

De-Securitizing Identity: Narrative (In)Consistency in Periods of Transition

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Abstract—When examining conflicts around the world, it is evident that the majority of intractable conflicts are steeped in identity. Identity seems to be not only a causal variable for conflict, but also a catalytic parameter for the process of reconciliation that follows ceasefire. This paper focuses on the process of identity securitization that occurs between rival groups of heterogeneous collective identities – ethnic, national or religious – as well as on the relationship between identity securitization and the ability of the groups involved to reconcile. Are securitized identities obstacles to the process of reconciliation, able to hinder any prospects of peace? If the level to which an identity is securitized is catalytic to a conflict's discourse and settlement, then which factors act as indicators of identity de-securitization? The level of an in-group's identity securitization can be estimated through a number of indicators, one of which is narrative. The stories, views and stances each in-group adopts in relation to its history of conflict and relation with their rival out-group can clarify whether that specific in-group feels victimized and threatened or safe and ready to reconcile. Accordingly, this study discusses identity securitization through narrative in relation to intractable conflicts. Are there conflicts around the world that, despite having been identified as intractable, stagnated or insoluble, show signs of identity de-securitization through narrative? This inquiry uses the case of the Cyprus conflict and its partitioned societies to present official narratives from the two communities and assess whether these narratives have transformed, indicating a less securitized in-group identity for the Greek and Turkish Cypriots. Specifically, the study compares the official historical overviews presented by each community's Ministry of Foreign Affairs website and discusses the extent to which the two official narratives present a securitized collective identity. In addition, the study will observe whether official stances by the two communities – as adopted by community leaders – have transformed to depict less securitization over time. Additionally, the leaders' reflection of popular opinion is evaluated through recent opinion polls from each community. Cyprus is currently experiencing renewed optimism for reunification, with the leaders of its two communities engaging in rigorous negotiations, and with rumors calling for a potential referendum for reunification to be taking place even as early as within 2016. Although leaders' have shown a shift in their rhetoric and have moved away from narratives of victimization, this is not the case for the official narratives used by their respective ministries of foreign affairs. The study's findings explore whether this narrative inconsistency proves that Cyprus is transitioning towards reunification, or whether the leaders are risking sending a securitized population to the polls to reject a potential reunification. More broadly, this study suggests that in the event that intractable conflicts might be moving towards viable peace, in-group narratives--official narratives in particular--can act as indicators of the extent to which rival entities have managed to reconcile.

Keywords—Conflict, Identity, Narrative, Reconciliation.

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I. UNDERSTANDING IDENTITY CONFLICTS

ACADEMIA has extensively acknowledged the role of identity as a catalytic variable within ethnic conflict and consequently a determinant to the conflict's dynamics and potential prospects for settlement [1]-[4]. Looking particularly at the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, a notable share of identity-based conflicts across the world has been defined by intractability and stalemate due to the disputants' failure to reach a viable peace agreement. In defining the term intractability, Heidi and Guy Burgess mention the dictionary definitions of the word intractable, which include "stubborn", "not manageable" and "hard to work with" [5, p. 177]. They do so in order to emphasize its negative connotation and its use for irreversible situations.

Louis Kriesberg identifies an intractable conflict by three characteristics: its persistence over more than one social generation, a background of numerous failed attempts to resolve it, and ongoing negative effects that can be considered destructive by other observers [6]. Unlike Heidi and Guy Burgess, Kriesberg rejects the irreversible nature of intractability and treats it as one of six dynamic phases within a conflict that can be avoided or reversed if treated appropriately [6]. It is important to distinguish whether one considers intractability to be fixed and irreversible or pliable and transformable, as each approach would provide a vastly different understanding of the connection between intractability and identity.

According to Nikki Slocum-Bradley, violent behavior between two collective groups involves constructing an understanding both for one's own group and for the opponent [2]. Hence, generation-long perceptions of antipathy between disputing groups prolong their conflicting relationship and contribute to patterns of intractability. Moreover, identity markers, narratives and forms of cultural expression contribute to the formation of incompatible identities between collective groups and can eventually lead them to conflict [1].

Joseph Montville suggests that to avoid acknowledging the importance of normative variables within ethnic conflict – such as identity – is a major reason for the failure of traditional peacemaking approaches [7] and consequently, a source of intractability for the conflict in question. As traditional approaches consider normative claims to be emotional and irrelevant to rationally-based bargaining, they neglect catalytic normative variables such as the impact of psychocultural drama, the lack of trust and respect between the disputing groups and the salience of restoring justice.

