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THE POLITICO-PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS OF THE CYPRUS CONFLICT

Bülent Evre (a)*
*Corresponding author

(a) Department of Public Administration, European University of Lefke, Gemikonağı, Northern Cyprus,
bulentevre@yahoo.com

Abstract

Although considered research has been devoted to different aspects of the Cyprus conflict, rather less attention has been paid to politico-psychological factors associated with the internal dynamics of the conflict. This paper aims to understand and interpret the politico-psychological factors underlying the Cyprus conflict from the social identity approach. Firstly, this approach my help us understand and analyse the socio-psychological factors underlying the conflict. Secondly, the social identity approach may contribute to narrow the gap in the literature on the psychological factors involved in the Cyprus conflict. The concept of social identity where members of a community are expected to think and behave in certain ways has a critical role in some intergroup conflicts. Within this framework, the paper attempts to illustrate how the social identities have been constructed, and categorised as ingroups and outgroups throughout the history, and to explain under which circumstances different social groupings lead to intergroup conflict. Accordingly, throughout the history different social identities have been constructed in Cyprus. It seems that during the Ottoman period since there was no political competition between the social groups, no political conflict arose. However, when two distinct nationalism florished under the British rule, the Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots embraced conflicting national aspirations. In Cyprus, two social groups' strong attachment to their ethnic/national identities could not have lead them to cooperation, but competition and rather conflict.

Keywords: Cyprus conflict, the Turkish Cypriots, the Greek Cypriots, social identity, political psychology.

1. Introduction

Identifying what Cyprus conflict is would be meaningless with no reference to any perspective. Having been on the international agenda over the past half century, the Cyprus conflict has been examined in various ways. Any scholarly work on the conflict should set out from the assumption that the Cyprus conflict is complex which requires the aspects involved to be elaborated separately. The literature on the Cyprus conflict can be classified into two in terms of internal and external dynamics. Whereas some studies focused primarily on the internal dynamics of the Cyprus conflict (Kelman, 1990; Hadjipavlou-Trigeorgis,1993; Diamond and Fisher, 1995; Yılmaz, 2004; Loizides, 2007; Husnu and Crisp, 2010), the others dealt predominantly with the external aspects of the conflict (Keashly and Fisher, 1990; Richmond, 1999; Fisher, 2001; Güney, 2004; Müftüler-Bac and Güney, 2005; Eralp and Beriker, 2005).

Although considerable research has been devoted to different aspects of the conflict, rather less attention has been paid to psychological factors associated with the internal dynamics of the Cyprus conflict. Yet, some work should address this context. From a psychoanalytic perspective, Volkan identified mass traumas experienced by both the Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots, and demonstrated how those influenced inter-communal relations in the analysis of the Cyprus conflict (Volkan, 1979; 2009). Concurring with him, Yılmaz too pointed out the significance of unresolved traumas and mistrust which were evaluated as "psychological barriers" between the two communities, and proposed a set of confidence building measures (Yılmaz, 2004). On the other hand, Hadjipavlou-Trigeorgis and Trigeorgis who adopted an evolutionary approach to conflict resolution, drew attention to the fears between the two communities, and proposed apart from two separate zones, a third, joint federated area which would permit interaction and cooperation (Hadjipavlou-Trigeorgis & Trigeorgis, 1993). Moreover, from intergroup contact theory, Husnu and Crisp underlined the existence of prejudice and discrimination as psychological factors in the ethnically divided island of Cyprus, and tested imagined contact of Turkish Cypriot participants whose intentions were reported to engage in future contact with Greek Cypriots (Husnu & Crisp, 2010).

Nevertheless, the present study focuses mainly on the internal parties of the Cyprus conflict from the social identity approach. Firstly, this approach may help us understand and analyse the socio-psychological factors underlying the conflict. Secondly, the social identity approach may contribute to narrow the gap in the literature on the psychological factors of the conflict.

This study comprises three main sections. The first section is devoted to the theoretical framework in which the concept of social identity is drawn upon. In the second one, the social categorisation processes in Cyprus are analysed throughout history according to the theoretical model in order to better understand social groupings such as ingroups and outgroups. The last section concludes with a summary of the paper and a suggestion for the settlement of the Cyprus conflict in terms of social identity.

