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THE HYPER-SECURITIZATION OF IDENTITY AND PROTRACTED SOCIAL CONFLICT

THE CASE OF CYPRUS



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This paper is a work in progress. Comments and suggestions are welcome.

*An Introduction: Securitization, Identity-Conflict and Insecure Communities**

Protracted social-conflict, a concept developed in 1978 by prominent Middle East and conflict scholar, Edward Azar, has come to play a central role in conflict and security studies.¹ Over time, refinements to this idea have been put forward by various scholars, but many, as I will come to acknowledge, seem to agree on a central aspect: the idea that such conflicts are characterized by perpetual hostility between two or more parties that is difficult to resolve due to underlying conflicts of identity.² The theoretical process of *securitization*, as conceptualized by Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver of the Copenhagen School of international relations theory, is very much intertwined with the onset and perpetuation of protracted identity-conflict. Securitization, which will be discussed in further detail later in this study, is the process of identifying threats, mobilizing public support to establish new security provisions, and expanding the power of the security apparatus.

In this analysis, I argue that the perpetuation of protracted identity-conflicts can be a result of what I characterize as the *hyper-securitization* of identity. When conceptions of identity become deeply embedded within processes of securitization amongst communities in conflict, removing identity from the conceptual realm of security can become extremely difficult. Communities long separated as a result of protracted conflict perceive elements of their opponent's identity as a perpetual source of threat. In these situations, perceptions of identity become extremely problematic to *de-*

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¹ The terms: "protracted social-conflict," "identity-based conflict," "inter-communal conflict," "protracted social violence," and variations thereof, will be used interchangeably for the purposes of this paper.

² While I chose to take a decidedly social-psychological perspective on the perpetuation of identity-conflict, one must keep in mind that no single causal mechanism is ever sufficient for conflict analysis. There is a rich body of valuable work from a variety of schools of thought and a range of academic expertise that contributes to the many understandings of political violence.

securitize or otherwise resolve. The inability of insecure communities to normalize their mutual perceptions of group identity, especially in protracted social-conflict, is what sets “hyper-securitization” apart from the process of securitization as it is discussed in the literature.³

According to Buzan and Wæver, for a phenomenon to be securitized, “the issue must be presented as an existential threat, requiring emergency measures and justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure.”⁴ Michael Williams describes the Copenhagen School’s securitization concept as “the outcome of a specific social process” in which phenomena in the normative realm of political discourse are identified as threats and transferred into the realm of security.⁵ Once sufficiently subdued, countered or resolved, the securitized phenomenon hypothetically ceases to be a threat, going through the process of de-securitization and returning to the realm of normal public discourse.⁶

Securitization in the Copenhagen School is intertwined with reciprocal normative understandings of social discourse between speaker and audience.⁷ Through what Buzan

³ Please note: Throughout this analysis, I will draw heavily upon work deriving from two main groups of academics. The first group is made up of scholar-practitioners (i.e., Track II practitioners) in the field of conflict analysis, and social-psychological and conflict resolution theory. These include: Harry Anastasiou, Edward Azar, John Burton, Leonard Doob, Ronald Fisher, Janice Gross Stein, Herbert Kelman, and Chaim Kaufman. The second group of scholars is made up of academics in the fields of political thought, critical security and securitization studies. These include: Barry Buzan, David Campbell, Jef Huysmans, Michael Williams and Ole Wæver. It should also be duly noted that Anastasiou, Doob, and Fisher have done extensive fieldwork, conflict resolution workshops and other Track II initiatives on Cyprus. Azar and Kelman have done so as well, but their fieldwork has taken place primarily in Lebanon and Israel/Palestine, respectively.

⁴ Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998), 23-24.

⁵ Michael Williams, “Words, Images, Enemies: Securitization and International Politics,” *International Studies Quarterly* 47 (2003): 213.

⁶ For instance, the process of quarantining an entire town for the duration of an outbreak of plague followed by the return to normalcy described in Michael Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* (1975), or the eventual decline in US concern over perceived inclinations of its domestic population toward communism in the latter decades of the Cold War.

⁷ That is, a shared understanding of meaning in terms of language, images, and symbols.

and his colleagues call a *securitizing move*, a particular actor attempts to present an argument for the need to securitize a particular issue to a particular audience.⁸ Such actions often take the form of securitizing *speech acts*, in which an actor discursively (i.e., rhetorically through discourse) attempts to make the case for the securitization of a threat to a target constituency through a variety of mediums (e.g., media, literature, technology, propaganda, etc.).⁹ Securitization can only take place if the securitizing move is successfully argued, or otherwise accepted by the target audience or constituency.

In the case of identity-conflict, by identifying systemic phenomena as threats to a common conception of group identity, the securitizing move or speech act is playing upon shared understandings of what constitutes the “self” and that which has the capacity to pose a threat to that “self.”¹⁰ Such threats can be interpreted as threats to a common sense of values, identity or way of life. The security of identity is thus framed as an existential situation in which identity can become *non-negotiable*. The loss, alteration or the imposition of outside influences upon one’s identity is portrayed as that which such a securitization poses to protect. In other words, the compromising of group identity is

⁸ Buzan, et. al., 25.

⁹ The process of securitization and the role of speech acts will be discussed in a later section in this analysis. For now, note that a speech act: (1) rhetorically identifies a phenomenon as a threat; (2) identifies the referent (i.e., that which is being threatened; e.g., the environment, the state, the values of a community, etc.); (3) the agency of the threat (i.e., that which is causing the threat; e.g., pollution or global warming, proliferation of nuclear weapons, “terrorism”, etc.); and (4) the means by which a group will take to defend themselves against the threat (e.g., cutting carbon emissions, economic sanctions, the Patriot Act, etc.).

