ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Blocking the solution: Social representations of threats and (non)dialogue with alternative representations in Greek-Cypriot newspapers during peace negotiations

Maria Avraamidou [ID] | Charis Psaltis [ID]

University of Cyprus, Cyprus

Correspondence
Maria Avraamidou, University of Cyprus, Cyprus.
Email: mariaavraamidou@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper first identifies representations of threats in Greek-Cypriot newspapers related to the negotiations for a Cyprus settlement. Then, it identifies how alternative representations to these core representations of threats are managed through the use of a number of semantic barriers. Therefore, it problematizes the role (function) that such representations of threats play in undermining the potential for transformative dialogue in a post-conflict and divided country in need of conflict transformation. Focus is on the editorials of two newspapers during a four-month period before the collapse of the July 2017 Cyprus peace talks. Both were suspicious and polemic vis-à-vis the said negotiations but used different strategies to oppose them. *Simerini* convened recurrently threats such as Turkification, state dissolution and threats against Hellenism. *Phileleftheros* focused on the issue of security drawing red lines on various dossiers under discussion in the negotiations. The paper contributes to the theoretical debate of the relationship between social representations and identities and the role of threats and historical narratives in undermining transformative dialogue through the use of semantic barriers.

1 | INTRODUCTION

Dialogical approaches to social representations theory advanced our understanding of the way semantic barriers block the transformation of social representations (Gillespie, 2008, 2012, 2015; Kadianaki & Gillespie, 2015; Marková, 2003; Marková & Linell, 2013; Sammut, Clark, & Kissaun, 2013; Sammut & Sartawi, 2012) as they function mostly through the communicative genre of propaganda (Moscovici, 1961/2008). A better understanding of communicative genres of diffusion, propagation and propaganda and their relationship to the structure of representations is crucial in expanding the unfinished project of genetic social psychology (Duveen, 2001, 2008; Psaltis, 2015a, 2015b). This paper furthers this discussion through the study of media representations of threats and use of semantic barriers around a peace settlement in post-conflict Cyprus. Although, communication studies problematized the role of media in re-presenting threats and fears contributing to the creation of fearful societies which are thus easily managed (Altheide, 1995, 2006) a social representations approach has not advanced towards a more nuanced discussion of main and alternative representations in the media. The dialogical approach proposed herein offers valuable insights on how media representations of threats may hinder the transformation of existing dominant social representations that sustain ethnoterritorial divisions.

Cyprus is an ideal context to make the aforementioned theoretical standpoint as the infamous Cyprus Issue is closely related to security and threats (UNDP-ACT & SeeD, 2015). The acceptance of a peace Plan by Cyprus' two dominant communities, the Greek-Cypriot and the Turkish-Cypriot, largely depends on whether the Plan will alleviate their fears and the leadership foregrounds demands on the negotiation table based on them. Greek-Cypriots justify security concerns by referring to the 1974 Turkish military invasion that led to 162,000 internally displaced people, loss of properties, killings and the presence of 30,000–40,000 Turkish troops on the island. In this regard, they contest Turkey's right for unilateral intervention in Cyprus. Turkish-Cypriots refer to the bicommunal strife of 1963–1964, the marginalisation of their community from power sharing and to the 1974 Greek junta-backed coup d'état aiming to unite Cyprus with Greece, had Turkey not intervened. The first effort for a settlement based on a complete Plan, the so-called Annan Plan in 2004 failed when, during simultaneous referenda, the Turkish-Cypriot community accepted the Plan by 62% and Greek-Cypriots rejected it by 76%. The Greek-Cypriot No to the Plan was linked to security and the prevalence of collective fears (Faustmann, 2009; Kaymak, Lordos, & Tocci, 2008; Lordos, 2006; Stavrinides, 2009). It is claimed that had their security concerns been accommodated, then a majority of a Yes vote was possible in the Greek-Cypriot community (Christoforou & Webster, 2004). The latest negotiations (2016/2017) also failed because of lack of agreement on security: the Greek-Cypriot side reportedly demanded the abolition of guarantees by Turkey, Greece and the UK and withdrawal of all Turkish troops whereas the other side asked for the continuation of a form of guarantees and permanent presence of some Turkish troops (Grigoriadis, 2017).

Despite that predominant propagandistic social representations of threats in divided Cyprus are reinforced by numerous factors such as the separate educational systems that align with the

official master narratives of conflict (Makriyianni & Psaltis, 2007), the representational field is not homogeneous. Representations of the Cyprus problem and international actors involved co-exist with different -often competing or contradictory- social representations (Psaltis, 2012, 2016). Overall, there are three distinct positions in the representational field of both communities: the *pro-reconciliation*, the *communitarian* and the *ethno-nationalist* (Psaltis, 2012, 2016). The Pro-reconciliation cluster includes those who retain regular intergroup contact, exhibit low levels of realistic and symbolic threats and are very positive towards the other community, support a Bizonal Bicommunal Federation (BBF), the UN-backed and agreed basis since 1977 between Cypriot leaders. Peace activists and bi-communal NGOs who advance a social representations project (see Bauer & Gaskell, 1999) of joint collective action for reunification belong to this cluster covering the political spectrum, although the majority is left oriented. The communitarian position is characterised by more adherence to the ethno-national symbols (flag, national anthem of motherlands) relating to high levels of perceived realistic and distinctiveness threats as well as lower levels of trust and contact with the other community. In both communities these positions represent a form of banal nationalism (Billig, 1995) where the ethical horizon of the concern of participants is constrained to the limits of their own community supported by the decades-long everyday living in two geographically separated communities. Lastly, the ethno-nationalism position in the two communities form a mirror image of each other where the ethical horizon is a larger ethnic community that includes the mainland nationals of Greece and Turkey but excludes the other community as suggested by the low levels of intercommunal contact, trust and high levels of prejudice and threats. This could be described as a state of cognitive polyphasia (Jovchelovitch & Priego-Hernandez, 2015) that is the 'dynamic coexistence – interference and specialisation – of distinct modalities of knowledge that correspond to definite relations between man and his environment' (Moscovici 1961/2008, p.190).