2. Problem Statement

For over a half century, inter-communal peace talks have been conducted to find a comprehensive settlement to the Cyprus conflict. However, apart from diplomatic inroads, no other alternatives have been successfully adopted to resolve the Cyprus conflict which is growing more complex and complicated over time. It is clear that the conflict has several aspects of which the psychological ones are pivotal and deserve to be elaborated. It is obvious that both parties involved in the conflict are expected to think and behave in accordance with their social identities. Therefore, understanding the nature of social identities and identifying the factors causing conflict may facilitate coping with psychological barriers to intergroup relations, and finding a peaceful resolution to the Cyprus conflict.

3. Research Questions

The basic framework that premises this paper is; What are the politico-psychological factors underlying the Cyprus conflict? Within this framework, this paper addresses the following questions:
What is the role of social identities within the context of the Cyprus conflict?
Which social identities have been historically categorised as ingroups and outgroups in Cyprus?
Under what conditions have different social groupings led to intergroup conflicts in Cyprus?

4. Purpose of the Study

Within this framework, the paper attempts to illustrate how the different social identities have been constructed, and categorised as ingroups and outgroups throughout the history, and to explain under which circumstances different social groupings lead to intergroup conflict.

5. Research Methods

In this paper, the social identity approach has been adopted as an explanatory framework in which historical data have been analysed. This approach may shed light on the politico-psychological factors underlying the Cyprus conflict in general, and aid us to understand and analyse intergroup dynamics which are central to the Turkish Cypriots-Greek Cypriots relations. The concept of social identity refers to the identification of individuals with particular groups such as gender, ethnic, cultural, national and so on. Social identities are also closely related to a system of significance; members of a group make sense of the social world in terms of their social groups. As Hannum puts it, "social identity refers to our way of thinking about ourselves and others based on social groupings." (Hannum, 2007:8).

It would be useful to clarify some key processes within the framework of social identity: categorization, identification, and comparison. To begin with the term "categorization" refers to psychological processes which enable us to divide or classify the physical or social environment into categories or groups in terms of similarities and differences. Following Henri Tajfel and John Turner, social categorization can be defined as:

"cognitive tools that segment, classify, and order the social environment, and thus enable the individual to undertake many forms of social actions. But they do not merely systemize the social world; they also provide a system of orientation for self-reference: they create and define the individual's place in society." (Tajfel & Turner, 1979:40).

Individuals make sense of the social world and locate themselves in society through categorization. They also classify themselves into groups in terms of similarity and difference. In doing so, individuals identify with the groups that they share in common. In other words, social groups provide individuals with an identification process:

"Social groups, understood in this sense, provide their members with an identification of themselves in social terms. These identifications are, to a certain extent, relational and comparative: they define the individual as similar to or different from, as "better" or "worse" than, members of other groups." (Tajfel & Turner, 1979:40).

The social identity approach is based on two principal assumptions. The first one is cognitive in the sense that the categorization process leads the individuals to overestimate intergroup differences and to underestimate ingroup differences. The other is motivational in the sense that what motives discrimination is a need for self-esteem or self-respect. In other words, the differentiation between groups is needed for a positive self-evaluation, a positive identity, a positive self-image (Worchel, 1998:6).

On the other hand, the comparison process is central to intergroup relations as a result of which conflicts may arise. As long as social identity is evaluated as satisfactory, the individuals continue to identify with the social groups that they belong to. However, if social identity is not satisfactory, then individuals may use three distinct strategies: individual mobility, social creativity, and social competition. These strategies are also evaluated as reactions to negative social identity. First, the members of a social identity may attempt to leave the existing ingroup and pass upward into a higher-status group (individual mobility). Second, individuals may seek to attribute positive characteristics to their ingroup by comparing their group to the outgroup on a new positive dimension; evaluating the attributes of the group which were previously negative as positive; or comparing their group to a lower-status group (social creativity). Finally, the group members may choose a direct competition with the outgroup to achieve a positive social identity (social competition). It is social competition which generates conflict between ingroups and outgroups (Tajfel & Turner, 1986:19-20).

