



## THE STATE OF THE CYPRUS QUESTION

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The Cyprus question raises a wide number of questions and issues to be investigated. Using scientific literature mainly, this present work is giving a broad overview and understanding of the main issues at stake, while acknowledging that not all the aspects of the conflict and its resolution are brought up. Moreover, a theoretical approach is used to define the type of reconciliation process ongoing in Cyprus and the several challenges it has faced in the past. Thus, this paper is structured as follows: firstly, the historical and political context in which the Cyprus question erupted is detailed. Afterwards, the notion of reconciliation is theoretically developed. In the third part, we enounce the issues that challenge and delay the peace process. That section acknowledges: one, the important role of the “motherlands” on Cyprus’ reconciliation; two, the issue of identity and nationalism in this context, and three, the rejection of the Annan plan and its consequences are mentioned. In the conclusion, a formulated response to the research question is provided and a short reflection over the “almost moral” imperative to reconcile former enemies concludes the paper.

*Keywords:* Cyprus, intractable conflict, reconciliation, identity/community-based conflict, nationalism

Dans le cadre de cet article, l’auteur décrit de manière globale les principaux enjeux du conflit chypriote, dont de nombreux aspects demandent à être étudiés plus en détails. Néanmoins, cet article n’a pas la prétention de répondre à toutes les questions que soulèvent ce cas d’étude, ni de présenter l’ensemble des aspects liés à ce conflit complexe. En plus de décrire les enjeux majeurs, une approche théorique est utilisée pour définir le type de processus de réconciliation mis en œuvre sur l’île, ainsi que les obstacles récents allant à l’encontre de ce processus. L’article est structuré en trois parties dont la première décrit le contexte historique et politique qui a mené à l’éclatement du conflit. La deuxième partie développe théoriquement la notion de réconciliation et la troisième partie énonce certains obstacles majeurs au processus de paix. Parmi ceux-ci, la question des « mères patrie » est évoquée ; le rôle de l’identité et du nationalisme sont également mis en avant ainsi que le rejet du Plan Annan et ses conséquences. Pour conclure, une brève réflexion portant sur l’impératif « moral » de réconciliation est menée.

*Mots clés :* Chypre, Conflit enlisé, réconciliation, conflit communautaire/identitaire, nationalisme

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“Cypriots know that they cannot become a World Power; but they have succeeded in becoming a World nuisance, which is almost as good”.

George Mike

## I. Introduction

Cyprus is the last European country witnessing a United Nation’s intervention (UNFICYP). Its territory is the scene of an intractable and protracted conflict that has split two communities for decades. The countless peace negotiations launched by international organisations or external parties to settle the conflict showed little result and it appears status quo will be maintained for quite some time. Recently peace talks started again with the 2018 elections, as elected presidents on both sides of the Green Line<sup>2</sup> seemed to favour a rapprochement discourse.

Nevertheless, fifteen years after the failure of the well-known Annan plan designed to solve the Cyprus question, it seems necessary to raise the question: is Cyprus an irreconcilable case?

In this work, scientific literature is used to apprehend the intricacies of this Cyprus question and to endeavour to provide a qualified answer. Secondary sources are mainly used, as it was not feasible to do empirical work. Close attention was given to the sources used as the conflict is still ongoing and some works showed bias when considering the question. However, we would like to highlight the fact that further empirical study of this thesis should be encouraged, as most of the English literature available on this matter is aged and several contextual changes have occurred in the recent years. There are several topics which require further investigation, including developing a thorough understanding of Turkey’s political stance on Cyprus since the recent hardening of its political regime and elucidate the role of the recently found hydrocarbon resources in the partnership between the Republic of Cyprus and Israel.

As the Cyprus case raises a number of questions, this present work is giving a broad understanding of the main issues at stake, while acknowledging that not all the aspects of the conflict and its resolution are brought up. For example, developments on the role of education in building peace or evolutions in the role of the economic pressure on politics of reconciliation deserve further research.

Thus, this paper is structured as follows: firstly, the historical and political context in which the Cyprus question erupted is detailed. Afterwards, the notion of reconciliation is theoretically developed. In the third part, we enounce the issues that challenge and delay the peace process. That section acknowledges: one, the important role of the “motherlands” on

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<sup>2</sup> The Green line is also called, in the Greek Cypriot community, the Attila line, as Attila was the code given by the Turkish army to the 1974 military operation. Nevertheless, this is communally connoted and also, calling the Green line in such a manner denies the fact that the Green line (although not in the same extend as it is after 1974) was firstly designed by the United Nations in 1964 following the inter-communal violence that occurred after the constitutional crisis during the early 1960s.



Cyprus' reconciliation two, the issue of identity and nationalism in this context, and three, the rejection of the Annan plan and its consequences are mentioned. In the conclusion, a formulated response to the research question is provided and a short reflexion over the "almost moral" imperative to reconcile former enemies concludes the paper.

## II. Historical and political context of the Cyprus Question

Throughout history, the island of Cyprus has always been part of different empires: the Roman, the Byzantine, the Latin, the Venetian, the Ottoman (which produced the Turkish population in 1571) and then, ultimately, the British empire, to which Cyprus was given in 1878 before Britain annexed it in 1915<sup>3</sup>. Given this rich history, the island is populated with a strong Greek community (about 80 percent of the population), as well as a large Turkish minority (about 18 percent of the population), and other smaller minorities such as: Maronites, Armenians, Roms, and Latin Christians<sup>4</sup>. For centuries, those different communities coexisted peacefully as a "quiet, traditional, essentially non-violent society"<sup>5</sup>, with tensions being only of sporadic occurrence ("very few, short-lived and circumscribed"<sup>6</sup>).

However, by the 1930s, an anti-colonialist movement began in opposition to the British rule<sup>7</sup>. The first riots against the British people occurred in 1931. Through the years, this anti-colonial movement transformed itself and was accompanied from the 1950s onward by nationalist claims. Within the Greek Cypriot community, a nationalist will for *enosis* (a union with the Greek "homeland") emerged. In reaction to the Greek Cypriot nationalist discourse, the Turkish Cypriot community began demanding *taksim* (a partition of the island and a union with Turkey). These two concurrent narratives were enforced with the development, in the early 1950s, of secret armed groups and organisations<sup>8</sup>: the EOKA<sup>9</sup> was formed within the Greek Cypriot community and the TMT<sup>10</sup> was created as the Turkish Cypriot organization. The emergence of armed groups claiming *enosis* or *taksim* led to an intensification of the

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<sup>3</sup> Catia GALATARIOTOU, "From psychosocial equilibrium to catastrophic breakdown: Cyprus 1955-1974", *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 2008, vol. 89, p. 847 ; Michael Stavrou MICHALIS, *Resolving the Cyprus conflict*, New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, 320 pages

<sup>4</sup> Catia GALATARIOTOU, "From psychosocial equilibrium to catastrophic breakdown: Cyprus 1955-1974", *op. cit.*, p.846 ; Nicos TRIMIKLIOTIS and Umut BOZKURT (Ed.), *Beyond a divided Cyprus*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, p.8 ;

<sup>5</sup> Catia GALATARIOTOU, "From psychosocial equilibrium to catastrophic breakdown: Cyprus 1955-1974", *op. cit.*, p.846

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 847

<sup>7</sup> Nicos TRIMIKLIOTIS and Umut BOZKURT (Ed.), *Beyond a divided Cyprus*, *op. cit.*, p. 8 ; In the early days, it was a mass and popular movement.

<sup>8</sup> They can also be qualified as paramilitary groups.

<sup>9</sup> This acronym stands for *Ethniki Organosis Kypriou Agoniston*, which is the *National Organisation of Cypriot Fighters*.

<sup>10</sup> This acronym stands for *Türk Mukavemet Teşkilatı*, which is the *Turkish Resistance Organisation*.



violent episodes. Between 1955 and 1959, EOKA lead its armed campaign against the British rule and the outbreaks of violence were generalized towards the whole society, with brutality stemming from both the British power as well as both communities' armed group. At this stage, riots against the colonial power were concomitant with intercommunal violence.