The media terrain in Cyprus is an interesting space to examine the interplay of competing social representations. National media have been reinforcing security concerns in covering the negotiations which has been for most of the times one sided and nationalistic (Avraamidou & Kyriakides, 2015). Particularly newspapers contributed to the cementing of antagonistic national identities since colonialism (Katsiaounis, 1996; Panayiotou, 2006; Şahin, 2008) while to the present day they have been mostly reproducing zero-sum approaches to the conflict and diffusing nationalistic repertoires (Avraamidou, 2017; Christophorou, 1993; Panayiotou, 2006). For example, during the Annan Plan referenda, all Greek-Cypriot TV stations opposed the Plan (Filippou et al., 2009) as most of the daily newspapers did with those promoting a No response, representing it as a threat to the nation and the state (Avraamidou, 2017). The proposed re-examination of how specifically those media which are critical towards negotiations for a BBF deal in their editorials with the multiplicity of social representations can bring into sharp relief both the internal conflicts within a single community around the resolution of the Cyprus Issue (Psaltis, 2012) while exemplifying the role these media in undermining the potential of a peace settlement.

2 | POLEMIC SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS, PROPAGANDA AND DIALOGICALITY

Moscovici (1961/2008) proposed the notion of Social Representations to understand how a new object of thought, psychoanalysis was received in the 50s by various groups in France (communists, workers, the church, psychiatrists etc). He (1973) defined a social representation as:

a system of values, ideas and practices with a twofold function: first to establish an order which will enable individuals to orient themselves in their material and social world and to master it; and secondly, to enable communication to take place among the members of a community by providing them with a code for social exchange and a code for naming and classifying unambiguously the various aspects of their world and their individual and group history. (p. xii).

The role of threats and fear is crucial since the exacerbated sense of difference in terms of values and worldview, known in social psychology as symbolic threat (Riek, Mania, & Gaertner, 2006) also regulates the social distance between ingroup and outgroup in the past-present-future nexus. Symbolic threats, through the process of objectification can take more concrete forms in the way the media discuss exaggerated differences between the two groups or express outright rejection of confidence building measures that would bring the members of the two communities in direct or indirect contact. This serves the second function of a social representation which is the organisational/communicative function. Realistic threats become more tangible consisting of threats to the welfare, financial and political interests of the ingroup in the everyday (Riek et al., 2006) and threat framing that leads to the creation of negative stereotypes for the outgroup. As Moscovici (2008) rightly argued:

In the context of a propaganda campaign, the messages that are communicated are so organised as to construct a representation of the object that conforms to the demand for a unified social field and to Party activities. The formation of a representation is one of the basic techniques of propaganda. (p. 312)

However, social representations are inherently dialogical and therefore contain alternative representations (Gillespie, 2008, 2012, 2015): they are the Self's perspective on what the Alter's representation is about an object that is the dialogical periphery of the core representation. Alternative representations do not always contradict the core representation, in fact most of the times they are a caricature or a "straw man" of the representation of the outgroup keeping the core representation intact from transformation. Such a management of alternative representations takes place through the use of semantic barriers (Moscovici, 1961/2008; Gillespie, 2008, 2012, 2015 which are used to "neutralise the transformative and dialogical potential of [.. .] alternative representations" (Gillespie, 2008p. 377). For example, in the case of the Cyprus issue and its re-presentation in the public sphere an editorial in the Greek-Cypriot press can be re-presenting it as a problem of violation of international law by Turkey. In this core representation closely aligned with the master narrative of conflict in history textbooks (Psaltis, 2016) one could find a caricature of the pro-reconciliation re-presentation of the problem, in the form of an alternative representation, as one that promotes the idea that the Cyprus problem is solely a bi-communal problem or a "psychological problem". By attributing ignorance to the supporters of reconciliation, thus applying a semantic barrier (see Sammut & Sartawi, 2012), they undermine the possibility of an honest engagement with their position that could potentially transform a reader's representation from an ethnonationalist or communitarian into a pro-reconciliation one. Such a conversion of an individual would be equal to engaging one in a different kind of representational project altogether (Bauer & Gaskell, 1999; Sammut, Tsirogianni, & Wagoner, 2012) and could also be mediated by direct intergroup contact (Allport, 1954). Within polemic representations it is also expected to find representations that undermine the possibility of contact between ingroup and outgroup members beyond the virtual management of

contradictory perspectives through the media (see Psaltis, 2012). Also given the complexity of the Cyprus issue various other international actors are involved beyond the two negotiators, leaders and various political parties within each community, namely the "guarantor powers" of the Republic of Cyprus (RoC) and the mediator, the UN. Therefore, there are multiple alternative representations of various others that could potentially function as dialogical sub-parts of a core representation struggling to maintain polemic of ideas. Some could challenge the core representation and are thus in need of management and others could be supportive when a certain representation of the perspective of another group could enhance the core representation.

It is important to dwell further on key semantic barriers. Moscovici (1961/2008) described semantic barriers as particular meaning complexes that can prevent dialogical engagement with alternative representations and identified rigid oppositions and transfer of meaning. The first, was observed in the use of ideological or moral oppositions like socialist versus capitalist, good versus bad which demand total support from the subject, or total rejection (Moscovici, 2008, p.325). The rigidity of this network of oppositions inhibits dialogical relations between the core representation and the alternative, because the relation between these representations is fixed a priori (Gillespie, 2008). Transfer of meaning is the categorising or linking of the new object of representation to a well-established negative concept or group. For example, for French communists at the time anything American was already invested with very negative meaning. By using the term American psychoanalysis, psychoanalysis was branded as bad. Gillespie (2008) added five more semantic barriers: Prohibited thoughts, Separation, Stigma, Undermining the motive and Bracketing. Prohibited thoughts refers to the attempt to make the subject fearful of the alternative representation, for example to claim that "psychoanalysis is the work of the devil" (p. 135). Separation is a strategy that allows elaboration of the alternative but treats it as inconsequential in challenging the established representation. For example, the Catholic Church considered science and religion as two separate issues. One could be simultaneously a good scientist and a good Christian. Stigma is the semantic barrier that creates a simplistic and stereotypical bi-polarity of us versus them leading to the idea that the alternative representations is not for us rooted in context-specific rationalisations. Undermining the motive relates to *ad hominem* arguments that attributes ulterior motives to those to whom they attribute the alternative. Finally, Bracketing is a rhetorical form of reported speech such as "they say", "they claim that" holding the alternative at distance (Gillespie, 2008). Elaborations of semantic barriers in the context of intergroup conflicts noted the use of intergroup trust/distrust (Gillespie, 2012, 2015; Psaltis, 2012) claiming that distrust greatly reduces the possibility to consider an alternative representation by members of the other group. Similarly, Kus, Liu, and Ward (2013) reaffirmed the use of rigid oppositions and transfer of meaning and their relation to historical representations of the Estonian-Russian conflict while Raudsepp and Wagner (2012) showed how Russian-Estonians are described by Estonians as beasts and barbarians and thus not worth interacting with which can be seen as another form of semantic barrier (Gillespie, 2015).