6. Findings

Historically, from the period of Ottoman rule to the post-1974 era, different social groupings and identities have become prevalent in Cyprus. However, only competition circumstances in the development of Greek and Turkish nationalism and their national aspirations have led to conflict on the island.

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6.1. Social Identities in Cyprus under the Ottoman Empire (1571-1878): The Dominance of Muslim and Christian Identities

The Occupation of Cyprus by the Ottomans in 1571 brought about new social identities. Firstly, the Orthodox and Greek-speaking population which was repressed by the Catholic Latin aristocracy under the Venetian period (1489-1571), became salient during the Ottoman rule. The Greek Orthodox Church was granted extensive privileges.

Secondly, although the island had been subjected to the first Muslims since 632 during the Byzantine period, with the arrival of the Ottoman Empire, Muslim and Turkish-speaking population from Anatolia appeared in Cyprus.

Although the communities on the island possess multiple identities such as geographical (Cypriotness), ethnic (Greekness/Turkishness), and religious (Orthodoxy/Islam), their religious identities became their dominant social identities. The defining feature of social category in Cyprus was religion. At that time, the religious mode of thought fuelled social identities and the Muslims and Christians made sense of their social world accordingly.

This social categorization process can be explained through two main causes: One is that throughout the Ottoman Empire, the population was organised on the basis of *millet,* that was religiously defined communities. For example, the Archbishop of Cyprus was not only the spiritual leader of the Orthodox people, but also the political leader, known as Ethnarch, of his people. Therefore, the religious identities were taken into consideration both in the relations between the Ottoman Government and social groups, and in the relations between social groups. The other cause for the domination of religious identities in social groups is that nationalist sentiments were not disseminated until the beginning of the nineteenth century, especially among the Greek Cypriots.

With respect to intergroup relations, social groups on the island lived side by side, but in silos rarely interacting with each other. Within the framework of the Ottoman *millet* system, each social group based on religious identity enjoyed its own rights and privileges. It is possible to say that intergroup relations were fairly stable. Therefore, there was no conflict or political antagonism between the Orthodox subjects and the Muslim ones.

On the other, the Greek War of Independence in 1821 started the dissemination of national sentiments among the Greek-speaking Orthodox on the island. This movement was seen as a revolt against the Ottoman Empire by the Ottoman rulers who were anxious about the disintegration of the Empire. As a part of a wider movement raging in the Peloponnese, in Central Greece, and in the islands of Aegean, the Church hierarchy such as the archbishops, the bishops, high-ranking Greek priests and many laymen were executed on the grounds of preparing to join in the Greek revolt against the Empire by the Ottoman Governor of the time, Küçük Mehmet. This tragic event had a traumatic effect on the Greek Cypriots, while in the eyes of the Turkish Cypriots, it was seen as a revolt against or disloyalty to the Ottoman Empire (Spyridakis, 1964:60-62; Attalides, 1979:25; Hadjidemetriou, 2002:298-311).

6.2. Social Identities in Cyprus under British Rule (1878-1959): The Dominance of Greek and Turkish Identities

The transfer of Cyprus from the Ottoman rule to British rule with the administrative and structural changes contributed to the (re-)construction of social identities on the island. This period can be easily characterised by the dominance of ethnic/national identities in respect of social identities. The emergence of two distinct nationalisms, namely Greek nationalism and Turkish nationalism became the main source of the social identities in Cyprus. In other words, national identities became the dominant form of social identity.

The two distinct nationalisms on the island, defined their national identities in ethnic terms and subsequently excluded one another. As both Greek and Turkish nationalisms qualify as an ethnic form of nationalism which emphasizes a particular ethnic group, these communities sought to establish a homogeneous population within the nation-state. It is to be noted that firstly, Greek nationalism arose nearly a century earlier than Turkish nationalism. This fact is significant in understanding the intergroup relations between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, which can be characterised as discriminatory.

It would be useful to sketch an outline of the historical background of both national identities as a dominant form of social identities. When the British took over Cyprus, the Orthodox and Greek-speaking population, especially elites of the island identified themselves with Greek identity and perceived Greece as their" motherland". The establishment of the Greek nation-state on the mainland in 1830 provided the Greek Cypriots with a national identity with which they could identify, and influenced the dissemination of national sentiments on the island as well.