Identity does not only affect a conflict's discourse, but also influences its perceived image as either solvable or intractable.

As Weber points out, individuals involved within identity conflicts hold emotional biases, which challenge their axiological neutrality and lead them to perceive the conflict as intractable [8]. Expectedly, if the individuals involved in the conflict are unwilling to accept their rivals due to their perceivably hostile identity, then they are unlikely to engage in reconciliation.

A. Identity through Narrative

Collective identity is defined and delivered to the individual in-group members through a number of portals and agents, including the media, political figures, religious leaders, teachers, family and friends. The verbal or written statements that these agents use to directly or indirectly define the overarching identity for a collective unit are identified, for the purposes of this study, as narrative.

Narrative can be seen in a range of forms, from the formality of book publications and educational material to the impromptu character of verbal storytelling. When storytelling is affected by psychocultural dramas of a past war, prejudice or ongoing rivalry between communities, then narratives of injustice, victimization and prejudice arise. Collective units that have been traumatized by war and conflict may experience a direct association with victimhood, and fully adopt a redefined collective identity that defines the unit's members as victims who have experienced war, threat and tragedy. Arthur talks of the *egoism of victimization* [9], while Buzan and colleagues [10] and Buruma [11] discuss of groups whose entire culture, history and sense of solidarity is based on their victimhood to one or more 'others'.

Literature identifies narrative as a tool for perceiving identity, a tool that has endorsed in-group identity and solidarity in times of threat, but also a tool that can deconstruct external threats and re-introduce in-group identity with positive in-group – out-group interaction [3], [12], [1], [13]. Narrative is catalytic in the process of understanding identity due to its capacity to reveal how an individual – or an institution – perceives oneself, their community and others, as well as how one understands certain historical events, like the conflicts they are involved in [1]. Narrative can consequently be seen as a prominent tool when engaging in reconciliation,

In the presence of psychocultural drama, narratives of a past conflict and its post-conflict discourse become emotional, connect events across time and promote hostility towards out-groups [1]. While they are not necessarily opposite, narratives of opposing groups say different stories of the same conflict by emphasizing different events and excluding others.

On the one hand, sentiments of trauma and insecurity in societies that experienced – or are experiencing – conflict provide the ground for distinguishing the in-group from the 'other' and, when narrating conflict, to promote in-group victimization and outgroup blame [4]. On the other hand, however, narrative has the capacity to be used constructively to acknowledge the sufferings of both the in-group and the rival out-group. *Constructive storytelling* as defined by Senehi [13] can promote mutual recognition instead of alienation and shared respect instead of hostility.

B. Identity Securitization as a Reversible Process

Narrating collective identity can be both constructive and divisive, and it can thus be seen as a socially constructed process. Narration, in its various forms, becomes subject to emotional biases and sentimentality. Scholars such as Oscar Wilde and Michael Tanner consider sentimentality cynical and an indication of weakness, as it provides a safe haven for people who refuse to overcome their grievances [14, p. 3]. In the context of war and conflict, sentimentality is often promoted within political rhetoric and amplified through public perception. It becomes an indication of patriotism and through the refusal to forgive or forget grievances and rivalries are preserved throughout generations, eventually endorsing a conflict's intractability.

Buzan, Waever and de Wilde draw on the importance of the *securitizing agent* [10], often an authority figure or institution within a society that has influence on collective narrative and is responsible for averting or endorsing a narrative's exclusivity and level of victimization. Such authority figures and leaders are often responsible for the extent to which a securitized narrative will be adopted by educational textbooks and diplomatic rhetoric by the state or community in question. They are therefore the key agents to turn to when attempting to de-securitize these narratives and move towards *constructive storytelling*, or reconciliatory rhetoric. Bar-Tal and Bennink [15] reiterate the catalytic role of authority figures in narrative formation, as they identify a number of formal reconciliation mechanisms in which leaders are asked to shift away from narratives of victimization, such as endorsing peace over nationalism in education.

Securitizing agents have the influence to endorse the divergence between groups in conflict, yet they also have the analogous ability to de-securitize a societal threat and re-introduce the rival other as a potential collaborator. The subjectivity of narrative as a socially constructed tool implies that the process of identity securitization through narrative can be reversible. Part II of this study introduces the case study of Cyprus, an identity-based conflict characterized by failed reconciliation attempts and protracted political stalemate.

