



Deconstructing resistance towards textbook revisions: the securitisation of history textbooks and the Cyprus conflict

Eleni Christodoulou 

Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research, Braunschweig, Germany

ABSTRACT

This article investigates Greek Cypriot 'discourses of resistance' to potential revisions of history textbooks as part of a wider peace education process. Although changing history textbooks towards a more inclusive and pluralistic narrative is arguably a necessary step for a sustainable peace, efforts to do so have met with strong resistance and ultimately failed. Existing studies have illuminated the problematic historical content of these textbooks and often point towards the controversies raised, but rarely do they offer an in-depth analysis of these discourses *about* textbooks. This study seeks to fill this gap by deconstructing these 'discourses of resistance' to reach a deeper understanding of why this aspect of peacebuilding has failed. Empirical findings through an analysis of interviews, policy documents, newspapers, speeches and circulars indicate a pronounced link between education and security, which has until recently remained at the periphery of peacebuilding research. Discourses of resistance present changes to history textbooks as a betrayal and threat to the nationalist struggle, a process I argue constitutes the *securitisation* of history textbooks.

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Introduction

Textbook revision or improvement as a means to contribute to peace is far from new. More than half a century before UNESCO¹ was founded, the First Universal Peace Congress that took place in Paris in 1889 emphasised the importance of revising textbooks to remove misleading and false ideas about wars and urged the 'publication of pacific school books'.² In fact, this was the first time that textbook revision was formally presented as a central issue at an international forum. The second meeting, held the year after in London, particularly emphasised the teaching of history and its role in promoting war. 'Why', asked one participant 'do we not give up those narrow worn out paths, in which

CONTACT Eleni Christodoulou  christodoulou@gei.de

¹For a historical overview of UNESCO's role in history textbook revisions, see Pertti Luntinen, 'School History Textbook Revision by and under the Auspices of UNESCO: Part I', *Internationale Schulbuchforschung* 10, no. 4 (1988): 337–48.

²The Universal Peace Congress', *The American Advocate of Peace and Arbitration* 51, no. 4/5 (September and October 1889): 101. There was a total of 33 Peace Congresses, held almost every year (though there was a longer pause during the First World War) with the last one being at the end of August 1939, a few days before the beginning of the Second World War. These events were highly regarded and supported by political elites. See David Cortright, *Peace: A History of Movements and Ideas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 40.

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history has trodden till now?³ Over a century later, and after the creation of hundreds of national, regional and international organisations involved in history education and peace, the question remains just as – if not even more – important, and yet inadequately answered. Why is there so much resistance to revising or changing history textbooks? What are the people of conflict or post-conflict regions afraid of and why? What is the impact of these history textbook controversies on the conflict itself and the ensuing peace process? This study aims to answer these questions as they pertain to the context of the Cyprus conflict, and in particular by deconstructing the resistance stemming from Greek Cypriots towards potential changes to history textbooks as part of the ongoing peace process.

The present study proceeds from the normative position that changing history textbooks to reach a more critical, inclusive and pluralistic narrative is a necessary part of sustainable peace. Numerous analyses of textbooks have illuminated their problematic historical contents in conflict and post-conflict settings.⁴ These are part of a burgeoning literature on the relationship between education and peacebuilding that has been developing over the past two decades. While some studies explicitly discuss the controversies raised, only rarely do they offer an in-depth analysis of these discourses *about* textbooks, and in particular through the framework of *resistance* within a peacebuilding context. Doing so is important for three reasons. Firstly, merely rejecting negative attitudes to textbook revision as ‘hyper-nationalist’ or ‘backward’ or placing the blame for the failure of textbook improvement purely on political elites or other ‘spoilers’, does not take scholars or practitioners very far in terms of overcoming the educational stagnation.⁵ This can even be counter-productive, widening the gap between those who support and those who reject textbook revision initiatives. Instead, it is pertinent to gain a deeper understanding of what lies beneath these behaviours and to identify patterns, fears (real or perceived), obstacles, distortions or even discursive strategies that make this resistance possible and hegemonic. For history textbook revisions to be more widely accepted as part of a peace education process, then these fears need to first be acknowledged and properly understood before they are successfully and constructively addressed. Secondly, these discourses and attitudes are important due to their impact on the conflict and the peace process itself: textbooks themselves become objects of debate and controversy often eliciting (as we shall see below) highly emotive responses. These history textbook debates are not just ‘collateral’ side effects of the conflict but are part and parcel of the conflict itself, constituting it, but also reproducing and thus potentially exacerbating it. It is therefore imperative to acknowledge and deconstruct the discursive power of these debates.