¹⁰ David Campbell’s 1992 work, *Writing Security: The United States, Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, provides useful insights into the implications of US identity during the Cold War drawing upon the rhetoric and politics of McCarthyism. Statements made by President George W. Bush in his first term of office provide compelling evidence of identity’s role in mobilizing support for the “War on Terror” and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, “By allowing radical Islam to work its will – by leaving an assaulted world to defend for itself – we would signal that we no longer believe in our ideals, or even our own courage.” – G.W. Bush, State of the Union, Feb 2006. Reza Aslan’s 2009 work, *How to Win a Cosmic War*, is a contemporary analysis that discusses perceptions of identity in the “War on Terror” from both “western” and “jihadist” perspectives.

tantamount to destruction of the both the communal integrity and the national aspirations of the identity group as a whole.¹¹ Through the mutual securitization of identity, communities in conflict engage in a *zero-sum game* of opposing conceptions of national destiny. The realization of one group's agenda automatically assumes and precipitates the denial of the other's.

In contrast to the centrality of speech acts in the process of securitization as discussed by the Copenhagen School, in the case of "hyper-securitization," a speech act serves in the establishment of a systemic environment similar to what Jef Huysmans described as *political communities of insecurity*.¹² This idea is characterized by a perpetual cycle of identifying threats and offering reassurances, the establishment and upholding of mechanisms administering inclusion and exclusion, and structuring the alienation of the "other" which may predispose communities toward violence.¹³ In other words, insecure political communities are constantly reaffirming and reestablishing their insecurity and increasingly instituting measures that are perceived to increase their safety. They establish norms, rules and institutions to identify who belongs to the community and who does not; and, as such, insecure communities come to portray "others" or "outsiders" as threats to their safety, increasing the likelihood of violence between groups.

Instrumentally, further negative social-psychological stimuli and correlating laws and rules of social conduct facilitate the perpetuation of insecure communities. National narratives are socially written and re-written, influencing and are influenced by

¹¹ This point may seem a bit abstract at the moment, but this process will be explained in detail in relation to my case study in the following sections.

¹² Jef Huysmans, *The Politics of Insecurity* (United Kingdom: Routledge, 2006), 47.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 45-62.

perceptions of threat, speech acts and securitization.¹⁴ In pursuance of perpetually reaffirming the securitization move, an actor will often draw upon *historical narratives* from previous securitizations as a means of rallying support for maintaining the current security environment.¹⁵

In order to narrow the analytical scope of this thesis and accurately depict its implications, I will discuss these ideas in relation to the unresolved situation in Cyprus. Despite decades of relative peace between the Greek and Turkish communities on the island, a political solution continues to elude Cyprus. In my study of identity-conflicts, a primary factor in the perpetuation of insecurity and the continuing lack of resolution lies in the interplay of *opposing negative perceptions of “self” and “other.”* The series of events that perpetuated this dynamic began with the mutual securitization of identity between the communities of Cyprus. As I will come to show, the Greek Cypriot’s call for union with Greece, or *Enosis*,¹⁶ constituted a rhetorical act in the securitization of this community’s collective identity. The response reciprocated by the Turkish Cypriot community, partition of the island or *Taksim*,¹⁷ assisted in the mutual establishment of opposing communities of perpetual insecurity. I argue that perpetuation of this insecurity

¹⁴ David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*, (Minneapolis: Regents of the University of Minnesota, 1992).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 11. For example: G.W. Bush chose title “Axis of Evil” to describe those states he wanted to convey as being existential threats to the security of the US: the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ba’athist Iraq and the DPR of North Korea. It is no mere coincidence that during World War II, the US fought another “Axis” in one of the most devastating conflicts in history. The “evil” often associated with the Axis (i.e., Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and the Japanese Empire) from World War II is drawn upon as part of a commonly understood national narrative in that it is the perceived duty of the US to defend itself against, and defeat, “evil.”

¹⁶ Greek for “union.” Beginning in the 1920s amidst growing dissatisfaction with British colonial rule and those deemed to be subversive elements within the Greek Cypriot community, the Orthodox and Nationalist segments of the Greek Cypriot population predominately advocated for union with Greece.

¹⁷ Turkish for “share out,” “split up” or “divide.” In the late 1950s, when it became clear that the British would not maintain their hold on the island, and in light of their neighbors’ call for union with Greece, the Turkish Cypriots reciprocated by advocating the partition of the island into separate Greek and Turkish Cypriot entities.

is indicative of the mutual hyper-securitization of identity between the communities on Cyprus.

I will begin this study by providing a brief synopsis of the events leading up to, and key events during, the conflict on Cyprus. I will then provide a conceptual overview of identity, its role in conflict, and the implications of securitization theory. With this framework in mind, I will continue by applying these ideas to the circumstances surrounding various phenomena that characterize the perpetuation of mutual insecurity on Cyprus. In the final section, I will re-solidify the variations between the Copenhagen School's securitization theory, and what I have come to view as "hyper-securitization."

Cyprus: A Demographic and Geographic Profile

Cyprus is the third largest island in the Mediterranean Sea. It sits roughly forty miles south of Turkey and five-hundred miles southeast of mainland Greece. In the north, approximately one-third of the island is the disputed entity, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) which is under the guardianship of 35,000 Turkish troops.¹⁸ However, the entire island is internationally recognized as being under the sole sovereignty of the Republic of Cyprus, which achieved EU membership in 2004. Ethnolinguistically, the island is 77 percent Greek and 18 percent Turkish. As a result of several major outbreaks in violence in the latter part of the 20th century, the island has been ethnically cleansed of members of the opposing ethno-national group in the north and south, respectively. However, before the outbreak of civil war and the eventual

¹⁸ Dinko Dinkov and Stoyan Stoyanov, "The Cyprus Problem: International Politics Simulation," *Managerial Law* 47, ¾ (2005), 173.

partition, the population was more evenly distributed throughout the island.¹⁹

The Beginnings of a Divided Cyprus and the 1955 Civil War

The earliest cited claim of ethnic ties to the island dates back to the arrival and flourishing of Mycenaean Greek civilization as early as the 15th century, BCE. Due to the presence of natural resources and its geographic location, Cyprus has been conquered and re-conquered throughout history.²⁰ In the 4th century CE, an approximately nine-hundred-year rule of Byzantium saw the cultural reunification of the predominantly Greek island with mainland Greece under a common Hellenic, Orthodox Christian kingdom.²¹ As part of the Empire, the Cypriot Orthodox Church was instituted with special privileges of power and relative autonomy. From 1571 until being rented to Great Britain as part of a defensive alliance in the late 19th century, Cyprus was a province of the Ottoman Empire.²² As an Ottoman ruled province, there was an undeniable growth of the Turkish population on the predominantly Greek island. During this period, both communities remained largely separate due to the Ottoman implementation of the *millet* system. The Ottoman period saw the Cypriot Orthodox Church restored to its previous stature established during the Byzantine era, and their rule was not characterized by any

¹⁹ Chaim Kaufman, "When All Else Fails: Ethnic Population Transfers and Partitions in the Twentieth Century," *International Security* 23, no. 2 (1998), 148.