These years of violent outbreaks led to the independence of Cyprus in 1960. However, it was not due to any party's victory against British rule but rather, the independence was organized and agreed on by external powers to stop the violence and solve the unmanageable Cyprus problem<sup>11</sup>. Consequently, the Republic of Cyprus was born out of an agreement between the United Kingdom (former colonial power); Turkey and Greece in consultation with the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot communities. A bicomunal constitution was imposed on the island and established a consociational<sup>12</sup> political structure which instituted power sharing between the Greek Cypriot community and the Turkish Cypriot community. Such constitutional arrangement aimed at preserving the communities and took into account the ethnic and sociological realities of the island. The Cypriot constitution was negotiated upon three guarantee treaties (also known as the Zurich-London Agreements of 1959)<sup>13</sup>. These treaties are: the *Treaty of Establishment*, which guarantees the establishment of military bases under British sovereignty, the *Treaty of Guarantee* which assures the independence and the territorial integrity of Cyprus and also allows, under conditions, military intervention of the United Kingdom, Greece and Turkey in case of any violation of that integrity; the last treaty is the *Treaty of Alliance* which foresees the communal defence by all the treaty's parties in case of external aggression of Cyprus<sup>14</sup>.

This limited independence<sup>15</sup>, paired with the guaranteed and supervised constitution, led to a constitutional crisis which, in December 1963, transformed into intercommunal violence until August 1964. During this period, Turkish Cypriot fled and sought shelters in what was called "enclaves" (around 25,000 Turkish Cypriot fled because of fear and threat) and all of the representative of the Turkish Cypriot community retired themselves from the state institutions...leaving the power to the sole Greek Cypriot community from 1964 onward. At that time, the level of violence was so great that the UN security council<sup>16</sup> intervened with its resolution 186 creating a peace-keeping mission that was implemented in March 1964 (UNFICYP)<sup>17</sup>. The mandate and function of the Force was "in the interest of preserving international peace and security, to use its best efforts to prevent a recurrence of fighting and,

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<sup>11</sup> Marie-Pierre RICHARTE, *Cyprus*, in William ZARTMAN and Victor KREMENYUK (Ed.), *Peace vs. Justice*, Lanham : Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005, p. 201; The United Kingdom was indeed not able to keep violence at a lower level anymore.

<sup>12</sup> Arend LIJPHART, "Consociational democracy", *World Politics*, 1969, vol. 21, n°2, pp. 207-225

<sup>13</sup> Nicos TRIMIKLINIOTIS and Umut BOZKURT (Ed.), *Beyond a divided Cyprus*, *op. cit.*, p. 8-9

<sup>14</sup> Marie-Pierre RICHARTE, *Cyprus*, *op. cit.*, p. 204

<sup>15</sup> Nicos TRIMIKLINIOTIS and Umut BOZKURT (Ed.), *Beyond a divided Cyprus*, *op. cit.*, p.8

<sup>16</sup> Cyprus complained to the UN Security Council of Turkey interfering in the state affairs and of aggressing the Republic. In response of what Turkey argued that the Greek Cypriot in power had been trying for the last 200 years to suppress the rights of the Turkish minority and denied any aggression acts.

<sup>17</sup> Fabienne H. BAIDER, Maria HADJIPAVLOU, « Stéréotypes dans des communautés divisées : sources de conflits et d'unité à Chypre », *Nouvelles Questions Féministes*, 2008, vol.27, n°3, p.73



as necessary, to contribute to the maintenance and restoration of law and order and a return to normal conditions”<sup>18</sup>. This resolution also recommended that the Secretary General “in agreement with the Government of Cyprus and the Government of Greece, Turkey and the United Kingdom, designates a mediator who shall use his best endeavours with the representatives of the communities and also with the aforesaid four governments, for the purpose of promoting a peaceful solution and an agreed settlement of the problem confronting Cyprus (...)”<sup>19</sup>. This UNFICYP mission had been prolonged ever since, up until today<sup>20</sup>.

Violence outbreaks occurred again in 1967. Every time a violent episode happened, a strong and wide diplomatic pressure was put on Turkey to prevent it from invading the island; even as Turkey already was intervening with bombings<sup>21</sup>. As a result of this, “[c]rucially in the 1960s each community came to see itself as an endangered minority: each experienced annihilation anxiety, feeling itself small and threatened by a big, powerful, murderous power: the Turkish Cypriots in relation to the Greek Cypriots, the Greek Cypriots in relation to Turkey”<sup>22</sup>.

However, the communities were not homogeneous bodies; which is especially true for the Greek Cypriot community which encountered internal disputes and fragmentation. Indeed, the most nationalist and unionist part of the community felt betrayed by Makarios<sup>23</sup>, who had presented the emergence of the Republic of Cyprus as the first step towards *enosis*. As a result of those dissent, a second EOKA (known as EOKA-B) was created and started a bombing campaign against Makarios’s supporters in 1971. It should also be said that the ‘supposedly harmonious’ relations with Greece grew more tense and complicated as the Greek Military *junta* accessed power in 1967 and prepared a military *coup* on Cyprus in 1974. This intra-communal violence and tension was put aside; however, from the official narrative and collective memory of the Greek Cypriot community after the partition of 1974.

On 15<sup>th</sup> July 1974, the Greek Military *Junta* organized a *coup d’Etat* on Cyprus with the aim to annex the island and oust the President of the Republic Archbishop Makarios<sup>24</sup>. In reaction to this, Turkey used the Treaty of Guarantee as a legal basis to send its troops on the island to defend against the threat over Cyprus’s national sovereignty<sup>25</sup>. However, the protective

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<sup>18</sup> S/5575/1964 UN Security Council, Resolution of 4 March 1964, 186, available at <https://peacemaker.un.org/cyprus-resolution186>, consulted on 22/04/2018

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> The last resolution of the UN Security Council to extend this mission dates of July 2018, *see* S/RES/2430 (2018) UN Security Council, Resolution of 26 July 2018.

<sup>21</sup> Catia GALATARIOTOU, “From psychosocial equilibrium to catastrophic breakdown: Cyprus 1955-1974”, *op. cit.*, p.848-9

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p.849

<sup>23</sup> Leader of the Greek Cypriot community and also President of the Republic of Cyprus from its independence until his death in 1977.

<sup>24</sup> Catia GALATARIOTOU, “From psychosocial equilibrium to catastrophic breakdown: Cyprus 1955-1974”, *op. cit.*, p.846

<sup>25</sup> Press article published on 7/7/2017 in *Libération*, « Chypre : il faut inventer d’autres processus de négociation pour la paix », interview of Gilles Bertrand by Gérard Maïder



military operation converted to a settlement since, as a result of this intervention, Turkish troops occupied around 37 percent of the land. The day of the Turkish invasion, the Security Council of the United Nations issued its 353 Resolution which asked all parties to observe a cease-fire and urged Greece, Turkey, and the United Kingdom to start negotiating peace immediately<sup>26</sup>. It took approximately one month for the Turkish forces to declare a *de facto* cease-fire<sup>27</sup> on August 16<sup>th</sup>.

This invasion led to the *de facto* partition of the island and had some serious consequences for the whole population, in addition to the collapse of the government and its economy. It had a “devastating effect” in terms of human rights violations including deaths, systematic or gang rapes, missing persons, and massive population displacements<sup>28</sup>. As stated by Galatariotou, “for the first time in its history Cyprus lay divided by a *de facto* border, the so-called ‘Attila Line’ imposed by the invading army. And as Greek Cypriots fled, and many remaining were subsequently driven out of the invaded northern territory, and the Turkish Cypriots in the south fled or were subsequently transported to the north, the two communities found themselves segregated and virtually sealed off from each other”<sup>29</sup>.

In summary, the period between 1963 and 1974 was a violent confrontation of two ideals that could not coexist as one community wanted a union with Greece and the other wanted the partition of the island and a union with Turkey. These opposing claims resulted in a zero-sum game: the strongest desire of one community was the worst nightmare of the other<sup>30</sup>. This “inter-communal violence arose out of the combustible combination of three factors: end-of-Empire politics, Cyprus’s increased strategic importance due to its geographical position, and the rise of an illusory belief in each of the two main Cypriot communities”<sup>31</sup>.