Greek nationalism on the island was part of a wider political ideal called "*Megali* idea" (Great Idea) which was a dream to revive the Byzantine Empire and to unite all the Greek lands into a greater Greece. This is also called "pan-Hellenism" that arose when Constantinople fell to the Turks in 1453. Since the Greeks of Cyprus saw themselves historically and culturally as Greeks, the Great Idea found expression among the Greeks of Cyprus as well as those from other parts of the Greek world (Markides, 1977:10). The Greek Cypriots perceived themselves as part of the Greek nation which was deemed much larger than in the other parts of Greek State from the pan-Hellenic ideal. Stavrinides describes Greek nationalism during the 19th century as follows:

"Greek nationalism and patriotism came to mean by the 1860s: pride in being a member of a superior nation, belief in the necessity of extending the boundaries of the Greek state to include all historically Greek lands, and consequently the assertion of the duty to support a just struggle against the Turkish conquerors who have for long held by force sacred national territory" (Stavrinides, 1975:20).

In the political landscape, the Greek Cypriot elites followed two main objectives under the British rule: The first one was to struggle for the union of Cyprus with Greece, known as *enosis*. The other objective was to acquire temporarily more local rights until *enosis* was accomplished (Spyridakis,

1964:63). During the British rule, the demand for *enosis* was kept on the political agenda. The policy of *enosis* was an expression of the Great Idea/pan-Hellenism which aimed to revive the Byzantine Empire. Although the idea of *enosis* originated in the minds of intellectuals, the Orthodox church as the most central and powerful of institutions undertook to lead and contribute to its development (Markides, 1977:11). Vanezis (1972:47), a Greek Cypriot scholar, states that "the whole British period in the history of Cyprus (1878-1959) is occupied by the struggle of the Orthodox Church for union (*enosis*) with the Greek motherland from which Cyprus had been separated for nearly 800 years." In addition, political elites such as the members of the Legislative Council and the various committees and councils which formed to promote *enosis*, supported the Church and followed its leadership role. (Hadjidemetriou, 2002:364-365).

On the other hand, Turkish nationalism began to flourish among the Muslims on the island nearly a century later than Greek nationalism in Cyprus. Throughout the Ottoman empire, the Turks were the last ethnic group who oriented themselves towards Turkish nationalism. Turkish nationalism developed especially among the young generation who were influenced by the new movement in Turkey. Although the Young Turk movement who favoured historically Ottomanism, Islamism, and Turkism respectively had influenced national sentiments among the Muslims of Cyprus as well (Evre, 2007-2008), it was essentially Turkish nationalism in relation to the establishment of the Turkish Republic in Turkey, which influenced the young Muslims in Cyprus (Evre, 2004).

The young Muslim generation began to see Turkey as the "motherland" and identify themselves with the Turkish identity. Despite the fact that Cyprus was kept outside the new boundaries of Turkey which was formulated by M. Kemal Atatürk as National Boundaries (Misak-ı Milli), the especially young Muslim generation followed intimately the Kemalist reforms such as the introduction of the Latin alphabet, a western dress code, and the secularization of education, with the motive of getting involved in the newly established Republic of Turkey. In other words, while Cyprus was politically excluded, the Muslims of Cyprus were culturally assisted by the Turkish Republic, such as meeting their educational needs.

With respect to intergroup relations, Turkish nationalism on the island emerged intellectually in relation to Turkey, but politically in opposition to the demand for *enosis* of the Greek Cypriot elites. Whereas, Greek nationalism provided the dominant self-reference for Greek Cypriots' social identities, Turkish nationalism did the for the Turkish Cypriots' social identities during the British rule. It is possible to argue that Cyprus conflict originated from the social groups' opposing national aspirations. Whereas the Greek Cypriot elites put forward the demand for *enosis* at every opportunity that arose, the Turkish Cypriot elites immediately countered *enosis*. The major motives underlying the Turkish Cypriots' strong opposition to union with Greece can be explained through their identification with a distinct national identity (self-respect), the vulnerability of the Turkish Cypriots and their perception of *enosis* as a threat (fear). In the eyes of the Turkish Cypriots who developed identification with the Turkish identity, the Greek Cypriots' demand for union with Greece was a factor which would decrease their self-respect or

self-esteem and caused a fear of self-existence based on the belief that the Turkish Cypriots would lose their distinct identities or might be annihilated under Greek rule.