²⁰ The strategic importance of the island is best illustrated by the long list of conquerors stretching from antiquity into the Common Era, including: the Assyrians, Egyptians, Persians, Romans, the Ptolemies, the Byzantines, and an interjection of Rashidun (i.e., under the [3rd] Caliph Uthman ibn Affan) rule before being re-conquered by Byzantium.

²¹ Kyroacos Markides "Social Change and the Rise and Decline of Social Movements: The Case of Cyprus," *American Ethnologist* 1, no. 2 (1974): 310-311.

²² Also, between Byzantine and Ottoman periods of rule, there was a period of relatively repressive Western European feudal control, using the island as a staging point for attacks being launched in the Levant during the Crusades.

overtly destabilizing inter-communal tensions.²³ In 1924 Cyprus was entrusted to the United Kingdom, of which it remained a colony until 1960.

By the late 1920s, there was a growing dissatisfaction with British colonial rule within the Greek Cypriot (GC) community. They felt it was the destiny of the island to be unified with their co-nationals in mainland Greece. This idea, conceptualized as *Enosis*, became the object of the GC's national aspirations. The Turkish Cypriot (TC) community, partially spurred on by Britain and Turkey, rose in opposition to *Enosis*, preferring to remain under British rule. By 1955, the GC's call for *Enosis* evolved into a systematic urban terror campaign and which relied on "dramatic, well orchestrated, and appropriately timed acts of violence" in an attempt to subvert colonial authorities and attract international sympathy for their political agenda.²⁴ This movement, primarily undertaken by National Organization of Cypriot Fighters (EOKA), began first by targeting colonial assets and subversive elements of the GC community and this increasingly sparked clashes with the TC community. The TCs responded by forming the Turkish Defense Organization (TMT), which served in both the defense of the TC community, and engaged in its own guerilla operations against the GCs. Despite the increased frequency and intensity of inter-communal violence, the British accentuated the divide by establishing an all-TC auxiliary police unit.²⁵

After several years of insurgency and civil war, it became clear that the United Kingdom lost the political will to maintain control of the island. Still opposed to unification with Greece, Turkey and the TC community modified their position to

²³ *Ibid.*, 310-312.

²⁴ Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, (New York: Columbia Press, 2006), 54-55.

²⁵ Markides, 341 and Ronald J. Fisher, "Cyprus: The Failure of Mediation and the Escalation of an Identity-Based Conflict to an Adversarial Impasse," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 38, no. 3 (2001): 309-310.

Taksim, or the partitioning of the island into Greek and Turkish Cypriot states. The civil war ended with a ceasefire agreement in 1958. The British relinquished the island to the Cypriots two years later with the exception of two military bases it kept under the Treaty of Guarantee. In 1959, the treaties of Zurich and London created the governing structure of a new “bi-communal federated state” and forbade the promotion of both Enosis and Taksim amongst the two Cypriot communities. The Treaty of Guarantee, between Greece, Turkey and the United Kingdom, passed in 1960, provided that each had the unilateral right to enforce the constitutional order of the new Republic of Cyprus. Also in 1960, an alliance was established between the Cypriot state, Greece, and Turkey allowing the latter states to station 950 and 650 troops on the island respectively.²⁶

The 1960 Republic and its Failure

The constitution in its entirety was quite detailed, complicated and overwhelmingly bi-communal.²⁷ The TC community enjoyed representation at a higher level than their proportion of the population. The government collapsed three years after its founding when the GC leadership attempted to alter some of the basic power sharing principles of the state to the detriment of the TC community. These amendments, known as the “Fourteen Point Proposal,” were largely credited to the GC President, Archbishop Makarios III, a staunch proponent of Greek domination and Enosis. The TCs viewed this

²⁶ Dinkov & Stoyanov, 175.

²⁷ Presiding over the executive functions of the government was to be a GC president and a TC vice president, both with veto privileges. Each was elected by separate polls within their respective communities. The legislature was made up of thirty-five GCs, and fifteen TCs. A majority was needed in both portions to pass a simple bill, and two-thirds in each to pass an amendment. Like the executive, the leadership positions of the legislature were to be Greek and Turkish Cypriots, respectively. The Supreme Court was to be comprised of three members, one GC, one TC, and finally, one of a neutral party (i.e., neither of Greek nor Turkish national descent). The field of public service was comprised of 70/30 percent GC to TC, respectively, and the armed forces 60/40 percent, respectively, accounting for 2000 personnel total (see note 28).

action as a direct threat to their status as an equal partner in the state.²⁸ Come December of 1963, in the wake of government collapse, inter-communal violence broke out in the form of a GC guerilla offensive, in which both mainland Greek and GC forces took part. Within a matter of time, these forces overtook nearly the entire island. A Turkish air assault combined with the threat of massive mobilization halted the Greek assault on TC enclaves in the north. Tens of thousands of Turkish refugees fled north to an area constituting three percent of the island.²⁹

The Crisis of 1974

The conflict on Cyprus came to its high water mark in 1974. That summer, a splinter group of EOKA, supported by the new junta in Athens, attempted to overthrow President Makarios III in a violent coup in order to bring about a swift and decisive unification with Greece. Acting in the name of the Treaty of Guarantee, Turkey responded by deploying troops to prevent unification and protect the TC population. The coup ultimately failed, and by the end of July, a treaty was signed between the parties ending the violence. Subsequently, in response to accusations of GC refusal to release TC prisoners, Turkish troops went on a crushing offensive, taking control of 37 percent of the island, where they remain stationed to this day.³⁰

The island was split into two sections at the capitol, Nicosia, and monitored by a UN peacekeeping force. This partition prompted the relocation of approximately 200,000 GC refugees south of the green line, and about 60,000 TC refugees to northern

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 174-176.