This paper aims to extend the discussion around polemic representations and the use of semantic barriers in the media into the context of a protracted conflict. Conflict narratives in protracted conflicts are crucial topics in need of enquiry since adherence to such narratives is claimed to reinforce conflict (Bar-Tal, Oren, & Nets-Zehngut, 2014). However, discussions of such narratives in relation to social representations theory needs further theoretical reflection (László, 2008; Bar-Tal, 2014. Following Jovchelovitch (2012) we claim that the narrative form relates past-present and future and is thus of crucial importance in organising social representations into projects (Bauer & Gaskell, 1999). Narrative principles drive and organise social representations by plotting themes, characters, languages, times and events into a coherent core

(Jovchelovitch, 2012) that operates as a metasystem carrying the force of deep-seated oppositional themata (Marková, 2003) in representational fields. We want to deepen such a discussion through an exploration of how narrative forms employ certain semantic barriers as symbolic resources (Zittoun, Duveen, Gillespie, Ivinson, & Psaltis, 2003) to undermine transformative engagement with various alternative representations. Such symbolic barriers make possible the blocking of direct, physical and semantic intergroup contact (Gillespie, 2015) and their views that could otherwise lead to the reduction of prejudice, building of trust and the eventual dismantling of division (McKeown & Psaltis, 2017). An understanding of these transformative microgenetic (Psaltis, 2015a, 2015b) processes of social influence are of crucial importance for the theoretical work of genetic social psychology to understand the processes of microgenesis, ontogenesis and sociogenesis of social representations (Duveen & Lloyd, 1990) and heterogeneity within social groups (Duveen, 2008). Specifically, our interest is on social representations of threats in the media related to peace negotiations. We are particularly interested in the way media manipulate threats and fear to prepare a rejection of a potential peace Plan by the Greek-Cypriot community and to uncover how media use certain semantic barriers to block dialogue with various alternative representations, not only from outgroups (the other community) but also other stakeholders involved.

3 | METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH AND METHODS OF ANALYSIS

The study is qualitative driven, guided by a central open research question, *how and in what ways Greek-Cypriot newspapers represented threats and fears in relation to ongoing negotiations for a Cyprus' settlement*. To examine dialogicality we added a secondary research question that is *in what ways alternative representations were treated, by the said newspapers through the use of semantic barriers*. To draw conclusions through comparison, we *looked for similarities and differences* across the newspapers.

The study focuses on a period of intensified negotiations during the last trimester of 2016 and beginning of 2017 in Switzerland. Considering the topic as particularly timely, data collection took place simultaneously with the events studied. We collected data three days before the Mont Pelerin II meeting between the two Cypriot leaders and throughout the Geneva conference beginning 12 January 2017 and the Mont Pelerin experts working groups meetings, beginning of February 2017. The specific period is November 17, 2016 to December 17, 2016 (first period) and between January 13, 2017 to February 3, 2017 (second period) during which the two leaders reportedly achieved convergences on issues of property, governance/rotating presidency, economy and territorial issues. But security which required the agreement of the guarantor states remained an obstacle (Dolunay & Çiftçi, 2017; Grigoriadis, 2017).

First, we established the overall stance of all five daily Greek-Cypriot newspapers (in Greek language) across a simple axis: *whether they were more supportive or more critical towards the process*. Therefore, we monitored newspaper content between 17 November 2016 to 4 December 2016: editorials, front-pages and lead commentaries were revealing, and categorization was rather straightforward providing, in line with Avraamidou (2015) that *Phileleftheros* and *Simerini* leaned clearly towards catastrophe whereas *Haravgi*, *Alithia* and *Politis* embraced hope (cf. Antoniades, 2017).

In line with the research question, the analysis focuses on the two newspapers leaning towards catastrophe to provide an exploration of threat representations. *Phileleftheros,* the oldest Greek-Cypriot daily newspaper although not affiliated with a specific political party and despite

claims for being neutral (Panayiotou, 2013) took historically pro-government positions, with small exceptions while it adopted anti-Plan positions between 2002 and 2004 (Avraamidou, 2017; Christophorou, Sahin, & Pavlou, 2010; Panayiotou, 2013). *Simerini* is a right-wing newspaper positioned towards the ethnonationalist right. It is part of the DIAS conglomerate, the largest Greek-Cypriot media company headed by Costis Hajikostis who has published widely taking an ethnonationalist approach on the Cyprus issue (Hajicostis, 2007; Hajicostis, 2015). The analysis focuses on their editorials for two interrelated reasons. First, because they represent the institutional stance of each newspaper (Hall, 1982; Perales, 2009) and, by extension of their media groups. Therefore, the analysis of editorials gives media stance on the peace process and their ideological map (Perales, 2009). Second, editorials as opinion articles, aim to persuade about the correctness of their stance concentrating politically significant symbols (Lasswell, 1942) and predominant ideological assumptions (van Dijk, 1992) and are therefore rich units for a qualitative analysis which is interested in meanings rather than accuracy or objectivity and which would justify focusing on other journalistic genres. During the said period, *Phileleftheros* had the biggest readership and *Simerini* ranked fourth in the weekdays and third in the weekends (Gnora, 2017). In the 50 days studied *Simerini* published 49 editorials on the Cyprus issue/negotiations and *Phileleftheros* 33.

The primary research question guided the choice of methods: For the content analysis we chose thematic qualitative analysis which is flexible and allows to uncover themes -in this case threats- within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For exploring dialogicality we built on the analytical tradition of social representations theory. This entailed looking for lexical instances which introduced the (ascribed) point of view of opposing or contradictory representations such as "They believe that ..." and which when possible are underlined in the extracts, Results section.