As a result of these different episodes of intercommunal and intra-communal violence, around 2,000 people went missing, from both communities and most are still missing or unidentified today<sup>32</sup>.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> RESO353 (1974) UN Security Council, resolution of 20 July 1974 available online.

<sup>27</sup> There wasn’t a formal cease-fire in Cyprus, which made the mandate of the UNFICYP’s implementation a little complicated.

<sup>28</sup> Catia GALATARIOTOU, “From psychosocial equilibrium to catastrophic breakdown: Cyprus 1955-1974”, *op. cit.*, p.846; Some refer to this situation as ethnic cleansing; we prefer not to use this term in this context.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Marie-Pierre RICHARTE, *Cyprus, op. cit.*, p. 202

<sup>31</sup> Catia GALATARIOTOU, “From psychosocial equilibrium to catastrophic breakdown: Cyprus 1955-1974”, *op. cit.*, p.847

<sup>32</sup> Committee for the Missing Persons website, <http://www.cmp-cyprus.org/>

<sup>33</sup> Source of this image: *Le dessous des cartes*, available online at this address: <http://ddc.arte.tv/cartes/245>



Ever since, the two communities (two nearly ethnically homogeneous communities<sup>34</sup>) live separated from each other by the border<sup>35</sup> and very little movement across the border was possible until 2003<sup>36</sup>. The division of the island became even more formal with the unilateral declaration of independence of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) in 1983 by Rauf Denktaş<sup>37</sup>. This independence was rejected by the whole international community but Turkey.

Because of its mostly unrecognised unilateral independence and its *de facto* partition, the situation of Cyprus, regarding the international community and international law, is particular. To the international community as well as the Security council of the United Nations, the Republic of Cyprus has sovereignty over the entire island, even though a portion of territory is currently under the control of the Turkish community and the Turkish army. Thus, the *de facto* political situation does not match the *de jure* internationally recognised situation since, in the eyes of the international community, the TRNC's sovereignty over the northern part of Cyprus is not legitimate. This complexity was accentuated by the accession of the Republic of Cyprus to the European Union (EU) in 2004 and the fact that no agreement could be reached over the reunification of the island prior its accession to the EU. Ever since, all Cypriots are individually members of the EU, but as a state, only the Republic of Cyprus is part of the EU; meaning that *de facto* only the southern part is part of the EU. Moreover, the *acquis communautaire* was only applied and implemented in the southern part of the island, which causes an even greater division between the two side of this island.

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<sup>34</sup> Michalinos ZEMBYLAS, « Ethnic division in Cyprus and a policy initiative on promoting peaceful coexistence :toward an agonistic democracy for citizenship education », *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*, 2011, vol.6, n°1, p.55

<sup>35</sup> Called the Green Line and surrounded by the “Buffer zone”, a UN controlled zone.

<sup>36</sup> Fabienne H. BAIDER, Maria HADJIPAVLOU, « Stéréotypes dans des communautés divisées : sources de conflits et d'unité à Chypre », *op. cit.*, p.74

<sup>37</sup> Leader of the Turkish Cypriot community, president of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, created with others the TMT movement (paramilitary organization pro *taksim* of the Turkish Cypriot community) and also created the National Unity Party.



During the twentieth century, “the island moved from coexistence and integration between two communities who were living in an ‘psychological equilibrium’ to violence and ‘genocidal hate’ that led to disintegration, fragmentation and a more general catastrophic breakdown”<sup>38</sup>. The so-called “Cyprus question” has mutated into an ethno-national conflict<sup>39</sup> that is now “frozen”, as there are few violent outbreaks with only sporadic incidents, and no agreed term for peace. All of this resulting in Cyprus being called a “deeply divided (and segregated) society”<sup>40</sup>. Nevertheless, Cyprus should also be regarded as an international conflict<sup>41</sup> : it is more than a “problem of historic enmity”<sup>42</sup> between Greeks and Turks manifested as an identity conflict over control of a state. (...) [but also as a] geopolitical conflict<sup>43</sup> reflected in the externally imposed rigid constitutional structure, which imploded into fragments due to foreign machinations”<sup>44</sup>.

### III. What does reconciliation mean in Cyprus?

Reconciliation is often perceived as the ultimate goal to reach after hostilities and once peace terms are agreed upon. Generally speaking, it represents the antagonism to conflict and/or the next step to be taken after it (especially armed violent conflict). Nevertheless, as stated by many authors, it appears there are several definitions of “reconciliation”, all relating to different types of approaches and processes or to different conditions needed to reach it<sup>45</sup>. The

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<sup>38</sup>Catia GALATARIOTOU, “From psychosocial equilibrium to catastrophic breakdown: Cyprus 1955-1974”, *op. cit.*, p. 845

<sup>39</sup>Fabienne H. BAIDER, Maria HADJIPAVLOU, « Stéréotypes dans des communautés divisées : sources de conflits et d’unité à Chypre », *op. cit.*, p.72

<sup>40</sup>Michalinos ZEMBYLAS, « Ethnic division in Cyprus and a policy initiative on promoting peaceful coexistence :toward an agonistic democracy for citizenship education », *op. cit.*, p.55

<sup>41</sup> Marie-Pierre RICHARTE, *Cyprus*, *op. cit.*, p.202

<sup>42</sup> Sometimes, the Cyprus question is portrayed as a religious question as well, as the communities do not share the same religious beliefs. However, we do not totally agree with this assumption and chose not to picture it this way. It seems that too often, religion is used as an angle to understand conflicts that have different root causes such as political dispute over the sovereignty of the state or imposed forms of government that do not take into consideration the demography and social features of the population living in that state. Therefore, we chose not to talk about this aspect in this work, as moreover, it is rarely presented as such in the literature.

<sup>43</sup> Regarding this aspect, it seems necessary to recall the specific place of Cyprus in the Mediterranean sea that makes the island a strategic position in regards to the relationship between European countries and the Middle East. Another aspect is the existence of hydrocarbon source in its territorial waters, which enables it to have some influence on the energy market of the EU. The matter of the extraction of hydrocarbon, in partnership with countries such as Israel and Greece will not be talked about in this work, but is another element that could change the politics of the island. Read more about this subject online <https://portail-ie.fr/analysis/1810/chypre-revient-sur-lechiquier-mediterraneen-grace-a-lenergie>

<sup>44</sup> Nicos TRIMIKLINIOTIS and Umut BOZKURT (Eds.), *Beyond a divided Cyprus. A state and society in transformation*, *op. cit.*, p.5

<sup>45</sup> Valérie ROSOUX, “Reconciliation as a Peace-Building Process: Scope and Limits”, in Jacob BERCOVITCH, Victor KREMENYUK & William ZARTMAN (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Conflict Resolution*, London: Sage Publications, 2009, pp.543-563



different definitions enhance different concepts such as trust<sup>46</sup>, truth<sup>47</sup>, or identity change<sup>48</sup>. Reconciliation can also be understood on a continuum between its “minimalist” form, which refers to any “mutually conciliatory accommodation between former protagonists”<sup>49</sup> and its “maximalist” form, which relates to “the transcendent nature of a far more demanding process requiring truth, mercy, justice and peace”<sup>50</sup>.

Valérie Rosoux presents another way of categorizing the different types of political reconciliation processes and distinguishes them into three approaches. The first approach is the structural one, which “gives priority to security, economic interdependence and political cooperation between parties”<sup>51</sup>. This approach is particular in that it deals with the interests of parties and the issues at stake. The second approach enhances the “cognitive and emotional aspects of the process of rapprochement between former adversaries” and is called the social-psychological approach<sup>52</sup>. The third one is founded on “a process of collective healing based on the rehabilitation of both victims and offenders” and is referred to as the spiritual approach<sup>53</sup>. The last two could be characterised as focusing on the “relationships between the parties”<sup>54</sup>.

In the case of Cyprus, as it appears with the following evidence, the approaches taken to reconciliation are structural and social-psychological ones. Forgiveness does not seem to be the main focus in the case of Cyprus, as very little vocabulary or grassroots initiative relating to spiritual processes are present. Therefore, the third approach is not used as a tool for this present analysis.