²⁹ Kaufman, 149.

³⁰ International Crisis Group, *The Cyprus Stalemate: What Next?* (Brussels/Nicosia: Europe Report N 171, 2006), I-35.

Cyprus. The respective populations on both sides of the line were ethnically cleansed of the members of the opposing group.³¹ In the north, the TCs established the “Turkish Federated State of Cyprus” anticipating reconciliation with the GCs.³² However, in 1983, in light of the perpetual failure of the official negotiation attempts that followed, the TCs openly declared their status as an autonomous entity: “The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus” (TRNC), of which only Turkey has granted diplomatic recognition. A united Republic of Cyprus was never restored.

Identity-Conflict: The Formation of Identity and the Path To Violence

In his 2001 study on the Cyprus Conflict in the *Journal of Peace Research*, Ronald Fisher defined identity-conflict as,

On going struggles between groups that are relatively intransigent and impervious to resolution, because they are deeply rooted in the underlying human needs and values that together constitute peoples identities. When group identities, and the needs that underlie them, are threatened or frustrated, intractable conflict is almost inevitable.³³

Fisher also summarizes Azar’s definition as, “hostile interactions between communal groups that are based in deep-seated racial, ethnic, religious, and cultural hatreds and which persist over long periods of time with sporadic outbreaks of violence.”³⁴ While differing slightly in context and focus, these definitions agree on several key concepts: perpetual conflict that persists in a large part due to underlying needs perceived to be linked to collective identity.³⁵ To understand the securitization of group identity in

³¹ Kaufman, 151.

³² Note that *federated state* was meant to denote that the “Turkish Federated State of Cyprus” would become a state within a larger bi-communal federal entity of Cyprus.

³³ Fisher, “Cyprus,” 307.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 308.

³⁵ John Burton has a similar conception of this idea which he deems as *deep-rooted conflict* (Fisher, “Cyprus,” 308); Leonard Doob and Herbert Kelman also emphasized the importance of a social-psychological approach in attempting to understand sectarian violence (Ronald J. Fisher, *Interactive Conflict Resolution* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1997), 31, 37-74.); Harry Anastasiou uses the

conflict, it is important to understand the role of identity in the context of security.³⁶ This overview begins by presenting two perspectives regarding this interplay: (1) identity as a psychological *need* in itself; (2) identity as a *mobilizing force* toward the fulfillment of needs.

Regarding identity, Janice Gross Stein has stated, “Social psychologists have identified a fundamental human need for identity – the way in which a person is, or wishes to be known by others; it is the conception of self in relation to others.”³⁷ According to Herbert Kelman, many conflicts are “typically driven by non-fulfillment or threats to the fulfillment of basic needs.”³⁸ Kelman goes on, drawing upon John Burton’s 1990 work, explaining that while individual needs can be articulated in terms of physical survival, needs can be manifested in the psychological realm as well (e.g., security, autonomy, justice and identity).³⁹ However, one cannot assume that violent political conflict between two identity groups can be attributed solely to ideological, cultural, or ethnic differences. Fisher, drawing upon Azar and Farah’s 1981 study, is careful to point out that threats to identity and identity-politics alone are not usually the causal mechanism for the onset of violence.⁴⁰ For instance, one may find that factors such as

term *protracted nationalist conflict* (Harry Anastasiou, “Communication Across Conflict Lines: the Case of Ethnically Divided Cyprus” *Journal of Peace Research* 39, no. 5 (2002): 581.).

³⁶ There is wealth of literature on the role of identity in conflict. For the purposes of this paper, I have provided a concentrated overview to establish my argument. Many scholars have taken in-depth looks into the identity dynamic in international relations such as Emmanuel Adler in the *Handbook of International Relations*, ed. Carlsnaes, Risse, Simmons (2002), Shibley Telhami and Michael Barnett in *Identity and Foreign Policy in the Middle East* (2002), and Martha Finnemore in *National Interests in International Conflict* (2002).

³⁷ Janice Gross Stein, “Psychological Explanations of International Conflict,” in *Handbook of International Relations*, ed. Walter Carlsnaes et. al., 298 (London:Sage, 2002).

³⁸ Herbert C. Kelman, “Social-Psychological Dimensions of International Conflict,” in *Peacemaking in International Conflict*, ed. I. William Zartman, 64 (Washington DC: United States Institute for Peace, 2007).

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁴⁰ Fisher, “Interactive,” 82. The case of Cyprus, as I will soon discuss, illustrates this point quite profoundly.

access to goods and services, justice, political power, social and economic equality, and sovereignty are, as any resource, finite and definitive.⁴¹ Group identity, on the other hand, is constructed through national narratives and is shaped by the systemic environment in which a group exists and has existed. It is reactionary, and evolving. However, inter-group hatreds are often the result of relatively recent phenomena, not the byproduct of inherent or age-old group rivalries.⁴² Therefore, we must be wary of placing identity in the realm of more objective criteria that can lead to contentions in inter-group relations.

I prefer to analyze the role of identity in conflict as that of a *mobilizer* toward the fulfillment of needs. Stepping outside the collective or group level of analysis, consider the individual. Individuals, during times of peace and stability in a relatively fluid social environment, can be somewhat flexible in their identity. They can identify themselves in multiple ways depending on the context of daily situations. In times of perceived conflict or instability, individuals tend to identify themselves in a way that will provide the internal (i.e., psychological) and external (i.e., physical) security or comfort found within an identity group.⁴³ The way in which an individual will ultimately define their identity during times of perceived threat will arguably depend on the cognitive interplay of group and individual narratives in the context of the perceived environment in which they exist.⁴⁴

⁴¹ By analyzing legal frameworks, statistical data from the IMF, World Bank, the UN, etc., and due to the work of organizations such as Freedom House and Amnesty International, it is possible to obtain a definitive understanding of these objective criteria.