II. CYPRUS: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Cyprus was a British colony inhabited predominantly by a Greek-speaking, Christian Orthodox majority, a Turkish-speaking Muslim minority and Greek-speaking religious minorities of Maronites, Armenians and Latin Catholics. The island was home to an autonomous Greek Orthodox Church, with its religious figures exerting political influence over the public throughout the island's colonial era (1978-1959) and often driving the Greek Cypriots' guerrilla uprisings for *enosis*, or political union with Greece. [16], [17].

Greek Cypriot guerrilla fighting cultivated in the establishment of the EOKA revolutionary group, which carried out a five-year war against British rule, resulting in the island's independence in 1960. The new Cypriot state was a consociational democracy, comprised of a Greek Cypriot

majority and a Turkish Cypriot minority, with the Greek-speaking religious minorities of the island becoming – constitutionally – part of the majority. Nevertheless, independence was not a positive outcome, as the ultimate goal of the majority was *enosis* with Greece. Relations between the Greek and Turkish Cypriots started to deteriorate, the power-sharing government soon collapsed and civil warfare erupted. Tensions lead to the establishment of a UN peacekeeping mission on the island and nearly a decade and a half after independence, the island was attacked consecutively by the Greek junta and the Turkish military forces. The latter established their presence over the island's north and by 1975 the population was displaced and re-settled into a Greek-speaking south and a Turkish-speaking north, partitioning the island with a UN-administered Buffer Zone [18].

Over the course of the next four decades, Cyprus experienced several attempts of building communication across the two communities and trying to agree on a settlement that would reunify the island. These attempts, with the most prominent and long-term being UN-mediated negotiations between each community's political leaders, have yet to result in a comprehensive settlement of what has come to be known as the Cyprus Problem, and thus the conflict in Cyprus has been widely referred to as stagnated, intractable and frozen [19]-[22].

III. IDENTITY SECURITIZATION ACROSS THE BUFFER ZONE

Identity was a major feature of twentieth-century Cypriot society, both for its Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities. For the Greek Cypriots, religious, cultural and ethnic identity seemed complementary, interchangeable and highly salient. The community's discourse revealed a history of collective identity institutionalization through schools and churches, a process further amplified by the continuous suppression of societal expression due to foreign rulers [17].

The highest form of authority for Cyprus during the first half of the twentieth century was the autocephalous Orthodox Church [16]. Previous archbishops, mainly Makarios III who was appointed in 1950, were leading figures in the fight for *enosis*, or the island's political union with Greece. Makarios' ecumenical influence played a great role in transferring this idea to his people and turning *enosis* into a moral, religious and ethnic duty for nearly every Greek Cypriot. The psychological importance of defining ethnic identity for the Cypriot territory led the community to decisive outbursts of violence, not only against the British colonizers, but against anyone that opposed the Greek Cypriot objectives. The Greek Cypriot community kept close ties with Athens, and enforced bilateral communication intended to further the ultimate cause of *enosis*.

The first riots started as early as 1931, when many priests took part and were exiled, including the archbishop of the time [23]. During the period surrounding 1931, although the quest for *enosis* was openly acknowledged amongst the Greek Cypriots, there were no evident political tensions between the two communities, and so aligning against the British imperialists was a common incentive for both Greek and

Turkish Cypriots. For this reason, a considerable amount of Turkish Cypriots chose to participate in the revolt [24]. Despite that fact, the riots were soon stamped down by the British, who responded with strict measures, including further suppression of cultural and ethnic expression. In 1955, the Greek Cypriots once again engaged in guerilla warfare that lasted approximately four years and resulted in national independence. Nevertheless, the new revolt was carried out solely by the Greek Cypriots, as the Turkish Cypriots openly opposed union with Greece and in some cases fought on the side of their British colonizers [25]. The 1955-1959 revolt, further strengthened the Greek Cypriot quest for ideological liberation, widened the political and societal gap with their Turkish Cypriot counterparts and endorsed in-group sentiments of solidarity and exclusivity within both communities.