Thus, the structural approach focuses on interests and issues linked to security, economic interdependence, or political cooperation. It often means that structural and institutional mechanisms must be accepted by the parties in conflict and implemented in order to

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<sup>46</sup> Duncan MORROW, “Seeking Peace Amid Memories of Wars : Learning from the Peace Process in Northern Ireland”, in Robert L. ROTHSTEIN (Ed.), *After Peace : Resistance and Reconciliation*, Boulder : Lynne Rienner, 1999, pp. 111–138

<sup>47</sup> Kader ASMAL *et al.*, *Reconciliation Through Truth : Reckoning of Apartheid’s Criminal Governance*, Cape Town : David Philips, 1997, p. 46

<sup>48</sup> Daniel BAR-TAL and Gemma H. BENNINK, “The nature of reconciliation as an outcome and as a process” in Yaacov BAR-SIMAN-TOV, *From Conflict Resolution*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, pp.11-38; Herbert C. KELMAN, “Reconciliation as Identity Change: A social-psychosocial Perspective”, in Yaacov BAR-SIMAN-TOV, *From Conflict Resolution*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, pp.111-124

<sup>49</sup> William J. LONG and Peter B. BRECKE, *War and Reconciliation. Reason and emotion in conflict resolution*, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2003, p.1

<sup>50</sup> Valérie ROSOUX, “Reconciliation as a Peace-Building Process: Scope and Limits”, *op. cit.*, p.544; John Paul LEDERACH, *Building peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*, Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997, 208 pages

<sup>51</sup> Valérie ROSOUX, “Reconciliation as a Peace-Building Process: Scope and Limits”, *op. cit.*, p.544; Arle M. TO

<sup>52</sup> Valérie ROSOUX, “Reconciliation as a Peace-Building Process: Scope and Limits”, *op. cit.*, p.544 ; Yaacov BAR-SIMAN-TOV, *From Conflict Resolution*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, 272 pages.

<sup>53</sup> Valérie ROSOUX, “Reconciliation as a Peace-Building Process: Scope and Limits”, *op. cit.*, p.544 ; Desmond TUTU, *No future without forgiveness*, New York: Doubleday, 1999, 304 pages.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*



eventually reduce the sense of fear or existential threat. Even though, it is recognised that reconciliation is not a linear process in which steps can be designed, it seems that this would be a good foundation to work on further aspects of the reconciliation (for example, those involving relationships between the communities). Furthermore, this structural category of action aims at permitting the coexistence between former enemies. In this case, as there are *de facto* two political entities in Cyprus, instead of institutional reforms to the state, some confidence building measures were tried out to smoothen the relationship between the two communities, living on each side of the “Green Line” and reassure each party on the intentions of the other<sup>55</sup> while pursuing the peace negotiations. Several measures failed, yet one could underscore that the Committee for the Missing Persons was successfully established and also, the Green Line was opened in 2003<sup>56</sup>.

Several observations indicate that the structural approach prevailed in Cyprus. For more than 30 years, the issue at stake has been the question of the state sovereignty and its political structure (unified with a bi-zonal and bicomunal federation or partitioned;...) with the main political discourses usually leading to a stalemate as they are incompatible. Nevertheless, it seems like the political leaders are preventing any political resolution of the question and are stirring such political discourses based on *chosen traumas*<sup>57</sup> or a selective memory of the conflictual period. Moreover, third parties were immediately involved in the process in order to find compromise and little room was left to the communities. This process of externalisation and instrumentalization of the negotiations results in the shift of responsibility from the communities to external actors<sup>58</sup>. Indeed, since the early beginning and prior to the 1960-Independence, negotiating was imposed on the communities of Cyprus, and even the basis of the negotiation was designed by external actors. This is brought up as one of the reasons for the failure of the many processes of negotiations that occurred since 1974<sup>59</sup>.

Regarding this aspect, it should be stated that Cyprus’s position in the Mediterranean Sea has always been strategic and this could explain why many countries were quickly involved in the Cyprus question; in addition to the sovereignty that the United Kingdom still holds over two military bases on the island). Moreover, the first crises erupted in the context of the early Cold War. Regarding those elements, the countless international negotiations held in Geneva, Vienna, New York, or elsewhere over the Cyprus problem as well as the important number of resolutions of the Security Council of the United Nations on the “Cyprus Question” can attest to a certain approach to reconciliation that was favoured for a long time by all the different parties.

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<sup>55</sup> Marie-Pierre RICHARTE, *Cyprus, op. cit.*, p.209

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p.210

<sup>57</sup> Vamik D. VOLKAN, “Large-group identity, international relations and psychoanalysis”, *International Forum of Psychoanalysis*, 2009, vol.18, n°4, p.211

<sup>58</sup> Marie-Pierre RICHARTE, *Cyprus, op. cit.*, p.209-210

<sup>59</sup> We will come back on this aspect in the following section regarding the role of external parties in the Cyprus peace process.



As stated by Wilmer, structural measures are essential to create a basic level of trust; however, they are not sufficient to resolve protracted conflicts<sup>60</sup>, “a reconciliation process obviously implies the transformation of relationships between former opponents”<sup>61</sup>. This transformative relationship relates to the social-psychological approach to reconciliation. Transforming the relationship between former opponents implies to work on the social representations and beliefs that the group has regarding the other group of people; as well as working on the group’s own identity<sup>62</sup>. Indeed, as large group identities are socially constructed<sup>63</sup>, one needs to challenge this particular construction of its own identity as well as the Other’s. Especially in conflictual context where, as the group’s identity is threatened, one’s identity is being built “against” the other’s identity (meaning in cultivating the differences that exist between the two groups). Generally, there is a feeling that acknowledging the Other and its claims will systematically delegitimize our identity construction and claims<sup>64</sup>. Academics often refer to this particular scheme as zero-sum logic : “the fulfilment of the other’s national identity is perceived by each side as equivalent to the destruction of its own identity. Thus, neither side can be expected to make a move to accept the other unless and until it develops a sense of assurance that its own existence is secure”<sup>65</sup>.

It seems like there is a sense of this in Cyprus. The *de facto* political situation is an obstacle for some discussions to happen between people from both communities who are cooperating on rapprochement projects. Often, subjects linked to the present and/or future situation of the state are avoided because there is a fear, especially present in the Greek Cypriot community, that engaging in a conversation over the state will implicitly result in the recognition of the TRNC<sup>66</sup>. Some people are even afraid to cooperate with the other community for this reason; which in fact threatens or generally slows down the peace process.

Furthermore, the relationship to the Other is important and sometimes decisive regarding the reconciliation process<sup>67</sup>. In conflictual environments, the figure of the enemy is almost institutionalized and is often dehumanized<sup>68</sup>, at its extreme form this allows the extermination of the Other. In Cyprus, the relationship between the people from both communities seems

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<sup>60</sup> Franke WILMER, “The social construction of conflict reconciliation in the Former Yugoslavia”, *Social Justice*, 1998, vol.25, n°4, p.93

<sup>61</sup> Valérie ROSOUX, “Reconciliation as a Peace-Building Process: Scope and Limits”, *op. cit.*, p.545

<sup>62</sup> Herbert C. KELMAN, “Reconciliation as Identity Change: A social-psychosocial Perspective”, *op. cit.*, pp.111-124

<sup>63</sup>Vamik D. VOLKAN, “Large-group identity, international relations and psychoanalysis”, *op. cit.*, pp. 206-213

<sup>64</sup> Cillian MCGRATTAN, *Memory, Politics and identity. Haunted by history*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, p.17

<sup>65</sup> Valérie ROSOUX, “Reconciliation as a Peace-Building Process: Scope and Limits”, *op. cit.*, p. 550 ; Herbert C. KELMAN, “Israelis and Palestinians: Psychological Prerequisites for Mutual Acceptance”, *International Security*, 1978, vol. 3, n°1, pp.170-171

<sup>66</sup> Barbara KARATSIOLI, “What kind of state are we in when we start to think of the state? Cyprus in crises and Prospects for reunification”, *The Cyprus Review*, 2014, vol. 26,n°1, p.154

<sup>67</sup> Valérie ROSOUX, “Reconciliation as a Peace-Building Process: Scope and Limits”, *op. cit.*, p. 550

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*



ambivalent. If one looks at history, both communities were coexisting and cohabiting peacefully before the rise of the Greek nationalist discourse and the then Turkish nationalist response to it. For this reason, it seems like social perceptions of the Other – at the societal level – were not dehumanized to the point that a genocide or a more generalized violence between the two communities at large could implode. It seems like the relation to the Other is an enemy relationship that was mostly enhanced by the political organization and parties. At least before the intercommunal violence of the 1960s and the Partition of 1974.