Moreover, being numerically in a minority position in comparison to the population of the Greek Cypriots, made the Turkish Cypriots particularly vulnerable to the demands of the Greek Cypriots. With respect to the Turkish Cypriots' social identity, the British rule constituted a break with the Ottoman rule in the sense that the Muslims of Cyprus who had been "the masters" on the island under the Ottoman rule, were reduced to a minority position under the British rule. With the introduction of the British constitution of 1882, the Legislative Council which consisted of twelve elected members and six appointed members, was established. The Christian and Muslim members of the Legislative Council began to be represented in proportion to their numbers in the population. Accordingly, while nine representativeness was granted to the Christian community, only three representatives in the Council were devoted to the Muslim community. Although at the beginning the Muslim elites protested against this arrangement and threatened not to participate in the Council, they later abandoned their demand for equal representation and started joining the Council (Evre, 2004:31-32). According to the 1881 Census, the Muslims barely constituted one-quarter of the population of which was estimated to comprise 137,631 Christians and 45,358 Muslims. From the 1880s to the 1950s, the Muslim-Turkish Cypriots deeply felt themselves to be a minority. For example, in 1943, the Turkish Cypriot elites established the "Cyprus Turkish Minority Association" and declared themselves as a minority.

Nonetheless, the Turkish Cypriots began to use the social creativity strategy in order to pass from a minority to an equal status from the mid-1950s onwards. The mass demonstrations in Turkey by the Turks of Cyprus during the 1950s, and the Turkish Government's involvement in the Cyprus conflict became the foremost factor which increased the Turkish Cypriots' self-confidence and self-esteem. The Turkish Cypriot elites began to strongly deny the majority/minority divide, and to ask for equal rights in the administration after the mid-1950s (Evre, 2004:127). With the establishment of the Republic of Cyprus in 1960, the Turkish Cypriots were elevated to be the co-founder with the Greek Cypriots, and from then, they refused to be identified or treated as a minority. On the other hand, despite their denial of being politically a minority, the Turkish Cypriots continued to feel psychologically a minority due to their vulnerability. However, the Greek Cypriots continued to perceive the Turkish Cypriots as a minority. In this regard, the rights received by the Turkish Cypriots was seen as "unjust" by the Greek Cypriot elites.

From the early period of the British rule, the Greek Cypriot elites constantly expressed their expectation of *enosis* from the Government. However, their demands were often confronted with both the refusal of the British Government which had strategic interests in the Mediterannean and the opposition of the Turkish Cypriot elites who were in cooperation with the British in opposition to *enosis*. The Greek Cypriot elites demanded Greece's assistance to convey the Cyprus conflict to the U.N. General Assembly for self-determination, but they failed to accomplish their purpose. Following the dissatisfaction with the outcome of their effort in the U.N., the demand for *enosis* turned to a violent movement during the 1950s.

EOKA, an underground organisation, established to fight against the British colonial administration, and for union with Greece (Druşiotis, 2005).

On the other hand, the Turkish Cypriot elites perceived the establishment of EOKA as a serious threat to the Turkish identity, and chose the social competition strategy to preserve their ingroup identity. In reaction to EOKA, TMT, a secret underground organisation, (Turkish Resistance Organization) was established in 1958 with the help of Turkey in order to counter EOKA's activities. With the establishment of two distinct nationalist underground organizations, ethnic conflict broke out between the Greek Cypriots and the Turkish Cypriots.