Bryant draws upon the evident institutionalization of moral responsibility towards the Greek ethnic identity [17]. Repetitive use of patriotic language in both schools and churches had a significant impact in generating the 1955 revolt against the British, with priests and teachers organizing students en masse [17]. Securitizing the Greek ethnic identity was even more successful due to the year-long suppression of ethnic expression imposed by the British colonizers [17]. In the absence of national institutions and in light of foreign rulers, the autonomous Orthodox Church acted as a safe haven of ethnic and cultural expression for the Greek Cypriots and indirectly politicized the religious gap between the two Cypriot communities. Politicized ethnic identities eventually became fundamental political divergences that brought the two communities in opposition under the process of decolonization until 1960.

As Brennan puts it, the "nationalist doctrine" assumes of the homogeneity of countries according to the model of nation-states [26, p. 223]. In the case of Cyprus, the nationalist doctrine was more than evident throughout the struggle against British imperialism and hence the independent Cypriot state was perceived by the majority of its population, the Greek Cypriots, as inferior to the ultimate goal of *enosis* but nonetheless a nation-state in the making. This notion was further endorsed by the new state's identity markers: The Republic of Cyprus adopted the Greek national anthem and its first president was the head of the autocephalous Orthodox Church, Archbishop Makarios III. Nationalism, "*Cypriotness*" [17, p. 55] and local collectivity remained alien concepts for the Greek Cypriots as they continued to aspire for ethnic salvation through *enosis*.

The independence of Cyprus was a compromise for the Greek Cypriots and hence achieving in-group trust to the newly established national institutions was a substantial challenge to overcome. For this reason, it was only expected for national establishments to be modeled after previously embedded institutionalized structures, which, for the Greek Cypriot community, were heavily based on the Greek *ethnos* and the autonomous Orthodox Church. This ideological connection provided an initial legitimacy for the new state that

a majority within the Greek Cypriot community needed in order to operate under the new national structure.

The Greek Cypriot focus on ethnic expression and their political aspirations for union with Greece strengthened in-group solidarity and created an evident gap with their Turkish Cypriot counterparts. Local literature and cultural expression focused on the Greek character of Cyprus and marginalized not only Turkish Cypriot culture, but also Maronite, Armenian, Jewish, Arab and Venetian influences on the island [26]. Suppression to Greek ethnicity caused a consequent suppression and cultural marginalization of the Turkish Cypriots, and solidified the ideological separation of the two communities. In reaction to Greek Cypriot nationalism, the Turkish Cypriots started affiliating more with Turkey than Cyprus and soon sabotaged the Cypriot state for its focus on Greek identity, primarily by formally withdrawing from the government in 1963 [26].

The respective institutionalization of homogeneous identities within the communities of Cyprus denied the multicultural pluralism of Cypriot society and dismissed it as a collective unit, as Cypriots remained more affiliated with the homogeneously-defined nation-states of Greece and Turkey. The securitization of ethnic identity hindered Cypriot national identity and evolved to establish a direct connection to the 'motherland' states and to jeopardize the sovereignty of the Cypriot state. Is this however the case today? The following section presents forms of in-group narrative from both communities and examines whether securitized in-group identities, as articulated through narrative, have remained unchanged.

A. A Comparison of MFA Narratives

The Cyprus conflict is considered intractable due to the lack of a settlement that can be mutually accepted by the disputants. The two communities have, throughout the conflict's discourse, adopted contested perspectives, an observation that is evident through the official diplomatic rhetoric of each side, namely of the Republic of Cyprus (RoC) in the south and self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) in the north of the island's Buffer Zone.

The contested narratives of these two administrations in Cyprus are evident when comparing the official Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) statements of each authority. Taking as an example the quotes referring to the Turkish Cypriot officials' withdrawal from the government, the Republic of Cyprus MFA website – drafted in May 2006 and updated last in 2008 – reads as follows [27]:

“The Turkish Cypriot leadership made full use of their constitutional privileges to block decisions of the government and render the administration of the young republic difficult and inefficient. Their ulterior motives were presented in two top-secret documents, found in December 1963 in the office of Niazzi Plumer, one of the three Turkish ministers in the government. These documents, covering the period between October 1959 and October 1963 explained in great detail the policy of the Turkish Cypriot leadership, a policy in which the

1959 agreements were an interim stage toward partition. [...]