In this matter, it should be reminded that not everybody agreed with the nationalist claims. This is illustrated by the intra-communal violence that occurred within the Greek Cypriot community. Moreover, different discourses existed, one being more “hellenocentric” and the other more “cypriocentric”<sup>69</sup>. As some authors state: “the reason why a murderous ethnic cleansing did not happen is that ordinary people were not as much taken in by the respective leaderships’ zero sum games; even when they showed support in practice, they did not go out to kill each other and in some cases rather helped each other find refuge”<sup>70</sup>. Another example of the humanity that was still present between the communities is the opening of the border in 2003 that enabled cross visits to people’s original home. As they returned to their current home, “many people also had returned with belongings which the present owner, usually a Turkish Cypriot family, had kept all those years thinking that one day the original owner of the house might return. Such belongings included wedding dresses, photographs, books, embroideries, antique mirrors, etc”<sup>71</sup>.

Another manner which impacted the transformation of the social representations and identities dealt with the past and seeking for truth about the past. There are some changes being made on that level. Shy but present, shared history of the conflict emerges and challenges the dominant nationalist discourses<sup>72</sup> but also exhumation and search for the missing persons started. This enables people to learn about the wounds, loss and suffering that they shared across the border. The Committee for the Missing Persons (CMP)<sup>73</sup> is a meaningful illustration of this.

Even though CMP was instituted “by agreement between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities under the auspices of the United Nations”<sup>74</sup> and resources were mobilized at the international level at first, it took a while for the CMP to start doing ground

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<sup>69</sup> Michalinos ZEMBYLAS, « Ethnic division in Cyprus and a policy initiative on promoting peaceful coexistence :toward an agonistic democracy for citizenship education », *op. cit.*, p.55

<sup>70</sup> Nicos TRIMIKLINIOTIS and Umut BOZKURT (Eds.), *Beyond a divided Cyprus*, *op. cit.*, p.206

<sup>71</sup> Maria HADJIPAVLOU, “The third alternative space: Bi-communal work in divided cyprus”, *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics and Culture*, 2012, vol. 18, N°2/3, p.107

<sup>72</sup> Barbara KARATSIOLI, “What kind of state are we in when we start to think of the state? Cyprus in crises and Prospects for reunification”, *op. cit.*, p. 154

<sup>73</sup> The CMP – established in 1981 – is composed of a member from the Greek Cypriot community, a member from the Turkish Cypriot community and a member of the ICRC designated by the United nation. The team is mainly composed of young Scientifics from both communities whose goal is the same and allows them to cooperate in order to reach it.

<sup>74</sup> CMP “Origins”, available online on this address: <http://www.cmp-cyprus.org/content/origins>



work<sup>75</sup>. However, the opening of the border, the referendum crisis in 2003, the ageing of the relatives and witnesses, and the political pressure on the parties led to the beginning of the ground work and the search for the missing persons around 2006. Those circumstances facilitated the start of the truth-recovery; it felt like the time was finally right and more people were ready. This collaboration is a proof of willingness to cooperate with the “past seen enemy” on a project to move the whole society forward from the conflictual period. This is also interesting in terms of transition and for the generations involved in the peaceful transition.

Those few examples show the slow changes happening in Cyprus. Transformation is also illustrated by some changes in the political leadership and on the Turkish Cypriot's side, the recurrent protests (since the economic and financial crisis in 2000) against the political leadership and the overpowering influence of Turkey in local politics and economy<sup>76</sup>. Nevertheless, patience is needed as this type of transformation is much slower and more diffused than structural changes<sup>77</sup>. It is also a difficult and long process because it cannot be imposed on people as it relates to their subjective feelings and narratives about the Other – especially in conflictual context – and the past in general.

Regarding the overall picture of the reconciliation process, it could be qualified as mainly top down with strong external pressures on it, although some grassroots initiatives exist (notably with victims' associations and movement such as “Occupy the Buffer Zone”<sup>78</sup>). However, these grassroots initiatives are quite fragile and new, as very little communication was possible across the divide. In Cyprus, “[t]he international community seems to negotiate ‘by the book’ (setting up a democratic, rights-conscious state) without taking into consideration the reality of the island and the true political aspirations of both parties: two peoples, two communities with a common past refusing to share a common future and unable to create new links and a common identity, even on a very general basis”<sup>79</sup>. This statement could nevertheless be questioned as some sporadic grassroots initiatives emerge.

Another element that must also be questioned is about the timing of the peace talks and negotiations. As Zartman states it, time is an essential element of stable foundations for the peace negotiation to start. According to him, ripeness is key: the parties need to feel like they reached an *impasse* in the conduct of conflict, meaning that any continuation of the conflict would be highly damageable for both parties. Coming to the realization that conflict has

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<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> Nicos TRIMIKLINIOTIS and Umut BOZKURT (Eds.), *Beyond a divided Cyprus*, *op. cit.*, p.6-7

<sup>77</sup> Valérie ROSOUX, “Reconciliation as a Peace-Building Process: Scope and Limits”, *op. cit.*, p.545

<sup>78</sup> Occupy the Buffer Zone is a protest movement that occurred between 2011 and 2012 in Nicosia at the Ledra/Lokmacı checkpoint and was held by Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot activists. This movement sought to bring awareness about the Cyprus political and economic problems.

<sup>79</sup> Marie-Pierre RICHARTE, *Cyprus*, *op. cit.*, p. 217



reached its point of “no return” would create a momentum for negotiations to appear like a reasonable – and probably not politically deadly<sup>80</sup> – option.

In Cyprus, it seems like there wasn't a mutually hurting stalemate that spurred the international negotiations. The UNFICYP prevented a too wide level of violence and quickly the *de facto* situation of the partition made it complicated as both leaders' discourse were totally incompatible, and regarding partition, the Turkish Cypriot community seemed to have won part of what they were asking for. At society level, individually, many people felt chased out of their home – since they actually were chased out or “transferred” – and many also suffered the loss of a relative – either missing or dead. Nevertheless, it seems like the *de facto* situation did not seem to bring strong feelings to any of the communities for quite some time, as if there were more immediately important matters to solve than the question of the political sovereignty of the state. Thus, it seems like this key element is missing in Cyprus: there was not a political nor a societal momentum for the negotiations to start either at the beginning of the conflict – as the talks were almost imposed by the international community and the United Nations – and neither nowadays, as the peace talks are often renewed but rarely when time is right. The only exception is probably the Annan Plan that occurred at the same time as the accession for the EU; which could have been a catalyst for the reunification of Cyprus...but was rejected by a large majority of the Greek Cyprus community.

As stated before, reconciliation and the peace terms cannot be imposed on the population. Yet, many negotiations did not involve properly talks about the true problem or mutual concerns of both communities about fear, security and cultural heritage<sup>81</sup>. Moreover, “they dealt solely with the immediate satisfaction of the parties involved (though not always of the parties concerned) as well as with the preservation of diverse and contradictory outside interests”<sup>82</sup>. Therefore, very little success is observable at the peace negotiations level.

More reasoning of this failure is explained in the following section.

## IV. Challenges to the peace process

### a. Understanding the broader context : relationship between Greece and Turkey and UE and Turkey

This aspect relates to the structural understanding of reconciliation and the importance of interests in the negotiations. As expected, the Cyprus question could hardly be understood without taking a look at the broader picture, involving – at the regional level – the influence of Greece and Turkey and their long lasting hegemonic dispute; and at the international level, the role of the EU in relation to Turkey's desire to access its membership and the interested

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<sup>80</sup> What I mean by this, is that often political leaders cannot take radical change in their stance on conflicting issues, because if they do so, it would deny the sacrifice that people did to fight for the ideal they believed in. As well as the feeling that people died for “nothing”.