³The participant was Mrs Fisher-Lette from Frankfurt. Her paper was entitled ‘Teaching of History in Schools’ and it was read in association with Resolution I of the Educational Committee. *Proceedings from the Second Universal Peace Congress*, (London, 14th–19th July, 1890): 87–8.

⁴See Yiannis Papadakis, *History Education in Divided Cyprus: A Comparison of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot Schoolbooks on the ‘History of Cyprus’* (Nicosia: PRIO Cyprus Centre, 2008); Nurit Peled-Elhanan, *Palestine in Israeli School Books: Ideology and Propaganda in Education* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012); Denise Bentrovato, *Narrating and Teaching the Nation: The Politics of Education in Pre- and Post-Genocide Rwanda* (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2015).

⁵By this I do not contend that they are not nationalist or do not disrupt the peace process but rather posit that we need to go beyond these labels and merely rejecting these positions, to try and understanding them within the lens of empathy that peace education aims to teach in the first place. One group’s ‘spoiler’ is another group’s ‘saviour’. The term is usually used to describe those actors that are directly involved in the conflict and act against peace processes. For an outline of the impact of ‘spoilers’ on peace processes see Edward Newman and Oliver P. Richmond, eds., *Challenges to Peacebuilding: Managing Spoilers during Conflict Resolution* (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2006).

Thirdly, and related to the above, history textbook revisions in conflict or post-conflict settings seem to spark fierce and fervent debates that penetrate all levels of society: from the public to the private sphere, from parliamentary deliberations to television and newspaper debates, from trade unions, NGOs, and religious institutions to the coffee shop and living room, offering rich and diverse forms of empirical data but also demonstrating the significance of this issue given the attention it receives.

Cyprus, a post-colonial state, has been characterised by an ethnically divided and largely segregated society for over five decades. The majority of Turkish Cypriots live in the north, the self-declared Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, a *de facto* state that is not internationally recognised by any country apart from Turkey, and Greek Cypriots live in the south, the Republic of Cyprus.⁶ As in other divided societies, education has been used (and accused) as a vehicle for normalising and legitimising political agendas.⁷ In this article, I argue that in Cyprus the educational stagnation regarding history textbook revisions can be explained and understood with recourse to 'discourses of resistance'. Empirical findings, through an analysis of in-depth interviews, policy documents, newspapers, religious speeches and circulars, point towards the hegemonisation of negative discourses with regard to history textbook revisions.⁸ These discourses present changes to history textbooks as a betrayal and threat to the nationalist struggle, a process I argue constitutes the *securitisation* of history textbooks. Securitisation constructs an 'existential threat' which necessitates urgent action and this act is accepted by a substantial audience.⁹ These securitising acts not only prevent educational change but also further polarise intra-group and inter-group relations, thereby influencing the process of reconciliation. Deconstructing these discourses of resistance reveals a rich pattern of inter-discursive arguments, assumptions and collective fears that help explain why there is so much resistance to changing the way history is being taught in the classrooms. The study indicates a strong interplay between history education and matters of security, a link which has been undertheorised and still remains at the periphery of peacebuilding research.¹⁰

The article begins with a discussion of the framework of 'resistance' to history textbook revisions, locating it within existing peacebuilding literature and the specific educational and historical context of Cyprus vis-à-vis the conflict. After outlining the methodology

⁶In this study, I focus on Greek-Cypriot resistance to peace education, and therefore when referring to resistance I am focusing on resistance in the Republic of Cyprus.

⁷Lynn Davies, *Education and Conflict: Complexity and Chaos* (London: Routledge, 2004); Tony Gallagher, *Education in Divided Societies* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Elizabeth A. Cole, ed., *Teaching the Violent Past: History Education and Reconciliation* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007). Lynn Davies has shown how educational practices construct a world of two opposing categories of 'us' the good, brave, 'victims' versus 'them' the malevolent, evil 'perpetrators'.

⁸This was part of a wider project that investigated how and why these discourses became hegemonic using theoretical insights from Antonio Gramsci and Michel Foucault to expose the conditions of possibility/impossibility by reference to the historical and political systems of 'power/knowledge relations'. Although these are strongly interrelated issues, in this paper, I focus on the 'what' of these discourses of resistance rather than on how they become hegemonic by operationalising a truth regime that marginalises the discourses that support textbook revision.

⁹Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1998), 27.