During the 1950s, both the Greek Cypriots and the Turkish Cypriots homogenised the ingroup similarities from the outgroup differences. Nevertheless, neither the Greek Cypriots nor the Turkish Cypriots were able to tolerate ingroup differences. Not only the outgroup differences, but also the ingroup ones were "otherised" by both social groups. Moreover, both social groups' political elites established an essential link between their social identity and the national aspirations. Hence, being a member of the Greek nation or the Turkish nation essentially entailed embracing union with Greece (*enosis*) or partition of Cyprus (*taksim*) respectively

6.3. The Republic of Cyprus Period (1960-1963): The Failure of Cypriot Identity

With the involvement of USA,Great Britain, Turkey, and Greece, the Republic of Cyprus was established in the midst of ethnic conflict. Both communities never even dreamed of an independent state of which the Greek Cypriots and the Turkish Cypriots would be the co-founders. This state partnership entailed a bi-communal cooperation based on a joint country and citizenship, namely Cyprus and Cypriotness.

However, the partnership of the state lasted only for three years due to the lack of confidence between the political elites and continuation of the national aspirations. For instance, despite the declaration of the independence of Cyprus, Makarios, the president, declared at every occasion that "the national aims (i.e. *enosis*) remained unchanged" which implied union with Greece (Vanezis, 1974:113).

Furthermore, Makarios, the president and Greek political elites thought that the 1960 Constitution was "unworkable" as it granted Turkish Cypriots more political power. According to the Constitution, the vice-president with the right of veto was to be a Turkish Cypriot; 30% of the members of parliament and civil servants were to be Turkish Cypriots. 3 of 10 ministers were to be Turkish Cypriots. However, Makarios proposed constitutional amendments which included diminishing the rights of Turkish Cypriots. However, after the Turkish refusal of the proposals, a well-organised and a secret plan, so-called "*Acritas* Plan*" was put into practice against the Turkish Cypriots. The plan in a nutshell aimed at excluding the Turkish Cypriots from the Government. For example, in December 1963 armed attacks were launched against the Turkish Cypriots, and after a short while inter-communal clashes broke out.

For the Turkish Cypriots, particularly the older generation, the year 1963 is traumatic. They were forced to live in subhuman conditions in enclaves geographically limited to three percent of the island for eleven years. As Volkan, a prominant Turkish Cypriot psychiatrist diagnosed,

"For the Cypriot Turks, their massive trauma that started in 1963-1964 when they were forced to live in enclaves. Since between 25,000 and 30,000 Cypriot Turks became internally displaced during 1963-1964, and since that time the island's Turkish population was only 120,000, it would appear that about a fifth of whose living in the enclaves were refugees." (Volkan, 2009).

It is not surprising that the Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots perceive and interpret the Cyprus conflict from their different perspectives and distinct social identities. Whereas the Turkish Cypriots consider the year 1963 to be the date that the Cyprus conflict erupted, the Greek Cypriots rather remain silent about what happened during 1963-1964.

6.4. The Post-1974 Period: The Dominance of Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot Identities

The year 1974 is historically a crucial turning point which brought about the de facto situation on the island. In July 1974 the military junta in Greece backed a coup against Makarios, the president of the Republic of Cyprus with the purpose of *enosis*. In response to that, Turkey as a guarantor intervened through the use of military force in Cyprus in order to prevent *enosis* and to restore the state of affairs. However, the disagreement in the Geneva talks led Turkey to the second phase of military intervention which eventually resulted in the division of the island, and the exchange of the population.

For the Turkish Cypriots, Turkish intervention provided them with a safe and secure place to live freely, while in the eyes of the Greek Cypriots, the year 1974 represents the invasion of the island, when the Cyprus conflict began with the invasion of the island by Turkey. It is obvious that the year 1974 was traumatic in the eyes of the Greek Cypriots as the year 1963 was for the Turkish Cypriots.

In the new de facto situation, Northern Cyprus was inhabited by the Turkish Cypriots, while the southern part of Cyprus was inhabited by the Greek Cypriots. In this period, besides ethnic identities, both communities began to prioritise their geographic/territorial identities. The Turkish Cypriots who comprised a relatively homogenised population separated from the Greek population, began to identify themselves as Turkish Cypriots with an emphasis on Cypriotness in relation to the Turks coming from the mainland Turkey after 1974. Similarly, the Greek Cypriots began to give more weight to Cypriotness as well as Greekness. The national aspiration for *enosis* was abandoned in the Greek Cypriot political discourse. Since it resulted in the division of the island, so-called "invasion of the island" symbolised the great defeat of *enosis* in the eyes of the Greek Cypriots.