⁴² Paul Collier, *Economic Causes for Civil Conflict and Their Implications for Policy* (Dept. of Economics: Oxford University, 2006), 11-15. James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *The American Political Science Review* 23, no. 1 (2003): 78-89.

⁴³ Stein, 298-299.

⁴⁴ For example, let us consider that a hypothetical individual in the United States may adhere to numerous identities: cosmopolitan; national (or extra-national, e.g., Irish-American, Russian-American,

Countless identity groups have co-existed harmoniously and in close proximity, despite their disagreements or differences.⁴⁵ However, in the wake of *threatening stimuli* from the systemic environment, *norms* that have kept these groups from clashing tend to erode.⁴⁶ Kelman identifies these phenomena as a major factor in transforming a particular conflict into a struggle for group survival.⁴⁷ Individuals inevitably tend to intensify their connections to the respective identity group that they perceive can ensure their safety.⁴⁸ In pursuance of the preservation of the *collective-self*, groups will often advocate policies by connecting them to the values embodied within the context of their respective identities.⁴⁹ As a result, competing groups may increasingly come to view one another as obstacles to a desired stability, threats to an object of value or as obstacles to a particular national goal.

etc.); ethnic; state; religious; professional; social standing; etc. But, during a particularly contentious presidential race, such identities may give way to that of political affiliation (i.e., Democrat or Republican, etc.). Then, for instance, while a group of individuals may strongly identify as adherents to a particular faith, hostility or even violence may arise between them in light of political preference. The political environment and opposing narratives that led to the adherence to a particular political preference prompted a shifting emphasis in preferred identity.

⁴⁵ The case of Rwanda is a particularly useful example. The Hutus and Tutsis intermarried and lived together for centuries as part of a fluid social class system with no evidence of hostility until being colonized by Belgium in the 20th century. As a matter of fact, the conflicts in Palestine, the former Yugoslavia, Sudan and many others have only been characterized by ethnic violence relatively recently (i.e., the 20th century).

⁴⁶ Such perceived threats from the systemic environment could include intense fear of bodily harm from violence or disaster, or the scarcity of resources and sustenance. Norms that have kept groups from clashing could be those of mutual trust and reciprocity, social stability and safety, and in some cases political autonomy or isolation.

⁴⁷ Kelman, 65.

⁴⁸ Stein, 298-300.; While the Turkish Cypriots may not have identified as closely with mainland Turkey as the Greek Cypriots have to mainland Greece, the Turkish Cypriots are non-the-less forced into a position of *de facto* "Turkishness." Turkey provides for the TRNC's military protection, serves as its only trading partner, and its sole source – however limited – of legitimacy in the international community. For religious or cultural Jews, this can often be the case as well. The fears and anxieties associated with a narrative of anti-Semitism and persecution may often push otherwise un-affiliated Jews into an affinity with Israel. Conversely, as Israel is the "Jewish state," the crimes committed by that state – real or perceived – might often be rhetorically attributed to Jews instead of Israel or Israelis.

⁴⁹ In the case of Cyprus, such actions are indicative of speech acts which ultimately resulted in the mutual securitization of the identity of "self," as I will come to explain.

In light of mutually exclusive group agendas, an escalatory situation may emerge in the form of *self-fulfilling prophecies*.⁵⁰ Further, in view of their incompatible goals, groups may perceive the security situation as a *zero-sum game* – a competition in which *only one group* can attain their desired goal. As Kelman points out: “In intense conflicts [...]there is a strong tendency to see these needs as zero-sum and to assume that one’s own security and identity can be protected or enhanced by depriving the other of security and identity.”⁵¹ An environment of mutual-distrust begins to emerge, and opposing groups tend to adhere to positive self-images and negative perceptions of their opponent – or, *mirror images*.⁵²

In light of such conditions, there are many factors that can serve in provoking the immediate onset of inter-communal violence. As the conflict continues over time, the resolution of the original systemic security problem becomes increasingly irrelevant to the conflicting parties. New norms of violence and hostility are established between conflicting identity groups; myths and narratives of pain and suffering are emphasized; mutual distrust and opposing mirror-images are perpetuated; and contradictory information and opinions are discarded in favor of prevailing conceptions of a “dangerous other.” These are the characteristics of an *intractable identity-conflict*.

⁵⁰ Kelman, 79.; In this conceptual dynamic, *group 1*, expecting aggression by *group 2*, poises itself in defense. *Group 2*, whether preparing for an attack or not, observes movements by their would be opponent and poises to defend against their suspected assault. Through the perceived expectations and non-communication of both groups, their forces are poised opposite one another awaiting the first move, bringing the situation imminently closer to conflict if not the immediate onset of violence.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 68.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 92-95.

The Securitization of Identity: Creating a Culture of Insecurity

The injection of threat into a system, or the perceived injection of threat into a system, can have a profound effect on the basis and cohesiveness of group identity. Like many other creatures, humans instinctually seek to preserve their existence. The facilitation of that preservation can be achieved through the security found within an identity group.⁵³ A *threat* can be defined as a phenomenon that is perceived to have the potential of manifesting harm or destruction to the existence of the *referent*. In the case of identity-conflict, “identity” serves as the *referent* in the securitization framework – that object perceived to be under threat. *Agency* is the term used to define the object or agent causing the threat. *Security* is then the means in which the “self” or “collective self” (i.e., group, political entity, etc.) engages to subdue or avoid the perceived negative results of threatening phenomena.

In contemporary politics, the Copenhagen School’s concept of *securitization* is the process by which systemic phenomena, usually challenges or threats, are shifted from the realm of normative discourse into the realm of security. This dynamic results in a new social and political conception of security and the means by which security should be achieved. To put this process into perspective, Buzan and his colleagues conceive of all possible issues theoretically existing on a scale ranging from *non-politicized*, to *politicized*, to *securitized*.⁵⁴ Non-politicized issues are understood as being those that are not a cause for public concern or controversy. Politicized issues can be somewhat controversial and receive direct public and government attention. Securitized issues are those which an actor claims cannot be addressed through established process and require

⁵³ As explained in the previous section, identity groups are formed on the basis of their perceived ability to provide internal and/or external (i.e., psychological and/or physical) safety and comfort.