¹⁰Exceptions to this are Mutsumi Hirano, *History Education and International Relations: A Case Study of Diplomatic Disputes over Japanese Textbooks* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2009) and Mäiksoo, Maria, 'Memory Must Be Defended: Beyond the Politics of Mnemonical Security', *Security Dialogue* 46, no. 3 (2015): 221–37, though the latter does not explicitly mention history education or textbooks but rather focuses on historical memory and ontological security theory, and neither of them take a strong (resistance to) peacebuilding focus. For a study of the relationship between memory politics and ontological security through the lens of war museums and its impact on Sino-Japanese relations, see Karl Gustafsson, 'Memory Politics and Ontological Security in Sino-Japanese Relations', *Asian Studies Review* 38, no. 1 (2014): 71–86.

used, the next section presents empirical findings that illuminate the perceptions, assumptions and emotions of the Greek Cypriots towards history textbook revisions through a deconstruction of the data into four sub-themes of resistance. The third section argues for the 'securitisation of history textbooks' as a useful conceptual framework for understanding the powerful dynamics i.e. discursive practices that make this resistance possible. The paper concludes with a discussion of the implications of this study for research and practice on history textbooks in divided societies.¹¹

'Discourse of resistance' to history textbook revisions and peacebuilding

History textbook revisions in a conflict society can be seen as an integral part of peace education, and of peacebuilding more generally. History textbook debates can be both a product and productive of the conflict. Resistance to history textbook revisions, therefore, has shared characteristics with resistance to wider peacebuilding efforts. I locate my work at a micro-level in the rather interdisciplinary field of peace education and, at a macro-level, seek to engage with peacebuilding debates, and in particular those which cast a constructively critical lens on liberal peacebuilding norms and practices.¹² It is in line with this 'post-liberal'¹³ peacebuilding and its focus on context-specific and locally grounded initiatives that I emphasise the importance of paying attention to the local voices that resist particular programmes or policies.¹⁴ I do not wish to romanticise the 'local' or 'indigenous' actors here, but rather to posit that if we are to move towards sustainable peace, their agency needs to be seriously considered and problematised by both researchers and practitioners, rather than being merely rejected as spoiling the peace process, regardless of whether or not their resistance is justified. In addition, as Mac Ginty points out, there is a tendency in literature which discusses challenges to peacebuilding – and in this case peace education – to focus on the state-level and blame political elites. It is also important, however, to adopt a horizontal perspective across society and investigate discourses that emanate from the broader public sphere.¹⁵ This opens up avenues which advance our understanding of the ways in which local communities 'subvert, exhaust, renegotiate, and resist'¹⁶ including how their beliefs are expressed and legitimated.

Bitter disputes about how to teach the violent past, but also problematic representations of the 'Other' in history textbooks have been a key concern for researchers of peace education leading to numerous and extensive studies on the role of history education in peace processes. Existing literature has pointed to the 'divisive and challenging

¹¹ Although a study of how history textbook revisions can be desecuritised falls outside the scope of this article, some suggestions for future research and practice are given in the concluding section.

¹² Oliver P. Richmond, *A Post-Liberal Peace* (London: Routledge, 2012). For research that engages with both these levels, see Mario Novelli and Sean Higgins, 'The Violence of Peace and the Role of Education: Insights from Sierra Leone', *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* 41, no. 1 (2016): 32–45. The 'resistance to peacebuilding' literature is part of a critical approach to peacebuilding that questions the Western assumptions of the liberal peace project.

¹³ Roger Mac Ginty defines 'liberal peace' as 'the dominant form of internationally supported peacemaking' and as a broader term that 'encompasses the socio-cultural norms associated with peacemaking'. Roger Mac Ginty, *International Peacebuilding and Local Resistance* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 20, 22.

¹⁴ This resistance may or may not be justified, depending on one's own political perspective and on the reason given, but an analysis of this is beyond the scope and purpose of this article.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.

nature of the revision process;¹⁷ to various history textbook revision initiatives;¹⁸ to the role of history education in constructing national identities and patriotism¹⁹ and examined the 'endless landmines'²⁰ of teaching contested narratives in the classroom, not least the links between trauma, identity and selective memory.²¹ Some of the challenges identified include the institutional power of the state, the media, the role of teachers and religious actors as well as a lack of financial resources. The issue of discursive resistance to history textbook revisions, however, remains both undertheorised and under-researched.