It is often claimed that the Turkish Cypriots have embraced a policy of separation. It is clear that the Turkish Cypriot elites adopted separatism as a national aspiration (*taksim*) in reaction to the Greek Cypriot elites' national aspiration (*enosis*) which was exclusive and discriminatory. In this regard, it is to be noted that the Turkish Cypriots' deep worries of survival led them to separatism. Due to the disagreements in the inter-communal talks since 1968, the Turkish Cypriot side that was excluded from

the Republic of Cyprus since 1963 established its own state, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus which is not recognised internationally, except by Turkey, in 1983.

However, with the motivation of accession of Cyprus as a whole to the European Union, the Turkish Cypriot masses and their new political leadership have favoured the reunification of the island under the umbrella of the EU since 2004. In April 2004, the Turkish Cypriots approved the referendum over the UN proposals for a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus conflict, so-called "*Annan* Plan", by 65 per cent, while the Greek Cypriots rejected it by 76. However, despite their refusal of the reunification plan, the Greek Cypriot side joined the EU, while the Turkish Cypriot side that favoured the reunification of the island, was excluded from it. This created displeasure and disappointment among the Turkish Cypriots who felt that while the Greek Cypriots were paradoxically rewarded, they were unjustly punished. Moreover, the isolation of the Turkish Cypriots from the international community continued, despite the EU's promise of removing the isolation on Northern Cyprus, in the case that the Turkish Cypriots said "yes" to the *Annan* Plan. For example, up to the present time, no direct flights have been permitted to Northern Cyprus; the Turkish Cypriots have not been allowed to compete internationally in sports; and Turkish Cypriot products are prohibited from being exported abroad (Volkan 2009).

Despite efforts to find a solution to the Cyprus conflict through inter-communal talks, no leaders including the ones known as being pro-solution and committed to the reunification of the island, have not yet achieved a comprehensive settlement. It is possible to interpret this as their failure to be able to think and behave irrespective of their social identities. This does not mean that social identities in and of themselves create conflict. Such conflicts occur when social identities create a distinct system of significance. The leaders' roles in the settlement of the dispute can be neither underestimated nor overestimated as leaders cannot represent their social groups by breaking away from the group's norms or expectations. Hence, sadly, since leaders are also members of their social groups that expect them to think and behave in a certain way, a solution to this conflict seems improbable.

7. Conclusion

Throughout history, different social identities have been constructed in Cyprus. It seems that during the Ottoman period since there was no political competition between the social groups, no political conflict arose. However, when two distinct nationalism flourished under the British rule, the Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots embraced conflicting national aspirations. In Cyprus, the two social groups' strong attachment to their ethnic/national identities prevented cooperation, and fuelled instead, competition and conflict. Despite the necessity of forging a partnership during the Republic of Cyprus Period, the social groups avoided any cooperation and collaboration, and instead continued to compete one another.

In the post-1974 circumstances in which both conflicting national aspirations lost their mass support, Cypriotism gained prominence among both social groups. Nevertheless, neither the Greek Cypriots nor Turkish Cypriots have attempted to understand each other's traumas, fears, worries or anxieties. Thus, the ongoing inter-communal negotiations, to find a solution to Cyprus conflict have not

yet resulted in a peaceful outcome. The political leaders and the social groups that they belong to, still continue perceive each other in zero-sum terms.

Both the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot elites have avoided developing and promoting a common social identity which could provide a ground on which these two peoples could co-exist peacefully. Therefore, for a solid solution in Cyprus, both the Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots as dominant social identities need to understand each other's traumas, fears, worries, anxieties, and expectations, and come to define their common identities without negating their distinctive identities.

With respect to social identities, a workable and lasting settlement of the Cyprus conflict needs to take into account both the territorial (Cypriotness) and the ethnic identities (Turkishness/Greekness), yet the Cypriot identity is not to be taken in a national context, but in a post-national one. In other words, to build a Cypriot nation which is an anachronism, eventually reproduces an exclusive and discriminatory nationalism. However, to bring Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot identities under the umbrella of Cypriotness as a post-national identity would be a more inclusive peace project.

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