We conducted a pilot study for the first reporting period identifying threats and fears in the editorials of both newspapers. This allowed confirming that the method of analysis was appropriate and finalizing the coding scheme. Our interest was in representations of threat and in dialogicality, therefore we coded similar threats and/or concerns and/or fears in the same code and named it accordingly. We did not look to find specific threats but led them arise from the data (inductive).

After the pilot study, we conducted the preliminary analysis of *Simerini* and subsequently we used the same logic to analyse *Phileleftheros*. The coding scheme for each daily is different reflecting their particularities and the inductive approach of the study. The codes used for *Simerini* reflected six inter-related threats: (a) threats related to Turkish expansionism, Turkification (30 editorials), **(b)** threats related to the state (i.e. dissolution, confederation, 29), (c) threats against Cyprus as country/patria (23), (d) threats against Cyprus' Greekness (12), (e) threats against Hellenism in general (7), (f) threats against the EU (i.e. anti-European solution, one editorial). Noticing that *Phileleftheros* tended to note what is acceptable and what is unacceptable in terms of the different dossiers discussed on the negotiating table, rather than noting directly threats related to the solution *in toto* like *Simerini,* we coded its editorial content as follows (a) security (a solution should provide safety, therefore indirectly claiming a fear of insecurity, 17 editorials), (b) references to lifting occupation (a solution should end occupation and reverse its results, 11 editorials), (c) territoriality (references to provisions about the issue of territoriality, 9 editorials), (d) state (the negotiated solution threatens the existence of the State 8 editorials), (e) ambiguity (references to ambiguous, unacceptable provisions, 5 editorials), (f) anti-European provisions (3 editorials), (g) provisions about the rights of Turkish citizens (2 editorials), (h) rotating presidency (2 editorials). Table 1 (supplementary material) includes the

most recurrent threats/fears, the semantic barriers in use, the alternative representation and its holders.

The subsequent sections present first findings regarding *Simerini* followed by those concerning *Phileleftheros* and concludes with a comparative discussion.

4 | RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 | Simerini: Turkish expansionism, Turkification, state dissolution and the internal enemy

This theme dwells first on the content of the most recurrent threats in *Simerini's* editorials that is Turkish expansionism, state dissolution, general threats against Cyprus and threats against the entire Hellenism-all expected to emerge as a result of the negotiated solution. These threats are mostly of realistic albeit of a general and not specific form supported also by symbolic threats. The following extract is characteristic of how these threats were combined in a single paragraph and how semantic barriers blocked engagement with the alternative representation that the negotiated solution will end Turkey's expansionist plans:

> <u>They ignore</u> history and the timeless expansionist plans of Turkey and the irrevocable decision of Ankara to dissolute the Cypriot state and, through an aberrant solution, to march towards its final goal to occupy the entire Cyprus. <u>They ignore</u> that, after Cyprus, it is the turn of Greece. <u>They believe that,</u> with the solution of the Cypriot [issue], the audacious plans of Turkey in the Aegean and in Thrace will be terminated and that the Aegean water will calm. Nicos Anastasiades and Antros Kyprianou refuse to accept that, with the solution they negotiate, the Turkishcypriot state will become Turkey's spear to conquest the entire Cyprus, but also [the spear will become] the bridgehead, from where the final Turkish attack will begin against Greece. Greece cannot raise, along with the bizonalists here, the banner of the bizonal federation. (December 2, 2016)

The extract contains explicit threats of a new Turkish invasion in Cyprus and a military attack against Greece if the negotiated solution is agreed. It is infused with a militaristic lexicon such as march on, destroy, conquest and attack. This is a realistic threat (Riek et al., 2006) against the wellbeing and life of the psychological subject targeting the physical existence of Hellenism, in Cyprus and Greece revealing the underlying ethical horizon of the ethnonationalist position (Psaltis, 2012). The solution is demonized and called aberrant. In terms of dialogicality, to refer to the supporters of the negotiations, the editorial uses repeatedly the deictic word *them* and clarifies that these others are the negotiating president and the head of the leftist opposition. The use of *them* stigmatizes those holding contradictory views and contributes towards defining impermeable barriers between us, the opponents of the negotiated solution and them, its Greek-Cypriot supporters. Another editorial argued that "The Cyprus Republic is at risk only if Greek hands sign its dissolution" (20 January 2017); therefore, the external enemy which is Turkey cannot complete its vicious plans without help from inside. The role of Greece in the editorial is yet uncertain. Furthermore, those who could be convinced by Turkey or adopt alternative representations supporting the BBF discussed at the time are stigmatized as ignorant, stubborn and bizonalists (supporters of a bizonal solution). The attribution of ignorance is (Sammut & Sartawi, 2012)

another semantic barrier as it makes less likely the engagement with the perspective of an ignorant. Also, characterizing opponents as stubborn or rigid is a mechanism of resistance noted in the minority influence literature-such a behavioural style reduces significantly the potential of minorities to gain social influence (Moscovici, 1976) as it puts to work a process of psychologisation (Papastamou, 1986) with connotations of the source of influence being crazy or mentally unstable (cf. Kadianaki & Gillespie, 2015).

Simerini's editorials recurrently used death metaphors which is another mechanism to strengthen adherence to national identity and to support collective continuity (Smeekes, McKeown & Psaltis, 2017). The following excerpt represents the negotiated Plan as threatening the existence of the Cypriot state. Importantly, it characteristically connects the role of the Greek-Cypriot leader with fears of death by employing the semantic barrier prohibited thoughts:

> *On the contrary, the same individual [Anastasiades] became a road roller that smashed all the positions and demands of the Greek side, so that he can deliver dead and buried the Republic of Cyprus to the voracious Turkish beast (4 December 2016).*

The following extract again combines the threat of Turkification with the threat that the solution will dissolute the state relating them to the general threat of Turkish expansionism. In terms of dialogicality, alternative representations are dismissed mainly through a rigid opposition of truth-fallacy and through the semantic barrier of transfer of meaning:

> *Cyprus' division is not lifted. It is consolidated. The Cyprus Republic, the second Greek state in the world, is not strengthened. It is dissolved. The risks of Turkification are not removed. They are magnified. The Cypriot Hellenism is not protected. It will have the fate of the Hellenism of Imbros and Tenedos. Cyprus is not surviving. It becomes Alexandretta. Turkey is not leaving. It remains as the legal suzerain. And the occupied areas are not freed. They become a Turkish province and Turkey's spear against the states and the people of the region. (...) After Cyprus' "peaceful" captivation, Thrace is cypriotized and becomes the second Cypriot issue. In how many fronts will Greece be called to confront Turkey? The Greek national sovereignty will face a direct danger. (17 November 2017)*