Part of the problem when undertaking such a research task lies in what is arguably an endogenous characteristic of any peace education initiative, i.e. its cyclical nature. The circularity emerges in the fact that peace education is resisted, precisely because of the attitudes it seeks to address in the first place (making a positivist cause-effect analysis epistemologically problematic). In other words, the hostile attitudes and ideas that it aims to transform are those preventing its implementation. This is related to the proposition presented earlier that these resistance discourses are inextricably linked to the wider conflict discourse; in many ways, the educational debate can be seen as a micro site of resistance – a microcosm of, in this case, the Cyprus conflict. As the empirical section of this paper shows, many of the issues of contention revolve around arguments that are presented as part of the wider resistance to peacebuilding efforts in Cyprus. However, to claim that they are identical would be to disregard the particular characteristics, paradoxes and ambiguities of the educational debate, as well as those public perceptions or assumptions that are specific to (the content, nature and purpose of) history education, risking the loss of useful insights that might help move peace education initiatives forward. Although the framework of the 'securitisation of history textbooks', does not 'solve' the inherent circularity issue,²² it does offer a way to circumvent this conundrum, and to capture these nuances, by changing the question from one of causation to one that looks at the conditions of possibility that make change 'impossible' – and resistance 'possible'. Rendering something possible presupposes making intelligible/imaginable certain ways of thinking and courses of action, which in turn requires that certain meanings, dispositions, subjectivities and social relations are already in place, operationalising a particular truth-regime that excludes through its

¹⁷Denise Bentrovato, Karina V. Korostelina and Martina Schulze, eds., *History Can Bite: History Education in Divided and Postwar Societies* (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2016), 16.

¹⁸Falk Pingel, 'Can Truth be Negotiated: History Textbook Revision as a Means to Reconciliation', *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 617, no. 1 (2008): 181–98; Karina V. Korostelina and Simona Lässig, eds., *History Education and Post-Conflict Reconciliation: Reconsidering Joint Textbook Projects* (New York: Routledge, 2013). For an analysis of the emergence of textbooks (and bilateral textbook commissions), as an international relations issue in Northeast Asia after 1945, see Daniel C. Sneider, 'The War Over Words: History Textbooks and International Relations in Northeast Asia', *History Textbooks and the Wars in Asia: Divided Memories*, ed. Gi-Wook Shin and Daniel C. Sneider (London: Routledge, 2011), 246–68.

¹⁹Mario Carretero, *Constructing Patriotism: Teaching History and Memories in Global Worlds* (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2011).

²⁰Michalinos Zembylas and Froso Kambani, 'The Teaching of Controversial Issues During Elementary-Level History Instruction: Greek-Cypriot History Teachers' Perceptions and Emotions', *Theory & Research in Social Education* 40, no. 2 (2012): 110.

²¹Zvi Bekerman and Michalinos Zembylas, *Teaching Contested Narratives: Identity, Memory, and Reconciliation in Peace Education and Beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

²²The circularity is not, I argue, a problem that can be 'solved' as it reflects the co-constitutive nature of the conflict dynamics (e.g. history, identity and education) and is therefore an endogenous characteristic of peace education processes. Therefore, the 'why' question turns from one of causation to one that explains the situation with recourse to why some things are made possible, whereas others are not – what Roxanne Lynn Doty prefers to call 'how-possible' questions.

choice of inclusion.²³ This shift in focus, therefore, enables an investigation into the representation practices and strategies that frame peace education in a particular way, wielding their specific securitisation capabilities.

Historical context of the study

The Cyprus conflict has all the characteristics of a 'divided society' as described by Lederach: it is characterised by the historical perception of enmity between Greeks and Turks accumulated over generations, the paradox of being neighbours but still locked into 'cycles of hostile interaction', as well as fear and severe stereotyping.²⁴ Five decades after the United Nations first deployed its peacekeeping mission in Cyprus (UNFICYP in 1964), and after several diplomatic initiatives failed to reach a political settlement, the intractability of the conflict is perhaps one of the few points on which both Greek – and Turkish – Cypriots agree. At the same time, Cyprus is strictly speaking neither a war zone, nor does it have a 'post-conflict' status: with the exception of isolated killings, the last time the country experienced large-scale violence was in 1974. A lack of physical violence, however, merely amounts to what Johan Galtung has famously called 'negative peace', with structural violence engraved in the existing system of ideas, representations and behaviours. The Cyprus case is an illustration of how time does not necessarily heal the wounds of the past,²⁵ but rather can be used to deeply embed the conflict in the identity of its people.