<sup>81</sup> Marie-Pierre RICHARTE, *Cyprus, op. cit.*, p.203

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p.202



international community's<sup>83</sup> mediation regarding Cyprus strategic position<sup>84</sup> in the Mediterranean Sea.

Cyprus politics, as a consequence of its “limited independence”, has always been watched over by the motherlands. In the 1950s, “the failure [by the British colonial power] to settle the dispute amongst the motherlands saw an internationalization of the negotiating process to Cyprus as the British realized Makarios’s influence with Greece”<sup>85</sup>. Hence, “the British concept of the tripartite prevailed, becoming the dominant process by which a Cyprus settlement was negotiated”<sup>86</sup>. Moreover, the internal politics of the island, on each side, is closely linked to the political and economic fluctuations – indeed, the small size of both economies makes it dependent on external actors – on Turkey for the Turkish Cypriot community or Greece and since 2004, the EU for the Greek Cypriot community.

This particularity has several consequences. The first one is related to the peace talks; since the beginning, the foundations of those negotiations have always been fragile as they opposed the president of the Republic of Cyprus to the president of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus; both being backed up by the “motherlands”. This configuration of the negotiations created a strong power-struggle kind of relationships and a Manichean approach of it, allowing very little room for the establishment of trust. Moreover, the confrontation probably made it harder for both leaders to take a step toward the other, without being politically delegitimized as they usually had strong stance and discourse on the matter. For a long time, this perpetuated the antagonist and adversarial approach to the negotiations, with the main concern being about the sovereignty and the question of security...which provides little ground for accommodation or compromise. As stated by several scholars, there is a need to reinvent the process of negotiations because, since 1964, the same scheme has been tried and used, always resulting in very little success<sup>87</sup>.

Another problem is that these peace talks have always been under scrutiny of the international community, with – depending on the time and events – stigmatization or simplification of certain attitudes. For example, post 1974, Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot community was usually seen as the “villain” as the discourse of the Greek Cypriot leaders were strongly based on the victimhood attitudes and as the presence of Turkey is illegal under the international law. However, since the rejection of the Annan plan by the Greek Cypriot community during the referendum held in 2004, the Turkish Cypriot community is now seen by international observers as the community that is the most willing to move forward. Both times, there was little understanding of the reasons that push each community to act like this.

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<sup>83</sup> Either by United States’ mediation; NATO or the United Nations... especially during the Cold War period, with the United Kingdom’s aim to be positioned in the wider global/regional power game relating to the Middle East. Further developments on this issue in Michael Stravou MICHALIS, *Resolving the Cyprus Conflict*, *op. cit.*, p.18

<sup>84</sup> See note n°40 about this strategic position of Cyprus, regarding the relationship between Europe and the Middle East.

<sup>85</sup> Michael Stravou MICHALIS, *Resolving the Cyprus Conflict*, *op. cit.*, p.22

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p.24

<sup>87</sup> Gilles BERTRAND, « Chypre : vers la réintégration ou la partition définitive ? », *Cahiers balkaniques*, 2004, vol.33; Press article « Chypre : il faut inventer d’autres processus de négociation pour la paix », *op. cit.*



The Cyprus question seems to be interdependent with more sustainable rapprochement between Greece and Turkey...which is itself hardly possible without a resolution of the Cyprus problem. In addition to this, it seems difficult to imagine the integration of Turkey into the EU without this rapprochement. This seems clear in the mind of the different political leaders of the Turkish Cypriot community as well as of Ankara. Prior to the Annan Plan referendum, there was a change in the political power within the Turkish Cypriot community, when Mehmet Ali Talat<sup>88</sup> was elected in December 2003 – a few months before the referendum took place – ousting the long-lasting leader Denktas. Denktas, who has always been a supporter of the *Taksim* and the status quo regarding Partition and who firmly believed in the possibility of an international recognition of TRNC. The political and financial crisis of the summer 2000 caused some hardship and growing despair in the population... leading to a progressive lack of interest regarding the *taksim* project and the question of the sovereignty of the state<sup>89</sup>. Consequently some protests erupted leading in a change in power in the following elections of 2003<sup>90</sup>. Around the same period, the legislative elections of 2002 in Turkey led to the accession of *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* (AKP - Justice and Development party) to power. This party supported the Annan Plan and in doing so, offered the possibility for the prospect of an European Unified Cyprus<sup>91</sup>. More globally, it supported the search for settlement in Cyprus. Though, in the long term, it seems complicated for Ankara to maintain its ambivalent discourse as it affirmed being a strong supporter of the resolution of conflict and committing to the UN while also stating that until settlement, Turkey will sustain with financial and military aid the TRNC regime<sup>92</sup>.

## b. State of identity and nationalism in the Cypriot context<sup>93</sup>

This dimension of the problem relates to the social-psychological approach of reconciliation. As stated previously, identity transformation is an important but slow part of the process toward reconciliation. Some authors believe that the political reconciliation is over, in ethno-

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<sup>88</sup> He was the president of TRNC between 2005 and 2010. He was firstly appointed as a prime minister by Rauf Denktas. He is also the leader of a centre-left wing political party (*Cumhuriyetçi Türk Partisi*) that advocates for the island reunification under a federation.

<sup>89</sup> Barbara KARATSIOLI, "What kind of state are we in when we start to think of the state? Cyprus in crises and Prospects for reunification", *op. cit.*, pp. 147-168

<sup>90</sup> Gilles BERTRAND, « Chypre : vers la réintégration ou la partition définitive ? », *op. cit.*

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> Nicos TRIMIKLINIOTIS and Umut BOZKURT (Eds.), *Beyond a divided Cyprus*, *op. cit.*, p.6-7

<sup>93</sup> We barely address the issue of Cyprus as a post-colonial problem yet as important as it is. Indeed, some authors underscore the responsibility of the United Kingdom in the today state of the Cyprus question; saying that "reviewing the British colonial period, there is no doubt that along with transforming the Cyprus problem from a colonial to a regional dispute, British policy also converted it into an interethnic conflict. Notwithstanding the adversarial incompatibility of Greek and Turkish Cypriot nationalisms, the process of ethnic division and segregation began with British colonial policies and practices that shaped the social system in such a way that the evolution of ethnonationalism/s in Cyprus was inevitable"; Michael Stravou MICHALIS, *Resolving the Cyprus Conflict*, *op. cit.*, p.27



national/protracted conflict, once the conflict identities do not display as the structural political divide in society anymore. Thus, once that citizen can share identities that transcend this divide<sup>94</sup>. In Cyprus, the situation is far from this ideal of political identities transformation. However, a close look to the identities might be an interesting insight to a better comprehension of the overall question.

One advances the idea that the mutual acceptance between the communities was possible because of their integration into larger empires: “yet for centuries Freud’s ‘narcissism of minor differences’ had remained contained in a taken-for-granted coexistence experienced as a given, natural and unquestioned part of Cypriot life”<sup>95</sup>. Yet, it is striking that during the anticolonial period of the 1930s, the “quest for self-determination morphed as a demand for the less-than-full-self determined existence engendered in the unionist demands of both communities”<sup>96</sup>. While fighting against the colonial rule, both communities worked on nationalist discourse linked to the “motherland” instead of working on the possibility of an emerging Cypriot identity. It is true that the 1930s period was marked by the rise of nationalism all across Europe, but it is still unexpected that they opted for identities that would systematically and almost unconditionally tear them apart<sup>97</sup>. Although, there were some ideological tensions and disputes within the communities. This is especially true for the Greek Cypriot community who suffered from intra-communal violence when supporters of the “Cypriot centred” discourse<sup>98</sup> were threatened by EOKA and the supporters of the “Hellenic centred” perspective<sup>99</sup>.