In 1963, after the Turkish members of the House of Representatives had rejected the budget, President Makarios decided to submit to the Turkish Cypriot Vice-President for consideration, proposals for constitutional amendment. Despite the fact that his proposals aimed toward removing certain causes of friction between the two communities and of the obstacles to the smooth functioning and development of the state, the government of Ankara opposed the amendments outright, even before their consideration by the Turkish Cypriots. The Turkish Cypriot leadership followed suit. In December 1963 tensions rose when police cars used by Turkish Cypriot policemen suspected of engaging in the distribution of weapons refused to submit to government inspection.

In December 1963 armed clashes broke out in Cyprus. Immediately the Turkish Cypriot leadership openly called for partition, Turkish policemen and civil servants withdrew from their posts en masse and Ankara threatened to invade.” [27]

The Turkish Cypriots' withdrawal from the government is presented quite differently by the MFA website of the TRNC – with the website being last updated in 2011[28]:

“The 1960 Republic of Cyprus recognized the political equality of Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots as the co-founding partners of the new republic. The Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus was designed, in effect, as a functional federation. Communal affairs, such as births, deaths, marriages, education, culture, sporting foundations and associations, some municipal duties, as well as taxes, were managed separately by the respective administrations of each community. At the international level, the Republic of Cyprus became a member of the United Nations and maintained one legal personality.

The 1960 partnership, however, lasted only three years. With a view to initiating the Akritas Plan, which put forward a deliberate campaign for changing the state of affairs created by the Constitution and ultimately realizing the ideal for enosis, the Greek Cypriots proposed amendments to the Constitution, known as the Thirteen Points that entailed usurping the rights of Turkish Cypriots and degrading their equal co-founder status to that of a minority on the island.

The disagreements between the two communities pertaining to the Constitution and other inter-communal matters consequently led to the tragic events of 1963, during which many Turkish Cypriot civilians lost their lives. At this point, the Greek Cypriots forcibly seized the partnership Republic of Cyprus, ejected all Turkish Cypriots from state organs and unilaterally amended the fundamental articles of the Constitution.” [28]

The historical overview of Cyprus is provided both on the RoC and the TRNC website, with both websites making extensive reference to the twentieth century conflict on the island. What is immediately noticeable is that both websites accentuate their own perspective of the conflict's discourse,

often omitting incidents that appear to be central for the other community's narrative. Focusing on the example quoted above, both historical overviews mention the 1963 split between Greek and Turkish Cypriot officials, yet the RoC official narrative claims that "Turkish policemen and civil servants withdrew from their posts" [27], while TRNC's official overview states that "Greek Cypriots forcibly seized the partnership Republic of Cyprus, ejected all Turkish Cypriots from state organs and unilaterally amended the fundamental articles of the Constitution" [28]. Each narrative respectively accentuates the threat posed to their community's security by the 'other's' demands and interests, consequently blaming the opposing community of abusing the constitution and disrupting peace on the island.

On a second example, the 1974 intervention by the Turkish military is presented by the TRNC as a legal step under "Article IV of the Treaty of Guarantee of 1960" to "prevent further bloodshed" and "greater loss of life" [28], while for the RoC it is an illegal and condemned action that eventually enforced "the policy adopted by Ankara twenty years earlier, of partition and forcible population expulsion" [27].

The MFA websites of both the Greek and Turkish Cypriot authorities devote a separate section of their website to the conflict's current problematic status, overview and recent developments, entitled the "Cyprus Question" on the RoC website and the "Cyprus Issue" for the latter. It is interesting how, on both websites, the island's historical overview is not a separate section, but a sub-section of the Cyprus "Question" and "Issue". This brings the issue of an unresolved conflict high on the agenda of both administrations, and reinforces the key role the conflict holds for each community's state of affairs. With a year-long pending settlement between the two antagonists, the contradicting narratives of victimization have been fully embraced by both foreign policy institutions, making it harder for their respectively securitized collective identities to be revisited within each side's official narrative.

Social constructionism regards objectivity as "impossibility" [29, p. 152]. The existence of contradicting narratives over a conflict's discourse reaffirms this belief. The two communities of Cyprus have adopted opposing narratives that respectively highlight their in-group perspective over the bigger picture, with in-group members reiterating and preserving subjective community rhetoric. To what extent, however do in-group narratives remain consistent across time?

B. Anastasiades and Akinci: 2000 and 2015

Despite the responsibility of the diplomatic force of each community to preserve and reproduce the official narrative without deviation, presidential leaders in the two communities seem to have more leeway in paraphrasing and re-introducing each community's narrative, based on their status as securitizing agents.