⁵⁴ Buzan, et. al., 23-34.

emergency measures outside “the bounds of normal political procedure” to effectively engage. Securitization prompts socio-political shifts established by a new impetus for a broadened security apparatus.⁵⁵ The securitization of a new issue expands the power of the actor charged with providing security to the political or social group.⁵⁶ Therefore, the goal of the entire process is to more effectively provide protection against *or* to facilitate the elimination of, the threat in question. Hypothetically, once a threat is subdued, it can be taken off the table as a security concern and placed back in the realm of normal discourse through *de-securitization*.⁵⁷ Bringing an issue into the realm of security brings the benefits of being able to address an issue in a more robust manner.⁵⁸ However, before an issue can be securitized, an actor must present a persuasive argument for the need to take extreme measures to address the threat in question.

According to the Copenhagen School, establishing collective acceptance for engaging in securitization is accomplished through a *securitizing move*.⁵⁹ This securitizing move must necessarily construct a phenomenon as a threat in the minds of those whose support is needed to successfully securitize an issue. This process is often undertaken discursively through *speech acts*.⁶⁰ A securitizing speech act presents an argument for the need to securitize a particular referent to a particular audience. The act

⁵⁵ It should be noted that many issues have undergone a successful process of securitization and can even be institutionalized as such. Weapons of mass destruction (i.e., nuclear, chemical and biological weapons) have long been understood as being capable of such devastation, that their use would be detrimental to the survival of humanity and the state system as a whole. A successful securitization has thus taken place, in which non-proliferation and sanctions regimes have been successfully installed as institutions in the international community. Obviously, this issue is still wrought with controversy, but, nevertheless, the prevailing attitude toward these weapons remains almost unanimously negative, and that their use is unacceptable in comparison to “conventional” weapons.

⁵⁶ Williams, 513.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 523.

⁵⁸ For example, through the appropriation of funding and manpower, increased social awareness, the creation of institutions and the adoption of rules and laws, etc.

⁵⁹ Buzan, et. al., 25.

⁶⁰ Buzan et. al. 26-42. Williams, 512.

must therefore draw upon a discourse of common social meaning in order to properly place the threat in perspective for the audience. The speaker (if honest) would therefore share a common understanding (though not necessarily a common knowledge) of the security situation for which the speech act is presented. According to Williams, several factors contribute to the execution of a successful speech act.⁶¹ The actor presenting the argument must be in a position of authority, characterized by membership within the elite, or as party to a community of experts. Normally the audience is not only those whose permission is necessary to extend securitization to the referent, but also those whose support is imperative in mobilizing against the threatening agent.

A speech act normally identifies the referent of the securitization process and the agent from which the threat is manifested. The audience to whom the speech act is targeting must then effectively believe the speaker. To put forth an effective argument, the speaker would need to draw upon commonly understood messages that resonate with the audience. The speaker may use narratives of shared identity, harkening to histories of national struggle and apply them in the context of the contemporary threat.⁶² The speaker must be sure to identify the agent as being harmful to the general security of the audience and convince them that extreme measures must be taken for their protection. It is also crucial that speech acts are reinforced by colorful imagery within the media and manifest themselves in other areas of popular culture. As Williams argues, “Speech acts are inextricable from the image dominated context in which they take place and through

⁶¹ Williams, 512-514.

⁶² For example, in presenting a “cosmic struggle” as an argument for the War on Terror, George W. Bush drew upon the myth of American biblical and moral “exceptionalism” and an otherwise irrelevant historical narrative depicting a farcical, age-old war between Christianity and Islam – a narrative often mirrored by similar statements made by al Qaeda (Reza Aslan, *How to Win a Cosmic War: God, Globalization, and the End of the War on Terror* (New York: Random House, 2009); Andrew Bacevich, *The Limits of Power: The End of American Exceptionalism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2008).

which meaning is communicated.”⁶³ Speech acts are therefore enabled by and become embodied in, the collective understandings of entire constituencies.

Identity and the Cycle of Perpetual Securitization on Cyprus

While whisperings of Enosis amongst the Greek population of Cyprus have been present since the fall of Byzantium, it was not until the 20th century that the idea took on mass appeal.⁶⁴ Kyriacos Markides, Cyprus native and professor of sociology at the University of Louisiana, attributes this phenomenon to early socio-political and economic related contentions between the traditional elite in the Cypriot Church and British colonial authorities. These contentions were coupled with increased concerns amongst religious and nationalist GCs that arose due to the increasing appeal of communist ideology within their community. Spearheaded by the Church, Enosis became the idea that unified the various non-communist factions of Greek Cyprus against both colonialism and communism.⁶⁵

In 1947, then Archbishop of Cyprus, Makarios II, included this statement in *Eleftheria*,⁶⁶ as part of a major public declaration,

With great sorrow we see a bunch of communist leaders conducting a relentless anti-Greek struggle [...] slandering the Greek government and every Greek value [...] Communism is totally at odds with Christianity and Hellenism and no true Christian Hellene can be at the same time communist...Enosis and only Enosis and nothing else but Enosis.⁶⁷

This statement, I argue, served as a major discursive event in the *hyper-securitization of identity* on Cyprus. I interpret the above statement as a textbook example of a

⁶³ Williams, 525.

⁶⁴ Markides, 313.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 316.

⁶⁶ Greek for “freedom.” “Freedom or Death” (i.e., *Eleftheria i Thanatos*) is the official motto of Greece stemming from their war for independence against the Ottomans in the 1820s.