Anyway, the course of history led to intercommunal violence occurring between 1963-1965 as well as over the summer of 1974. Those different events, respectively, are used by the Turkish Cypriot community and the Greek Cypriot community as “chosen trauma” which is, according to Vamik Volkan, a “shared mental representation of an event in a large-group’s history in which the group suffered a catastrophic loss, humiliation and helplessness at the hands of its enemies”<sup>100</sup>. This becomes part of the collective memory as it is passed on to the next generations resulting in the “transgenerational transmission of trauma”<sup>101</sup>. Thus, the

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<sup>94</sup> Ernesto VERDEJA, « The elements of political reconciliation », in Alexander Keller HIRSCH (Ed.), *Theorizing post-conflict reconciliation*, New York, Routledge, 2012, p.166

<sup>95</sup> Catia GALATARIOTOU, “From psychosocial equilibrium to catastrophic breakdown: Cyprus 1955-1974”, *op. cit.*, p.847

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p.848

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p.847: “the rise of ethnic as opposed to a form of local nationalism is a crucial factor in the story, and an intriguing one: with the end of empire in sight, why did Cypriots not develop their Cypriot identity as a national identity but opted instead for a wider ethnic Greek or Turkish identity which would ipso facto set them apart?”

<sup>98</sup> The accent is put on the common feature of both communities and the Cypriot aspect and specificity rather than the “greekness” of the people. Generally, left-wing political parties supported this discourse, the most notable being AKEL; who put a lot of work towards rapprochement as early as 1974.

<sup>99</sup> Michalinos ZEMBYLAS, « Ethnic division in Cyprus and a policy initiative on promoting peaceful coexistence :toward an agonistic democracy for citizenship education », *op. cit.*, p.55

<sup>100</sup> Vamik D. VOLKAN, “Large-group identity, international relations and psychoanalysis”, *op. cit.*, pp. 211-212

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*



“mental representation of the event emerges as a most significant large-group identity marker”<sup>102</sup>. This process of selective memory enables the political leader to frame one’s history in order to strengthen a specific understanding that serves as a basis to the social construction of the community’s identity, claims and narrative. In the Greek Cypriot community, there seems to be a consensus over the amnesia of the intra-communal violence to solidify the unitary discourse and to blame solely the Turkish invasion as the cause of the current situation. Therefore, there is a strong culture of victimhood in that community as it is part of the political strategy to unite the Greek Cypriot community over the issue. This framing in terms of Human Rights also permitted the attraction of the international empathy<sup>103</sup>. The Turkish Cypriot community was most impacted by the inter-communal violence of 1963-1965 that led to its disengaging from the state institution and to a progressive “enclavisation” of its people<sup>104</sup>. Moreover, during the 1990s, this “enclavisation” was reinforced as they were more and more excluded and separated from the world market and political recognition, since the international community had very few relations with TRNC<sup>105</sup>.

Through the years, the long lasting physical and cultural division between the two communities brought Greek and Turkish Cypriots to a phenomenon of “ethnic estrangement”<sup>106</sup>. This is being reinforced with the state-building process that exists in each community and that turns down the other community<sup>107</sup>. This state of affairs provided very little opportunities and incentives for rapprochement between the communities, this ideology being marginal on the political level, but also at society level. For example, education program favoured imported school books in the Greek community and the nationalist discourse prevailed, as Greece was supporting education policies<sup>108</sup>. This, of course, was coherent with the larger political discourse: “I know, I don’t forget and I struggle”<sup>109</sup>. Overall,

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<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 212

<sup>103</sup> Iosif KOVRAS, “Explaining Prolonged Silences in Transitional Justice: the disappeared in Cyprus and Spain”, *Comparative Political studies*, 2012, vol. 46, n°6, p.744

<sup>104</sup> This concept of “enclavisation” refers to the fact that Turkish Cypriots started to live between themselves because they feared in mix communities; Bülent EVRE “The modifications of enclave mentality and identity issues in a post-conflict society: a critical review of a psychopolitical analysis of Cyprus », *European journal of Psychotraumatology*, 2015; Vamik D. VOLKAN, *Enemies on the couch : A psychopolitical journey of war and peace*, Durham: Pitchstone Publishing, 2013, 504 pages

<sup>105</sup> Barbara KARATSIOLI, “What kind of state are we in when we start to think of the state? Cyprus in crises and Prospects for reunification”, *op. cit.*, p.150

<sup>106</sup> Rebecca BRYANT, *Imagining the Modern: The Cultures of Nationalism in Cyprus*, London: I.B.Tauris, 2004, 256 pages.

<sup>107</sup> Michalinos ZEMBYLAS, “Ethnic division in Cyprus and a policy initiative on promoting peaceful coexistence :toward an agonistic democracy for citizenship education”, *op. cit.*, p.54

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.53-67

<sup>109</sup> Michalinos ZEMBYLAS, “Ethnic division in Cyprus and a policy initiative on promoting peaceful coexistence :toward an agonistic democracy for citizenship education”, *op. cit.*, pp.53-67



this maintained the sense of being an endangered minority that existed in each community, which felt threatened by a “powerful, big and murderous power”<sup>110</sup>.

It should also be stated that in Cyprus, there is little room to challenge the official narratives and discourses. This is illustrated by long silence among the civil society regarding truth seeking and search for the missing people. Usually, civil society in the aftermath of a violent conflict is driving the process of truth recovery; but in Cyprus that was not the case. Official organisations of relatives to the missing people might have constituted obstacles to such search<sup>111</sup>. It is thus very difficult for alternative discourses to emerge.

Nevertheless, several economic crises have put some pressure on Turkish Cypriots who started protesting against the political elites and the Turkish presence in Cyprus. Regarding this, “the 2002-2003 Turkish Cypriot protests marked a turning point in the recent history of Cyprus, with Turkish Cypriot claims for reunification within the European Union challenging, and then bypassing, the local political order deeply rooted in the pro-*taksim* struggle by appealing directly to the international community”<sup>112</sup>. This change occurred at the same moment when the Annan plan was being negotiated and when it was question of a united Cyprus accessing to the EU; resulting in creating a societal momentum for rapprochement to happen. However, as it is explained in the next section, this did not lead to a “happily ever after”.

### c. Rejection of the Annan Plan and enlargement of the EU (2004) : a condemnation of the peace process ?

Many observers and people strongly believed that the Plan Annan would have succeed at reuniting Cyprus before it entered the EU. The “warming of the Greek-Turkish relations in the late 1990s”<sup>113</sup> coupled with the recent rapprochement between the two communities – reaching its peak with the opening of the Green line in April 2003 – as well as the protests in the Turkish Cypriot community against the presence of Turkey enabled high hopes and strong feelings that the time was finally ripe for the conflict to be over. Actually, a paradigm change was observable in the end of 2002 as people “were now called on to *politically act together*, not to rediscover their history or claim their common culture and not to wait for a ‘solution’ stemming from the peace talks, but to *initiate a movement for change: to make peace*. They needed to think outside the frame of fixed activities, to question the ‘movement’ and its nature, and to reconsider the ways to act together in society”<sup>114</sup>. However, many were

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<sup>110</sup> Catia GALATARIOTOU, “From psychosocial equilibrium to catastrophic breakdown: Cyprus 1955-1974”, *op. cit.*, p.849

<sup>111</sup> Iosif KOVRAS, “Explaining Prolonged Silences in Transitional Justice: the disappeared in Cyprus and Spain”, *op. cit.*, p.746

<sup>112</sup> Barbara KARATSIOLI, “What kind of state are we in when we start to think of the state? Cyprus in crises and Prospects for reunification”, *op. cit.*, p.148

<sup>113</sup> Michael Stravou MICHALIS, *Resolving the Cyprus Conflict*, *op. cit.*, p.169

<sup>114</sup> Barbara KARATSIOLI, “What kind of state are we in when we start to think of the state? Cyprus in crises and Prospects for reunification”, *op. cit.*, p.156



deceived by the important rejection of the plan by the Greek Cypriots the day of the double referendum in April 2004.