The dissolution of the state is a realistic threat as it concerns losing power and control over the state (Riek et al., 2006). Turkification herein is rather a generic threat: the realistic threat (losing power or resources -i.e. land- threats to physical integrity of the in-group) is complemented by symbolic threats (i.e. Greek versus Turkish cultural values). Therefore, the understanding is that Cyprus is Greek and the state, from where political power arises, is also Greek and should be Greek-controlled. Notably, the bicommunality of the RoC is silenced by a zero-sum approach to sharing political power with the other community. In terms of dialogicality the structure of the extract is premised on the truth-fallacy opposition; there are real threats and any claim to the contrary is false. Those negotiating and supporting the negotiations argue that the solution will transcend division, but the editorial argues that it will entrench division. Their opponents say that the RoC will be strengthened whereas they reply that it will be dissolved. To the argument that solution will block Turkification, it argues that it will set Cyprus *en route* to a peaceful Turkification. References to the islands of Imvros and Tenedos and to Alexandretta are used as evidence of contemporary Turkish expansionism as

they are areas with Greek-orthodox populations that came under Turkish rule in a clear example of the use of history in the form of history repeating itself. Editorials like this used the semantic barrier transfer of meaning, from Turkey to the negotiated solution which is described as a Turkish solution that satisfies all Turkish aspirations. The alternative representation that Turkey can be trusted is dismissed using the semantic barrier of prohibited thoughts: to trust Turkey is catastrophic because, *we* cannot expect anything positive from the workings of a beast-as called in another editorial. Such alternative representations are excluded from the sphere of probabilities and are connected to fear and danger. Notably, relevant animal like metaphors constitute another well-known mechanism of propaganda which also leads to the dehumanisation of outgroups.

The following extract also uses rhetorical questions to reinforce distrust of Turkey as a semantic barrier (Gillespie, 2015). It functions as an organizing principle based on historical references (cf. Kus et al., 2013):

> *What will happen tomorrow, if the solution is signed? What is the guarantee that Turkey will abide with everything agreed and will not try to give its own interpretation, and subvert the agreement? (…) Who will force the Turkish army to withdraw within the deadlines? Who will force the usurpers to deliver the properties to the Greeks who will return? Who will prevent the settlers, who will be called to leave, to do so? And who will prevent the influx of new settlers, who will come? The federal police? But the federal police will be comprised of Greekcypriots and Turkishcypriots. The Turkishcypriots police-officers will use guns against their co-nationals? Or the precedent of 1963 will be repeated, when Turkishcypriots-members of the Cypriot Army defected to TMT[1]? (25 November 2016)*

Herein, questions which have obvious answers are addressed through new rhetorical questions, that expectedly opponents would raise. This is an interesting dialogical mechanism as it forms the structure of a pseudo-dialogue. It engages with alternative representations on the terms of the core representation as it is assumed that the *true* answer lies in the core representation and not the alternative. Therefore, it is another instance of the truth-fallacy rigid opposition. For example, by claiming that Turkey will never abide by the agreement it ensures that there is no meaningful alternative representation to consider. The editorial represents realistic threats as Turkey could invade once more or Turkify Cyprus indirectly through Turkish settlers. But contrary to most constructions of threats in *Simerini* internal aspects of security are implicated and concern the federal police and by extend bicommunal relations. The argument is that the bicommunal federal police will not be able to maintain order because of ethnic cleavages. To support this argument, it uses an example of Cyprus' turbulent past and predicts that the Turkish-Cyprpiots, as in the past, will act more as Turkish than as Cypriots. This is also a characteristic discursive strategy of nationalism to emphasize the other's nationalism while silencing our nationalism and to elaborate only those versions of history that back our side contra theirs.

As evident in the above extracts, *Simerini* made multiple references to history or to be more precise to one-sided narratives of victimisation (Psaltis, Carretero, & Cehajic-Clancy, 2017) to support its main representation. This is a strategy in which representations of the past become organising principles to achieve multiple aims. They are used first as evidence that we should not trust Turkey (thus to support the main representation) because it plans to recapture Cyprus and, second, as evidence to undermine the credibility of supporters or potential converts by alternative representations. Some of the stigmas used throughout editorials towards supporters or potential converts

are ignorant of history or naïve who cannot comprehend history. Historical references identified, are not detailed but rather superficial and the language used is cliché (i.e. reference to timeless expansionist plans of Turkey). Also, editorials linked current Turkish policies to the ottoman empire calling them neo-ottoman aspirations. The rare time that historical references were more specified, they referred to the plans of former Turkish prime-minister Erim (1971/1972) for capturing Cyprus in 1952. These references support the main historically unchanged Turkish expansionism at the expense of Cyprus and Hellenism reproducing a Greek-Turkish binary opposition which functions as a semantic barrier. The continuous resistance against Turkey's plans is stressed through noting the 1963 interethnic violent events called with the ethnocentric term *tourko-antarsia* meaning Turkish rebellion. Therefore, supporting this negotiated Plan is not compatible to our history as in effect we will be delivering Cyprus to Turkey. But rejecting the Plan is compatible to our history. In the context of the narrative proposed the erratic malevolent, strong and dictatorial Turkish leadership is historically in an *asymmetric* binary opposition of victim-perpetrator with the *tiny*, *weak* and even *ignorant* Greek-Cypriot leadership.

In a nutshell, the representation of threats in *Simerini* has as its core a terrifying and strong Turkey that constitutes threat to multiple others with its expansionist aspirations especially against Cyprus. Its editorials are a fine example of what Moscovici described as Propaganda given the underlying antagonistic relation and zero-sum relationship that sustained their conflict supporting narrative. Words and expressions are used in war-like spirit and any agreement on the negotiating table automatically means that Turkey wins something at the expense of the ingroup. The president and his supporters are accused for bringing-about a catastrophic Plan. Their political opponents are called to unite and prevent this national catastrophe for Greek-Cypriots and for Greece, for *national* enlightenment. Importantly, the people of Cyprus as the Cypriot Hellenism are the *deus ex machina* who will resist and reject the Plan.