It is noteworthy to compare the statements of current RoC President Nicos Anastasiades and his counterpart, Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akinci, as the official narratives they adopt appear to vary and even converge across time. Both Akinci and Anastasiades had been prominent political figures

during the '00s and '10s, with Anastasiades in the year 2000 being the political leader of the governing party and Akinci state minister and deputy prime minister for the Turkish Cypriot administration.

In 2000, Glafcos Clerides served as the Greek Cypriot President and Rauf Denktash was the Turkish Cypriot leader. On July 20th of that year, the anniversary of the 1974 Turkish military intervention, local media covered Clerides' visit to New York for a round of meetings with UN and US officials, with Clerides rhetoric emphasizing on Turkey's illegal presence as an occupying force on the island and his strategy being to create international leverage against the island's occupants. In an analogous tone, DISY president Anastasiades endorsed President Clerides and urged Greek Cypriot political parties to support the government in the new round of negotiations that was expected to begin in Geneva under UN mediation [30]. At the same time, DISY's official statement reiterated this support and made reference to Greece's ongoing support to end Turkish military occupation in Cyprus [31].

On the same day, Denktash called the military intervention a celebration for the rebirth of the Turkish Cypriots, while the anniversary was an opportunity for the Turkish Cypriot leader to reinstate his support to a confederated solution of two states on the island. Commenting on ongoing anti-government protests, Denktash said that the challenges the Turkish Cypriot community is faced with, primarily economic, will be resolved with Turkey's support [31]-[33].

Akinci's 20th of July statement in 2000 highlighted that "it would not be right to describe the presence of the Turkish army in Cyprus as an occupation" and "the Turkish invasion was carried out to prevent the occupation of Cyprus by the Greek junta and to prevent its annexation to Greece" [34]. On the same day, Greek Cypriot media quoted Akinci's mention of the political and economic dependency of his community to Turkey and of the Greek Cypriots' responsibility of causing this through international embargoes achieved against TRNC – the self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus [31]. While in 2000, as deputy prime minister, Akinci highlighted the protective role of Turkey's intervention and blamed the Greek Cypriot leadership for Turkey's suppositious sovereignty infringements through political and economic influence, in 2015, President Akinci took a historic turn in acknowledging that "the 1974 Turkish invasion of Cyprus was a war even though the Turks call it a "peace operation" and "one of its biggest victims were the Greek Cypriots" [35].

Both Akinci and Anastasiades, in their 2000 statements, reveal a need for emphasizing their community's victimization, with a focus on Turkey's role over the status quo on the island. Fifteen years later on the same anniversary, in a turn of rhetoric analogous to Akinci's, Anastasiades moved away from the ethno-centric Greek Cypriot narrative of victimization and the reiteration of the illegality of the Turkish military invasion and focused on the Greek Cypriot community's in-group responsibilities by stating: "No one can save a people that does not overcome its deadlocks in unity, especially a people whose political leadership fails to take

responsibility for its actions, while it is historically proven that where there is division, soon comes catastrophe” [36]. The two leaders indicated, through their statements as the primary authority figures in each community, a reciprocated desire to approach the other community in good faith.

The shift in official narrative across time is even more striking when comparing contemporary rhetoric to President Makarios’ rhetoric in 1963, months before violence erupted between the two communities. In an April 1st declaration, the anniversary of the 1955-1959 guerilla warfare against the British, President Makarios stated that the island’s independence was a step closer to *ethnic salvation*, referring to union with Greece [37]. The speech was delivered in Greek, one of the two official languages of the Republic – along with Turkish – yet a language native only to the Greek Cypriot community. Makarios’ 1963 disregard of the Turkish Cypriot minority in his narrative comes in contrast with Anastasiades and Akinci’s first joint Christmas and New Year holiday statement in December 2015, during which both leaders addressed both communities in both languages [38].

C. Perceiving Narrative: Public Opinion

The dynamics between the two communities and perceptions over collective identity have shown a shift similar to the one portrayed by each community’s leaders. The goal of ethnic salvation was widely endorsed within the Greek Cypriot community in the 1950s and 1960s, whereas the years following the 1974 communal partition focused more on the re-attainment of lost properties and the restoration of the republic. Today, following the endorsement for reunification by their leaders, the two communities seem to be embracing the prospects of a potential peace settlement.