The stake was specifically high for the Turkish Cypriots: for them, who felt their sovereignty was threatened, “the peace process offered a way to insure the political identity of the Turkish Cypriot community through a federal solution. In the end, sovereign will of the Turkish Cypriot people gained them the political equality they had aimed for. [They] did not sacrifice sovereignty for federalism but were taking steps to insure the recognition of their Turkish ‘Cypriotness’”<sup>115</sup>. Indeed, they felt threatened because the EU approval of the Republic of Cyprus’s candidacy in 1990 – while Turkey’s rejection - “trapped [them] between two competing processes of European integration: exclusion/isolation promulgated by Greek Cypriots vs. Turkish integration”<sup>116</sup>. As a result of this and for the first time since 1974, and “Turkey’s predominance on the island”<sup>117</sup>, the Greek strategy designed to transform the power configuration in Cyprus finally managed to shift the asymmetric relationship that prevailed ever since. As a matter of fact, “Ankara realized that Turkey’s European aspirations depended not only on a successful outcome of the intercommunal talks, but, inexplicably, on the attitude the Greek Cypriot-controlled Republic of Cyprus adopted in the UE”<sup>118</sup>. According to Michalis Stavrou Michael, it is this change that “provided the preconditions for shifting the various entrenched positions, attitudes and behaviour”<sup>119</sup> sufficient enough to envisage a positive outcome to new peace negotiations.

The negotiations regarding the so-called Annan’s Plan were then “interlinked with the EU’s enlargement process that aimed at inducting a reunified Cyprus into the EU”<sup>120</sup>. The accession to the EU should have been a catalyst for settlement. Several times, its Council reaffirmed its preference for united Republic of Cyprus to access the EU. Yet the rejection of the Annan Plan did not prevent the partitioned Republic of Cyprus to join the EU. However, this failure of the United Nations plan seems this time to be particular in that it could lead to an almost definitive partition of the island as both parts live now into different worlds<sup>121</sup>. The rejection by the Greek Cypriot was a shock for many international actors and very few comprehensions of this rejection could cross the divide. To the people of Cyprus who had been working on peace, it was the rejection of two decades of rapprochement initiatives and hard work and a disappointment regarding all the grassroots initiatives that occurred. Another huge deception was the “no” vote of left-wing political parties<sup>122</sup>. However, some scholars argue that the Greek Cypriot’s will had been overlooked during the negotiations and that the transformation required to enable the peace terms to be accepted was not mature enough in this community,

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<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p.153

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p.151

<sup>117</sup> Michael Stavrou MICHALIS, *Resolving the Cyprus Conflict, op. cit.*, p.151

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p.150

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, p.169

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, p.170

<sup>121</sup> Gilles BERTRAND, « Chypre : vers la réintégration ou la partition définitive ? », *op. cit.*

<sup>122</sup> Barbara KARATSIOLI, “What kind of state are we in when we start to think of the state? Cyprus in crises and Prospects for reunification”, *op. cit.*, p. 157



whereas Turkish Cypriots civil society had been more active on this level and more transformed during the past years; saying that maybe the timing was not ripe. Nevertheless, this rejection by the Greek Cypriots shifted the international community's perception of them and benefited to the Turkish Cypriots who were previously seen as not willing to move toward peace.

As a consequence of the Republic of Cyprus accession to the EU, several economic crises hit the Republic. In addition to this bad conjuncture, an incident at the Navy Base led to contestations against the government and its lack of reaction to the hardship that many people endured since the early 2010s. This critical time saw the re-emergence of nationalist, *enosist*, neo-nazi and other groups from different background, all supporting diverse discourse but especially discourse against rapprochement and rejection of the "Other"<sup>123</sup>. This type of discourse is quite common during times of hardship where any person not belonging to the group is seen as a threat to the group's identity and realization<sup>124</sup>.

Therefore, the failure of the Annan plan, the accession of the partitioned Republic of Cyprus to the EU and the economic and political crises that followed seem to deepen the divide between the two communities living on the island and leave little room for rapprochement expectations...although peace talks and some grassroots initiatives still exist and contact is now easier across the Green Line since the opening policy implemented in 2003.

## V. Conclusion : about the necessity for reconciliation?

These preceding developments enable a qualified answer to the question: "is Cyprus an irreconcilable case?".

Timing seems to be a big issue in Cyprus. The specific situation is that the political and economic life of the island is entangled in more global politics – at least with the regional and European politics. This makes the internal politics very sensitive to external pressure and the overall context...which is of structural importance for the resolution of the Cyprus question. As time is crucial to render peace talks successful, it seems that the way to address the issue of peace could also be questioned in Cyprus. The same – most of the time imposed – scheme has been used over and over without enabling any concrete results. There is strong pressure of the international community for reconciliation, resulting in most of the initiatives coming from the outside. This is contrasting with the many Handbooks for reconciliation or scholars' observations that state that peace and reconciliation processes will be facilitated if the elite and political processes are matched with grassroots initiative or at least acceptance and participation to the building of a peaceful future by the people. The failure to include the society as a whole could lead to resistance<sup>125</sup> to the peace process among the population and

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<sup>123</sup> Michael Stravou MICHALIS, *Resolving the Cyprus Conflict*, *op. cit.*

<sup>124</sup> Vamik D. VOLKAN, "Large-group identity, international relations and psychoanalysis", *op. cit.*

<sup>125</sup> This resistance is illustrated for example by the rejection from the Greek Cypriot community of the Annan Plan in 2003.



could reveal to be counter-productive as it might, in the long run, create frustrations and lead to a resurgence of violent conflict. In addition, the process of identity transformation is slow in Cyprus. Until 2002, the rapprochement groups discussed and shared history but few political claims emerged relating to this. Talking about politics, the present and future of Cyprus is difficult for people within the Greek Cypriot community, who feel ill at ease with the *de facto* existence of two concurring states on the island. This is a real obstacle to reconciliation as it is one of the cause of the problem – which embodies two opposing political narratives – that strongly needs to be addressed in order to move forward, but still, most peace talk or local initiative avoid it. As a result of this, initiatives are still on the margin or have not convinced most people of each community. Nevertheless, the 2010s crises created opportunities for the communities to share common experiences of hardship, leading in the apparition of a new equilibrium which could bring an opportune momentum for peace. Yet, we agree with Barbara Karatsioli who states that “a peace process should be an active process, involving all levels, that allow people to transform their politics and economy and rethink sovereignty. (...) Peace and state building can be a way out of the crisis and a way into further democracy. In this sense, instead of inheriting a sense of sovereignty – a state – Greek and Turkish Cypriots can work together to create a sovereign state to lead them out of the structural adjustment crisis”<sup>126</sup>.

More globally, through this case, we would like to reflect upon the need for reconciliation in certain cases. As peaceful coexistence seems to be necessary, the need for reconciliation is questionable. Some wonder if a separation of the communities, like in the Balkans, might represent a more favourable solution for the upcoming generations of people who did not live through the years of conflict... and remind that the current calm and stability should not be confused with peace<sup>127</sup>. Moreover, is there an obligation to keep a nation state together by any means, even those going against the will of the people? It seems like the international system, still composed by “attached-to-their sovereignty” nation states, witnesses an emerging number of transnational, regional, or local actors; thus, is the 19<sup>th</sup> century-conceptualised nation state the ultimate form that enables a political entity to exist on the international scene? We would argue that it is not the case. However, in the case of Cyprus, there is uncertainty about the form that the state must take to ensure the respect of each community’s political will. While the events of 2004 offered a clear-cut understanding of the problem, it seems important to stay away from any determinist interpretation: referendums rarely depict the exact reality of things. Since 2004, different attempts to reach peace occurred with peace talks being held a few times and in 2018, both communities elected presidents who are inclined to rapprochement. Indeed, Mustafa Akinci (elected by Turkish Cypriots for the next five years) formed a large coalition with parties from both sides of the political spectrum and seems to advocate reunification of Cyprus; and his counterpart, the Greek Cypriots re-elected Nicos Anastasiades, was among the only supporters of the Annan Plan from its political party. The incarnation of the political leadership by such people could facilitate the maintenance of initiative among the civil society to work towards if not reconciliation at least rapprochement

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<sup>126</sup> Barbara KARATSIOLI, “What kind of state are we in when we start to think of the state? Cyprus in crises and Prospects for reunification”, *op. cit.*, p.165

<sup>127</sup> Pierre-Yves PÉCHOUX, “La zone tampon ou *Buffer zone* des Nations Unies à Chypre”, *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains*, 2002, vol.1, n°205, p.117



and understanding between the communities. Knowing that the political power is not hostile to rapprochement should bolster such initiatives and reinforce civil society...



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