4.2 | Phileleftheros: Building consensus around security

Phileleftheros set security as its primary concern during the said negotiations. Specifically, it recurrently underlined that a settlement should abolish Turkish guarantees and remove all Turkish troops out of Cyprus. But relevant recurrent warnings on security reflected a certainty that the negotiated Plan was not heading towards this end. Still, the newspaper supported the continuation of the negotiations. The subsequent analysis provides evidence of how support for the negotiations was the "text" of the editorials whilst the "subtext" of their representations, the connoted taken for granted meaning hidden under layers of text (Moscovici, 1973) reflected a zero-sum approach to the conflict and the negotiated solution.

Phileleftheros characteristically noted that any other option, apart from freeing Cyprus from guarantees and troops, will not be considered a solution (17 January 2017). This creates a rigid opposition as it does not allow any rapprochement with the alternative representation in view of a compromise for example modification of the guarantee system. The rigid opposition of truth versus falsehood is thus implicitly evoked coupled by a second one flexibility-rigidity, to blame solely the other side for the ongoing deadlock because as noted "Since 1974 and for almost 43 years, discussions have not led to an agreement because, basically, the occupying power has not decided so". Also, rigid oppositions were occasionally supported through the semantic barrier of undermining the motive with the use of several dehumanizing dangerous animal metaphors for Turkey and its leadership. For example, Erdogan, they said, acted like a "bull in glasshouse" (17 January 2017), or that "a state's independence cannot be protected by the

wolves" alluding to Turkey's guarantees (23 January 2017). Such metaphors clearly imply that one cannot reason or trust these dangerous animals and consider their alternative representation.

The voice of Greek Foreign Minister, Nikos Kotzias was used to foreground further the demand on security. The following is a characteristic extract of an editorial building on Kotzia's call for "scrapping off system of guarantees in Cyprus", that is the abolition of the existing system according to which Turkey, Greece and the UK guarantee the independence, territorial integrity and security of Cyprus:

> *The rhetoric developed across the known school of thought on the Cypriot (Issue) and the negotiated solution, was based on the long-lasting known argumentation. Now it is the time for truths. It is now the time that the political leaderships, regardless where they belong, to take a responsible stance in relation to the substances of the statements of the Greek minister of Foreign affairs. ... And to say if they accept his calls, if they agree with the frame he defined in relation to the solution, the guarantees and the withdrawal of the occupying troops. And if they are ready to contribute with ideas, arguments and action towards the direction that the Greek minister proposed. (24 January 2017)*

Evidently, Kotzias's insistence on zero troops and zero guarantees was celebrated as the necessary counterbalance to the Turkish diachronic intransigence. So, despite that editorials recurrently underlined guarantees as old fashioned, still asked for a close alliance with one of the guarantor powers, Greece and called the Cypriot leadership to unite around the Greek FM. In terms of dialogicality, the above extract acknowledges the existence of different approaches on the Cyprus' settlement within the Greek-Cypriot community and appears to reject both in favor of an objective truth-its own. Then, it expects leaders across the political spectrum to align with the Greek FM. Understanding perhaps the paradox to criticize the system of guarantees by the two motherlands but call for unity around one of them, the editorial claims simply that this is *correct* thus also applying the truth-falsehood rigid opposition. The barriers of stigma are indirectly but clearly used since anyone who accepts the alternative (e.g. a modification of the system of guarantees) would be accepting a lie- would be ignorant or naïve or even an internal enemy, a traitor. Notably, the editorial is not really providing an objective third way vis-à-vis the "known school of thoughts" implying that one is the ethnonationalist/anti-federalist and the second is the pro-reconciliation side, but it is aligning with the first one by undermining a solution that could derive from the zero troops, zero guarantees position.

To legitimize its demands related to guarantees and troops, the following editorial underlines that security will play a significant role in the ways that ordinary Greek-Cypriots will position themselves vis-à-vis a potential referendum. It also claims that the demand for abolishing guarantees and removal of all troops would benefit the Turkish-Cypriot community as well:

> *The last days, internally, the issue of guarantees is discussed. Also, given that within the Greekcypriot side, <u>fans of the preservation of the guarantee system</u> have been discovered, we need to clarify the following: We CANNOT accept the preservation of the guarantees. We cannot accept guarantees by Turkey, or by any other country. The Republic of Cypriot does not need protectors. The Republic of Cyprus belongs to the European family and this is its biggest guarantee and security. The Greek side should not in any case discuss even modifications of the guarantee system. It does*

not discuss guarantees, and this should be our stance until the end of the negotiations. We remind merely that the issue of security is prioritized by the Greekcypriots and this issue defines, of course along with other parameters their final position towards a solution plan. We consider that the above serve all Cypriots and this is something that the Turkishcypriots should also comprehend. Because it serves them as well. (27 November 2016)

In the end, the editorial searches for a wider consent around the complete abolition of the system of guarantees by presenting it as beneficial for Turkish-Cypriots as well, perhaps to avoid the stigma of being one-sided. Here the alternative representation is about Greek-Cypriots, stigmatized as fans of the preservation of the guarantee system but not clearly named. Herein security can be ensured for all Cypriots only through abolishing the occupation so that Cyprus becomes normal that is truly independent state. Supposedly, the national *we* in this rare instance that Turkish-Cypriot community is considered as potential partner, opens up representing realistic security threats against it as well. In another instance that the 2003 opening of the checkpoints was re-presented in a positive light in a *Phileleftheros* editorial was because fact that no conflict followed was proof for Turkish-Cypriots that they should have no security concerns and accept the abolition of guarantees. But these inclusive references create scepticism as at-least paradoxical when seen vis-à-vis how editorials recurrently represented the Greek FM as heroic, not in the name of all Cypriots but in the name of the Cypriot Hellenism. In this instance the community covered by the ethical horizon is clearly the Greek-Cypriot community revealing an identity position in the representational field described as communitarian, majoritarian or maximalist (Psaltis, 2012).