⁶⁷ *Eleftheria*, October 12, 1949 quoted in Markides, 317. Note that “[...]” is abridged by me.

securitizing speech act.⁶⁸ This rhetorical exercise, imparted publicly by the traditional spiritual and political leader of the Cypriot Orthodoxy, clearly identifies the *threat*: communism; the *agency* of the threat: communists; the *referent*: Christian Hellenes (i.e., group identity); and Enosis (union with Greece) as the strategy to counter this threat. This securitizing move played a huge role in creating the political space for EOKA (with the full support of the Church) to begin its campaign targeting “communist traitors” and British colonial assets. They sought to protect the communal integrity of the “true Hellenes” of Cyprus by achieving a union with Greece. The leadership of EOKA and Makarios III began planning for the execution of this struggle as early as 1950, and closely collaborated throughout the first civil war.⁶⁹

The presentation of a dual threat of colonialism and communism increased the centrality and cohesion of a unified nationalist Orthodox Cypriot identity group. Their pursuit of security in the face of these perceived existential threats prompted the advancement of an exclusive nationalist movement that, by its exclusivity, alienated their TC neighbors.⁷⁰ In 1955, when EOKA began its operations, the TC community found itself in a volatile situation in which the fate of their homeland and would-be state was to be decided. The future of their socio-political community was perceived as being under direct threat. TMT mobilized in support of continued colonial rule and some TCs overtly took up the banner of British Colonial Cyprus as auxiliaries. Bringing the self-fulfilling prophecy dynamic to life, violence quickly erupted between EOKA, TMT and the British colonial forces.

⁶⁸ As per Williams overview of the Copenhagen School’s securitization theory.

⁶⁹ Hoffman, 54.

⁷⁰ Fisher, “Cyprus,” 310.

Before the end of the first civil war, as domestic political support in Britain for continued colonial rule waned, the TC community would predominantly come to espouse the call for Taksim. Embodied within this national agenda was the securitization of an exclusive TC identity. Though not necessarily linked to a specific rhetorical act, this security agenda identified the *threat*: Greek domination, or Enosis; the *agency* of that threat: Greek nationalists, EOKA, and the Cypriot Church; the *referent*: Turkish Cypriots (i.e., group identity); and the strategy for achieving security: separation of the island into GC and TC entities, Taksim. The first civil war thus constituted the first round of a zero-sum game in which the mutual aspirations of communities on Cyprus stood in direct opposition to one another. The success of one community's agenda implied the failure of the other. The perceived threats to the GC community (i.e., colonialism and communism as identified in the initial speech act by Makarios II), had clearly evolved into the more immediate threat posed by TC agency in blatant opposition to their national aspiration of Enosis.

The failure of the 1960 Republic was indicative not only of a disproportionate power structure, but also a testament to both communities' clear inability to mutually de-securitize identity as a source of tension in their political and security environments. The systemic conditions in the GC community before the first civil war that crystallized in the call for Enosis remained unaddressed. The threat of communism and the TC community were likely still perceived as existential threats to the political unity of the collective "Greek Cypriot self" and the political power of the Cypriot Church. Politics between the communities during the short-lived unified Republic of Cyprus were highly contentious; fear and distrust made cooperation difficult if not impossible: "It can be summarized that

the constitutional order of the Republic of Cyprus, designed according the agreements from Zurich and London, was destroyed because neither community tried to preserve or protect it.”⁷¹ The resulting collapse of the Republic was, as such, a continuation of the previous processes of securitization (i.e., Eleftheria, Enosis and Taksim). In many ways, it was a testament to the success and the potency of the mutual securitization of identity. These conditions reflect the very difficulties posed by what Azar and the scholars that followed him identify as protracted social-conflict.

The Fourteen Point Proposal issued by President (Archbishop) Makarios III, which served as the flashpoint in TC and GC parliamentary relations, was perceived as an expected betrayal to the TC community.⁷² They had always feared that the GC community never ceased in their collective aspirations of Enosis. As per Huysman’s conceptualization of *insecure communities*, the GCs sought to securitize the political unity of the majority community by asserting its *functional autonomy*.⁷³ They sought to rectify the perceived injustice and legislative imbalances posed by disproportionate TC political influence and representation.⁷⁴ The second civil war and the events of 1974 that ensued, further established structures of *alienation* amongst communities of the island through ethnic cleansing and the eventual establishment of separate, defined geographic entities with militarized borders (i.e., a partitioned Cyprus). These communities, long neighbors in a shared landscape, became estranged and fearful of one another. This

⁷¹ Dinkov & Stoyanov, 178.

⁷² Included in this amendment were the removal of veto privileges for both president and vice president, the implementation of majority rule in certain parliamentary actions (as opposed to GC and TC majority rule, respectively), and the removal of the strict division of proportional representation in civil and armed services (www.cyprus.gov.cy).

⁷³ In this case, *functional autonomy* is concerned with the ability of an overwhelming majority to administer its politics as it sees fit.

⁷⁴ Huysmans, 48-49.; see section and notes of “The 1960 Republic and its Failure,” above.

further enabled socially isolated, insecure communities to uphold contentious narratives and myths of a “dangerous other.”

The *non-communication* that arose from the decades of ethnic separation that ensued further exacerbated and reinforced *mutual positive conceptions of “self” and negative conceptions of “other”* on Cyprus.⁷⁵ As long as the communities remained separated and resolution evaded mediation efforts, the communities on Cyprus were left in a constant, self-perpetuating identity-conflict. Without positive frames of reference, mutual conceptions of “other” on Cyprus were based on previous hostilities, and as time went on, these images festered in the form of increased nationalism, myths, and stereotypes. Mutual trust and reciprocity and other forms of positive interaction became impossible to maintain. These conditions ensured the perception of *perpetual insecurity* by both Cypriot communities.

The *non-communication* and *mirror-image* dynamics on Cyprus can be exemplified by focusing on each group’s opposing perceptions of the same issue in the conflict. Even some of the most basic historical aspects of tensions on the island are contested in the collective memories of each group. Such discrepancies are evident in the works of Anastasiou and Doob in which they interviewed members of both communities during the course of their time on Cyprus. For instance, while the GCs tend to see onset of their suffering with the Turkish invasion in 1974, the TCs tend to view the collapse of the bi-communal state in 1963 and the resulting civil war as the heart of their misfortunes.⁷⁶ The GCs predominantly see their “legacy of pain and suffering” being marked by the 1974 war: mass refugee movements, property damages, missing persons, brutal crimes

⁷⁵ As per Kelman’s *mirror images* and Anastasiou’s *non-communication*.

