, and working on activities together. These projects were very significant in terms of re-categorization of identities where Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots united under one identity "Cypriots" by learning their common identities, shared history, and common humanity. At the end of the projects, many students left the occasions with feelings of curiosity about the other culture and eager to connect with the other community. Although these two communities still maintained their Turkish and Greek identity, these projects showed them that they live in the same country, and reminded them that before the conflict, there was a Cypriot identity where two communities

were neighbors, close friends, or even partners. Regarding this, Ayşen, from the Turkish community who attends the bi-communal choir, says:

"We don't have any difference. Can you see any difference between the Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots? No, because we have similar genes. Who feels happy about the separation? I had a Greek Cypriot friend and neighbor when I was young and we used to play together, share everything. She taught me Greek, and I taught her Turkish. We were close friends until they had to leave the town because of the conflict. I always speak Greek with my Greek Cypriot friends. Some people don't like us because we get along with the Greek Cypriots very well. We love our country more than they do because we are Cypriots."

Greg, from the Greek Cypriot community who is also in the choir shares the same feelings:

"After living in Greece, I went back to Cyprus and I joined the bi-communal choir when I was 18. I met my best friend in the choir who is a Turkish Cypriot. Last year, I asked her to be her best man in her marriage. For the first time, two Greek Cypriot people became best men in a Turkish marriage. Until that day, nothing like this has happened before. We appeared on a TV interview and they published our story on the newspapers. For a Greek Cypriot, it was a very special experience."

These people proved that interaction and a good level of communication increase the trust level between the two communities and create a shared and a common identity where the individuals don't only feel that they belong to their own communities, but they also feel attached to the other community.

3.4. Challenges

Threats lead to biases and conflicts because group members are motivated to protect their groups' resources and maintain their values and traditions. For example, realistic threat occurs when there are intergroup competitions and conflicting goals whereas symbolic threat occurs when an out-group violates the group values (Stephan et al., 2000). Symbolic threats can be more seen in religious and political contexts where one group's beliefs are seen as violating or conflicting with another group. However, social identity theory and self-categorization theory propose that people can shift back and forth between collective and personal identities when the contexts change. Therefore, they argue that social identities are never fixed. People can have multiple social identities at different levels of inclusiveness (Croucher, 2017). Social psychology theories argue that constructive intergroup contact requires equal status between group members. However, the difficulty of having equal status may not be easily overcome. Moreover, some other challenges might occur in intergroup relations such as intergroup anxiety, group homogeneity, naïve realism and desire to maintain the group power and status (Croucher, 2017).

For example, in some situations, anticipated intergroup contact causes intergroup anxiety because of the unknown where a collection of negative feelings occurs such as fear, anger, or disgust. When groups are homogenous, people expect each other to have similar traits and behaviors which creates barriers to individualization and to connect with groups that are different. In fact, people tend to identify with group members when group boundaries are less permeable, and they tend to maintain their groups' power and status when out-groups are perceived as threats. Lastly, naïve realism suggests that groups think that their perception of the

world is objective and accurate, so they expect out-group members to have the same judgments and decisions based on their reality (Pettigrew, 1998).

Considering these arguments, Cyprus displays a very complex picture because although there is a considerable amount of people who try to increase the interaction between these two communities, either personally or socially, there are still people who are afraid of interaction, and think that there is a threat to communicate with the other community. For example, Michalis, from the Greek Cypriot community, expresses his concerns about bringing peace to the island.

“The Greek Cypriots who want peace, it is like a crime. They still teach how to hate each other. After realizing that what I was taught was not accurate, I started to research by myself and I learned the other side of history, I learned about the mistakes that Greek Cypriots made in the past. But the truth is here. The truth is not based on what Turkish Cypriots or Greek Cypriots say. If you want to learn the truth, you have to listen to both sides. But I received a lot of reactions from other people. When I talk about the mistakes that Greek Cypriots make, people start to get angry. I heard a lot negative comments from my parents and from the people in my school... Without knowing the other person, you can't have an opinion about them.”

Similarly, Hatice, from the Turkish Cypriot community, shares her thoughts about interacting with the other community:

“People want to keep the status quo because it is easy to live apart and not communicate. Although I want to communicate with the other culture, I usually feel anxious and nervous because I don't know how they will perceive me and how they will react. I wish there were more activities for both communities to come together because that seems like the only way we can overcome our prejudice and feel closer to the other community.”

What both Hatice and Michalis say is very important in order to understand the challenges people face with intergroup relations and listen to their suggestions and expectations to overcome those challenges. It is crucial to announce the peacebuilding activities to more people and try to increase the participation, especially for people who feel more prejudiced towards the other culture and who feel anxious about getting together.

Unite Cyprus is a movement with almost 7,000 people who fight for peace which shows that there are no two separate groups but there is a “Cypriot” identity. It is an independent self-funded grassroots initiative to connect Cypriots by seeking the truth, building empathy, respecting diversity, reinforcing solidarity and promoting a joint future in order to reach a united Cyprus for all Cypriots. After interviewing people and observing the daily lives of people, I realized that there is a good number of people who support peace and want to live together again, and there are people who have trust issues and who don't feel comfortable getting together because of the past events. However, if peace projects and activities continue, especially for the young children, there is a great promise that the communities can agree on a solution, not necessarily living together but learning to respect diversity and each other's culture.

4. Conclusion

This paper analyzed the deep-rooted conflict in Cyprus through different fields of studies such as politics, border studies, and social psychology. The interviews that are made with the islanders showed that although there is a considerable amount of people who feel closer to the

other community because of shared experiences and friendship connections, the peace solutions seem harder for some people who are hesitant to communicate with the other community. The results showed four main challenges in bringing the communities together and transforming the conflict which are the involvement of the motherlands, the education systems in both societies, the cultural elements such as museums and entertainment tools which trigger nationalism, and lastly the feeling of the anxiety to come together. The only way to understand the different dynamics of the conflicts is to look at how and why the conflict occurred in the first place, what has been done to promote peace and what is needed in the future to bring these communities in conflict together. Despite all these challenges, responses from the interviews revealed that people who had more contact with the other community and less connection with the motherlands showed more eagerness to live with the other community. This research provided explanations of why the conflict is still not resolved and gave examples of how to reduce prejudice between the groups in conflict. The study concludes that in order to construct an alternative and a more collaborative future, the inter-communal contact between communities should be increased, and the new paradigm of positive peace and nonviolence should be embraced where the culture of war is dismantled, learning for peace is encouraged and the geographic limits are deconstructed.

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