The following extract quotes Turkish President's statements on security. Notably using the semantic barrier of bracketing and the use of quotation marks, the editorial reports directly, the part of his statements that a solution should preserve guarantees and that Turkish troops will stay forever in Cyprus. Direct reporting provides, at first glance the opportunity to readers to engage directly with the views of those who hold opposing representations. Although a classic journalistic practice in news stories it is not that common in editorials, but it has the effect to keep the words of the Turkish president at a critical distance, especially when combined with warnings that readers should not make the mistake believing that Turkey is ready for a compromise. This is the said extract:

> *The Turkish President referred also to the issue of Security and chose to say what? That Turkey will remain in Cyprus forever, with its troops and guarantees. His indirect reference to ELDYK and TURDYK[2] had just one purpose and he should not be ... misjudged by some. To emphasize Ankara's position to maintain the guarantee system. "Do not expect no guarantees by Turkey. There is no chance that the Turkish army will depart from Cyprus" said Tayip Erdogan and his statement can only be read in one way. (17 January 2017)*

Evidently, Turkish positions are not overtly silenced, but they are selectively interpreted so that they protect and enhance the main representation of intransigent Turkey: Erdogan is cementing further this representation when quoted saying that Turkish troops will remain in Cyprus whereas, other, evidently more controversial parts of his statements reflecting a will to compromise are not directly quoted but are interpreted in a way that supports the newspaper's core representation. Obviously, the editorial was concerned that Erdogan's statement was open to

multiple even positive readings, that for example Turkey might accept the withdrawal of all occupying troops but retain a number of soldiers, like Greece, in line with the current constitution and the treaty of alliance. This attempt to enforce an interpretation is another manifestation of rigid opposition as it demands a "total support from the subject, or total rejection" (Moscovici, 2008, p. 325) a black and white picture, leaving no space for grey areas. Stereotypical references and the bull metaphor in a glasshouse is enhancing Turkey's threatening profile and simplifies power relations on the negotiating table: Erdogan is as an irrational, aggressive yet powerful actor whereas Greek-Cypriots are fragile like glass. Analytically, this is interesting from another point of view; it is characteristic of *Phileleftheros'* editorials to attribute alternative threatening representations mainly to Turkey while in a subtler manner they attribute such representations to internal actors or the mediators and to dismiss dialogue with them as well breeding distrust towards these various others projected as taking sides with the enemy.

Phileleftheros' editorials used security to construct consensus on other issues and create in general suspicion over the negotiations. One characteristic example concerned criticism against the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General in Cyprus, Espen Barth Eide basically for being willing to push for a deal cementing guarantees (26 January 2017)**.** So, Eide is added into the list of actors holding the alternative representation of accepting the continuation of a form of Turkish guarantees in Cyprus. The editorial presented internal disagreements about Eide's role as an unnecessary, harmful confrontation for *our* cause (meaning the Greek-Cypriot side) and called all to convey the message to Eide that *we* are not willing to accept anything but zero troops and guarantees. Importantly, emphasis is on internal actors despite that the controversy arose over an external actor who once more remain nameless but divided between Eide's opponents (anti-Eide) and his defenders (pro-Eide). Eide's opponents, arguably demanded his removal because he could be organizing plots against *us*. But his defenders, if his opponents were right, were "offering him cover" to continue his vicious actions. The editorial after presenting these two opposing stances in a seemingly objective manner, it presented the objective truth-its own stance, but which was not however equally distant from the two poles. Evidently, the actions of the anti-Eide fraction did not seem to have the catastrophic impact as those of his supporters who become the epicenter of criticism in what has been described before as the "Black sheep effect" (Sammut & Sartawi, 2012).

The following extract refers to a so-called Plan B had the current negotiation effort failed. The idea of preparing a Plan B′ was supported by the critics of the negotiation effort. But at the time the president resisted to align himself with this idea. *Phileleftheros* adopted the demand for a Plan B′ and legitimized it on the basis of a threatening Turkey. But what is of more interest is how dialogue with the alternative representation is prohibited with the use of the semantic barrier of separation:

> There is a tendency not to refer to Plan B. Preparing for all possible scenarios does not mean abandoning the permanent and only target, which is to reach an agreement on the Cyprus issue. It is obvious that avoiding making references to a Plan B needs to end because it (Plan B) concerns good preparation to face possible moves by the Turkish side. No one doubts that the only route to reach a solution is through negotiations. No one disagrees with this. (25 November 2016).

The newspaper, perhaps to avoid being accused for co-siding with the rejectionists given that the entire so-called rejectionist block was at the time demanding a Plan B, it emphasized that *everyone* wants negotiations and that a Plan B′ would push Turkey to make concessions on

security. The barrier of separation convened the message that one can support both the negotiations and a Plan B′. In this way *Phileleftheros* adds to the canvas another alternative representation, this time coming from those who it presents as rejectionists or extremists who do not want negotiations. One could assume here that they imply those aligning with the *Simerini's* ideas.

Phileleftheros' foregrounded the security demand through a distrust of Turkey and questioned its motives and the motives of the Turkish-Cypriot leader, often called *occupying* leader (24 November 2016) alluding to how he was representing the interests of the occupying power, Turkey, rather than his own community. Simultaneously *Phileleftheros* tried to appear as the moderate, patriotic alternative between those Greek-Cypriots willing to accept any solution and nationalists who would reject any solution.

4.3 | Blocking the solution: Similarities, differences and avenues for future work

The preceding analysis suggests the use of various realistic and symbolic threats and semantic barriers from both newspapers studied despite certain differences. Specifically, both formatted polemic social representations either directly (mostly *Simerini*) or indirectly (mostly *Phileleftheros*) as they had "one major alternative representation, which is not a real alternative, but rather a rhetorical counter point" (Gillespie, 2008, p. 383). Also, both used most of the already identified semantic barriers (Moscovici, 1961/2008; Gillespie, 2008; Sammut & Sartawi, 2012) to protect their main representation, that of a distrustful Turkey. The larger opposition, at a moral level, was between the trust versus falsehood which has a parallel in the good versus bad (Gillespie, 2008, p. 385) or victim versus perpetrator in the case of external actors, and between the patriot versus traitor in the case of the internal enemy. The good or more precisely nationally correct stance is to resist to the negotiated pro-Turkey solution whereas the bad stance that is the anti-national is to support it. These polemical representations are mainly instigated by how Turkey's long-lasting aim is to capture Cyprus-which as explained is a realistic threat that also implies symbolic threats as for example the threat of Turkification found explicitly in *Simerini* may account to fears of cultural assimilation by a barbaric, backward other. The Turkish-Cypriot community is rather absent lacking any agency to define developments while when referenced, this is done in ways to support the core representation of each newspaper.