⁷⁶ Anastasiou, 584-585.

allegedly committed by Turkish troops and the shattering of their national aspirations. Harkening to descent from Mycenaean ancestry and supported by archaeological evidence in the Museum of Nicosia, they see themselves as a people long separated from their Greek cousins on the mainland with a legitimate national agenda.⁷⁷ The GCs, Anastasiou observes, largely ignore the previous troubles and crimes committed against the Turkish population of island, choosing to perceive that there was little tension before the crisis of 1974.⁷⁸ On the other hand, the “Museum of Barbarism,” outside Turkish Nicosia, once a home inhabited by TCs, displays a litany of photographs of persons allegedly victims of GC atrocities during the strife that followed the collapse of the Republic in 1963.⁷⁹ Both GCs and TCs continue to publicly draw upon the alleged atrocities of the other, ensuring that memories of pain and suffering are not forgotten.

There are additional examples of historical discrepancy between the communities on the island. One example involves the comparative interpretation of the legitimacy of the TRNC. While the TCs tend to view Cyprus as much their home as any and the TRNC as a historically justified, legitimate independent state, the GCs tend to view it as an illegitimate breakaway state that asserts its independence through Turkish intimidation.⁸⁰ Opposing perceptions of the Turkish Army’s role in the conflict serves as another example.⁸¹ The TCs tend to view Turkish military presence as a liberating force serving as their protector against the violent nationalist agenda of the GCs and Greece. The GCs on the other hand tend to see the Turkish Army as an intimidator and an immediate threat to peace; they view Turkey as an aggressor and its army as an occupier.

⁷⁷ Doob, 386.

⁷⁸ Anastasiou, 582-583.

⁷⁹ Doob, 388.

⁸⁰ Anastasiou, 584.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 583-584.

The use of certain nationalist symbols, such as flags and songs, can also incite varied feelings of insecurity and fear amongst the populations.⁸² There is also a crucial economic dimension to these discrepancies. The TRNC has been consistently excluded from world trade since it declared independence in 1983. While the TNRC needs to engage in international trade for its survival, the GCs bitterly oppose it. They view any trade coming from the TRNC as trafficking in stolen goods – goods that are perceived to be the property of the Republic of Cyprus, an internationally recognized sovereign entity and EU member state.⁸³

Once established, political communities of insecurity revolve around cyclical manifestations of threats and reassurances. The initial securitizing moves on Cyprus (i.e., Eleftheria and Enosis, followed by Taksim), ultimately set both Cypriot communities on course for mutually perpetual states of insecurity. Conditions such as mutual trust and reciprocity – considered essential for social and political reconciliation in inter-communal identity-conflict – are unachievable in such an environment. On Cyprus, this intractable, self-perpetuating security dynamic is the direct result of the hyper-securitization of the identity amongst the communities on Cyprus.

Conclusion: Implications of the Hyper-Securitization of Identity

This analysis attempted to describe how the intractability of the identity-conflict on Cyprus can be explained by, and is intimately related to, the process of securitization. This process contributed to a cyclical, self-perpetuating security dynamic. These conditions played a crucial role in the intractability of the political situation in Cyprus

⁸² Anastasiou, 586-588.; Doob, 386-387.

⁸³ Anastasiou, 585-586.

and are indicative of contemporary understandings of intractable social-conflict. In view of this perpetual cycle of securitization, and the inability of the communities on Cyprus to remove “identity” as a contentious factor in their social and political environment, I have specified the phenomena leading to this security dynamic as a condition of *hyper-securitization*.

The history of the island establishes the context in which the two communities conceptualize their claims to Cyprus, how they perceive the legitimacy of their national agendas and the events that have led to a socio-political stalemate. In discussing the elements of identity-conflict, I presented particular qualities that serve in distinguishing it as categorically separate from other types of organized violence and the factors that can contribute to its intractability. By presenting the Copenhagen School’s securitization theory, I discussed how an issue that may lay dormant in the political psyche of a community for generations could quickly become the basis for extreme action and even violence. This set the groundwork for understanding protracted social-violence in the context of a mutual securitization of identity between communities in conflict. I then went on to establish how these factors culminated in the establishment of perpetual political communities of insecurity on Cyprus and contributed to a protracted identity-conflict particularly impervious to resolution efforts.

Within the framework of the initial securitization imperative, the “Greek Cypriot self” served as the referent, which, through the self-fulfilling prophecy dynamic, led the Turkish Cypriot community to a reciprocal process of securitization in the realm of identity. As a *zero-sum* game, victory for either side was incumbent upon the denial of the opposing party’s national agenda. If a threat to identity constitutes a threat to the

“self,” then existential situations can arise in which groups may pursue security by any means necessary. Because the “self” is a non-negotiable object, and is perceived to be central to individual and collective existence, its security is paramount and a group may exercise extreme measures to maintain it. Drawing upon identity as the referent and mobilizing force in the process of securitization against threats of human agency can, under certain circumstances, end up being an exercise in hyper-securitization. In light of the exclusivity of nationalist agendas, the securitization of a particular identity within a larger community toward the attainment of a particular national destiny may further contribute to conflict. If a nationalist group pursues a political agenda that is exclusive to its own group in a larger political community, the groups that arise in opposition may respond by seeking the denial of that national destiny, perhaps by pursuing an exclusive agenda of its own.

Though there have not been any major incidents of violence on the island for quite some time, the Cyprus conflict remains unresolved. Despite countless efforts at official negotiations, third party reconciliation talks, conflict resolution workshops and international interventions, concrete political solutions have yet to present themselves. It is clear that the communities in Cyprus did undergo mutual securitizations of identity – the de-securitization of which has yet to be achieved. Therefore, it may be useful to draw the distinction between subjective referents like identity, and other more objective referents in the securitization process, which may prove to be more susceptible to return to normative discourse through the process of de-securitization.

There seems to be little scholarship that discusses the details of the de-securitization process and I did not get a chance to examine the implications of shifting

“identity” from the realm of security back to normative discourse. Just as securitization theory in this study contributed to the understanding of protracted identity-conflict, perhaps exploration into the process of de-securitization can offer insights into its resolution. I have already begun to investigate this topic. I hope that this paper, in conjunction with my continuing work on the subject, will form the basis for a larger, more comprehensive study that will seek to present a more dynamic approach to understanding the de-securitization of identity and the resolution of protracted identity-conflict.