Perceptions over collective identity, due to their constructed nature, can diversify both across time and within seemingly homogeneous in-groups. Recent studies [39], [40] reveal in-group inconsistency to what both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots perceive as their primary identity.

A survey conducted by the International Peacebuilding Alliance (henceforth Interpeace) in 2010 revealed that 92% of Greek Cypriots considered themselves to have Greek cultural roots, yet only 53% acknowledged Greece as their motherland. For the Turkish Cypriots, an 88% claimed to have Turkish cultural roots, and an analogous 83% saw Turkey as their mother country. On a question of self-identification, however, the level of consensus within each in-group decreased with 2% of Greek Cypriots feeling purely Greek and not Cypriot, 20% feeling only Cypriot and not at all Greek and 45% of the Greek Cypriot sample feeling equally Greek and Cypriot. Similarly, 9% of Turkish Cypriots felt solely Turkish, 5% feel purely Cypriot, 14% feel more Turkish than Cypriot and 20% more Cypriot than Turkish. The 2010 poll indicates that a significant percentage in both communities acknowledged the dual character of their identity – Greek Cypriot/Turkish Cypriot – and equally affiliates with both its ethnic and national aspects.

A 2015 opinion poll conducted by the University of Nicosia [40] identified a slight conversion towards the *Cypriotness* of

collective identity in comparison to the 2010 findings, with 48% of Greek Cypriots identifying as solely Cypriots- compared to 20% in 2010 and Turkish Cypriots identifying as solely Cypriots to their staggering majority at 88%.

Analyzing the tendencies of Greek/Turkish Cypriots for supporting either their Greek/Turkish or their Cypriot identity, reveals the diversity of opinions and perceptions regarding one’s identity within the collective unit. Nevertheless, a comparison between the findings of the 2010 and 2015 opinion polls shows that the two communities have vastly shifted from disregarding their *Cypriotness* in the 1960s to be fully endorsing it in light of a potential peace settlement in 2016.

One can argue that Cypriot public opinion within the two communities appears to align with the rhetoric of their respective securitizing agents. While official diplomatic narrative continues to embrace the legal and political divergencies between the two communities, the support to reconciliation shown by Anastasiades and Akinci has enabled the public to de-securitize the identity threat posed by the other community. Considering the frozen status of the Cyprus conflict and the lack of intercommunal violence, Anastasiades and Akinci managed to act as de-securitizing agents and endorse reconciliation on both the individual and the communal level.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study reveals that authority support to reconciliation can be catalytic in the case of identity-based conflicts, as authority figures have the ability to securitize or de-securitize identity threats to their respective in-groups. The 2015 opinion poll was conducted in light of positive statements and initiatives taken by the two leaders, Anastasiades and Akinci. Additional joint statements and confidence building measures - including the 20th July statements – took place after the poll was conducted and hence, if a relationship is assumed between the rhetoric of authority figures and public perceptions over collective identity, then a positive attitude towards the other community and a high endorsement of *Cypriotness* are expected to still apply.

The findings of this research can directly relate to Allport’s Contact Hypothesis [41], which acknowledges authority support as one of the four primary pre-conditions for positive contact. In a similar vein, authority support through narrative appears to be catalytic for the de-securitization of external threats to an in-group’s collective identity.

Cyprus, with its decade-long history of conflict intractability, stands closer than ever to a potential settlement that will resolve a 60-year divisive rhetoric and a 40-year geographical partition. The inconsistency identified between each community’s diplomatic narrative and official statements by the two leaders, influencing and being reaffirmed by public opinion, reveal the importance of securitizing agents in identity-based conflict. Moreover, Cyprus appears to show signs of identity de-securitization through narrative, despite its classification as an intractable conflict.

In his account on successful conflict mediation, Zartman

[42] emphasizes the impact of leadership *ripeness*, or the level at which each party's leader is ready to engage in negotiations and agree on a final settlement. Adopting Zartman's term, this study's findings indicate that leadership ripeness is not only necessary for the political settlement of a conflict, but more so for the encouragement of the population involved to reconcile with a former enemy and cease to perceive the other as an identity threat.

In conclusion, the narrative inconsistency presented between the diplomatic and the leadership narrative of the two communities in Cyprus and the influence of the latter on public opinion suggest that the island is transitioning towards reunification and is likely to witness a positive outcome in an upcoming referendum for reunification.

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