Simerini's editorials treated alternative representations within the ingroup clearly as un-patriotic with which there can be no rapprochement. Turkification, the main threat in the newspaper, it claimed can only succeed if Greek-Cypriots themselves agree to a solution that would dissolute the state, leaving them completely powerless vis-a-vis Turkish aggression and threatening the entire Hellenism. This alludes to the central argument of the newspaper against the Annan Plan (Avraamidou, 2017) but during this reporting period the hellenocentric references, as discussed below, are more exaggerated. *Phileleftheros* targeted various alternative representations by various actors but occasionally entered into a pseudo-dialogue with them attempting to enforce an interpretation of their stance through rigid oppositions. Its editorials rarely criticized directly Greek-Cypriots holding the alternative representation but only indirectly implied that *some* Greek-Cypriots who it did not name convey Turkish positions as their own. Still, it avoided entering into any substantial or potentially transformative dialogue with them as its main concern was to draw its community's red lines beyond which Turkey would achieve its national aims without describing the historical context. Therefore, both newspapers were in (non)dialogue with internal enemies who held alternative representations: Turkey was in the

background (sustaining rigid oppositions) and there was no substantial effort to enter into dialogue with Turkey-taken for granted stance. This is also a common discursive strategy of nationalism to construct internal enemies which has been described as the black sheep effect (see Sammut & Sartawi, 2012) and external enemies.

Simerini called for the termination of the negotiations and rejected their basis (bizonal bicommunal federation). *Philelefteros* claimed to support negotiations and used disclaimers that it wanted them to continue but then adopted a rejectionist representation proposing for example zero troops, zero guarantees. Interestingly, after the collapse of said negotiations, July 2017, Turkey and Turkish-Cypriots blamed the Greek-Cypriot and the Greek side as having led the summit to failure due to their insistence on zero troops and zero guarantees. Supporting the continuation of the negotiations allowed perhaps *Phileleftheros* to maintain a seemingly moderate self-identity as the objective third part between two extremes: the supporters of any solution and the nationalists. *Phileleftheros* polemical representations aimed at building a wider in-group alliance around security which it used strategically to demand also a stronger alliance between Greece and Cyprus. Attempts to appear moderate but still patriotic, served to address a wider audience across the political spectrum and perhaps to maintain a strong part of its proclaimed identity as an objective media because it is not aligned with a specific political party. *Simerini* was not concerned with national unity. By contrast, its editorials were conflictual and directly aimed at polarization within the ingroup.

Simerini is closer to the *ethnonationalist* position and *Phileleftheros* to the *communitarian or maximalist* stance. *Simerini* used the idea of Greekness in its essentialist, primordial understanding, as our glory nation whereas *Phileleftheros* promoted alliance with the specific Greek leadership that promoted the idea of zero troops, zero guarantees. *Simerini*, asked for a national solution from within Cyprus, that is by those political powers rejecting bizonality and constructed the people as the real carriers of the nation. For *Simerini* any peace Plan resulting from negotiations would only satisfy Turkish aspirations at the expense of Greek-Cypriots and is thus doomed to failure. Despite positioned in the ethnonationalist position, in *Simerini*, the state was a powerful symbol used discursively as protecting the nation, unlike the past that the state was seen by ethnonationalists as contra-nation. Importantly, in *Simerini*, historical representations and the narrative format (Jovchelovitch, 2012) proved instrumental in providing the core representation with a format that organizes the various threats identified and offering them legitimacy through a pattern teleological schema of a pre-determined end with the capturing or control of the whole of Cyprus by Turkey. A sense of continuity is supported by simplistic and ahistorical notions of circularity of the form that history repeats itself (Psaltis et al., 2017) which in turn legitimizes a series of present and future threats and fears described in detail in this paper. *Phileleftheros'*, despite few exceptions, lacked *Simerini*'s historical and dramatic references and direct representations of two opposing stances within the GC community, the us = patriots versus the other = traitors, binary. Yet, in the end its editorials also expected all to align around a set of core nationally correct demands on security because Turkey cannot be trusted.

The potential deconstruction of these threats and fears by various alternative representations of various actors identified here (pro-reconciliation Greek-Cypriots, Turkey, the leaders of the two major parties supporting the peace process, the UNSG special representative) are blocked through a series of semantic barriers whose function is to hinder the intrusion of doubt in the current belief system (Duveen, 2002) of the reader and avoid reflection (Kadianaki & Gillespie, 2015) on their core representations that could lead to ontogenetic transformation of their positions-crucial in a post-conflict and divided society. The semantic barriers employed not only do not function as semiotic promoters of exchange between the core and alternative representations but on the

contrary, undermine and hinder the transformation of the core representations aligned with the master narrative of conflict identified elsewhere (Papadakis, 2008; Psaltis, 2016) as a main obstacle to conflict transformation in Cyprus.

To conclude, despite focusing on a specific negotiations period to examine media content and function, this analysis offers a wider explanation of the phenomena studied. It contributes both to the theoretical debate of the relationship between social representations and identities in line with its general aim but also to communication studies. Specifically, this in-depth analysis allowed to identify each newspaper's core representation and the dialogical analysis illustrated how contemporary, mainstream media may attempt to hinder social dialogue to maintain the status-quo of division impeding transformative dialogue with external and internal others. New research could investigate whether and how the readership reads these core representations and whether and if the strategies to impede other social representations can be successful. Another venue for research is the examination of intra-media homogeneity to establish if and whether the editorial line influences other media content and/or if there are contradictory representations in the same newspaper. This would allow sketching a more complete picture of social representations of threats around the Cyprus Issue in the mainstream media. From the perspective of genetic social psychology (Psaltis, 2015a, b) there is a need to further explore the ways in which forms of recognition (Psaltis & Duveen, 2006) often reported in real social interaction could be implicated in engagements between the core and alternative representations.

ENDNOTES

[1]TMT stands for aTurkish Resistance Organisation and refers to a Turkish **Cypriot** pro-partition paramilitary group.

[2]ELDYK and TURDYK refer to the Greek and Turkish contingent in Cyprus respectively in line with the 1960 constitution.

ORCID

Maria Avraamidou https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9781-1181
Charis Psaltis https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8724-665X

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