The crux of the so-called 'Cyprus Problem' started in the mid-1950s when the Greek Cypriots (80% of the population) began their liberation struggle against British colonial rule. Greek Cypriots regarded themselves as 'Greek' and desired union – *enosis* – with Greece, which they saw as their 'motherland'. The Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus was a strong supporter of this union – led by Archbishop Makarios III, who in fact became the first president of the island later on – and vehemently 'guarded' the education of Greek Cypriots during British colonial rule.²⁶ On the other hand, *enosis* was viewed by the Turkish Cypriots (18% of the population) as a threat to their existence and influence on the island and they responded by forming their own paramilitary organisation in order to prevent such a union. Instead, their goal was to permanently divide the island, a policy called *taksim*. The Turkish Cypriots were convinced that their own 'motherland', Turkey, would send military aid to achieve *taksim*. After an intense struggle against the British (who exploited their position and exacerbated tensions between the two communities in order to extend their colonial rule), Cyprus officially gained its independence in 1960.

²³Jennifer Milliken, 'The Study of Discourse in International Relations: A Critique of Research and Methods', *European Journal of International Relations* 5, no. 2 (1999): 229. Roxanne L. Doty, 'Foreign Policy as Social Construction: A Post-Positivist Analysis of U.S. Counterinsurgency Policy in the Philippines', *International Studies Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (1993): 298.

²⁴John P. Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997), 23.

²⁵For a discussion about the timing of history teaching in the aftermath of conflict, see Pingel 'Can Truth Be Negotiated', 181–98.

²⁶As Panayiotis Persianis argues: 'The Church leaders used the schools to enhance their political power and later they used their political power to support the schools and protect them from the Colonial Government interference.' Historically the Church had founded and financially supported many schools in Cyprus, and priests often taught at these schools. It was historically seen as the 'guardian' of the national language, the national sentiments and the national identity' of the Greek Cypriots. Panayiotis K. Persianis, *Church and State in Cyprus Education* (Nicosia: Volaris Print Works, 1978), *Preface*, 17.

Yet the new constitution forbade both *enosis* and *taksim*, and further complicated the situation by giving the right to Turkey, Greece or Britain to militarily intervene if there was a need to re-establish the status quo. Intercommunal strife ensued, especially during the period 1963–1968 which saw the Turkish Cypriots resorting to enclaves and forming their own administrative sections, with hundreds of casualties on both sides. In the meantime, in 1967, a small group of right-wing colonels imposed a military dictatorship in Greece and caused intra-communal clashes between the Greek Cypriots.²⁷ In July 1974 after a failed coup by the Greek junta in Cyprus, Turkey retaliated by invading the island, first by occupying the northern coast, and shortly afterwards by launching a second offensive that extended its occupation to over a third of the island's territory (36%). This led to the de facto partition of the island, with thousands of casualties and refugees. Greek Cypriots suffered the heaviest losses with around 162,000 being displaced from the northern part, and 48,000 Turkish Cypriots from the southern part.²⁸ Unlike the Turkish Cypriots, who found enough uninhabited Greek-Cypriot houses in the north, thousands of Greek Cypriots had to remain in refugee camps or seek temporary shelter with friends or relatives. This feeling of loss and injustice was further exacerbated with the arrival of 'settlers' from Turkey after 1975 who were immediately given Greek-Cypriot properties in the north.²⁹ Despite the partial opening of the borders in 2003, allowing movement between one side and the other, deeper interaction remains limited as a result of the lack of contact over many years (e.g. intercommunal marriages remain so rare that, since 2015, couples have been given a bi-communal award by the Stelios Philanthropic Foundation for their marriage³⁰). The acceptance of Cyprus in the European Union as a divided country in May 2004 (the *acquis communautaire* has been suspended for the northern side) has arguably cemented the gap between the two sides, reinforcing the construction and perception of differences between the 'self' and the 'other'.³¹ At the same time, the continued presence of Turkish troops (around 35,000 soldiers) remains to this day a thorny issue and a deep source of insecurity for the Greek Cypriots. This was in fact one of the main obstacles leading to the

²⁷ According to the Greek junta, Cyprus was a state that was subordinate to Greece and *enosis* should be achieved by force, but the large majority of Greek Cypriots were against these hardliners.

²⁸ Gürel, Ayla, Mete Hatay and Christalla Yakinthou, *An Overview of Events and Perceptions, Displacement in Cyprus – Consequences of Civil and Military Strife*, PRIO Cyprus Centre Report 5 (Oslo: International Peace Research Institute, 2012).

²⁹ Ibid., 9–10. The fact that tens of thousands of mainland Turkish citizens have been encouraged by Turkish governments to move to the northern part of Cyprus has been an extremely controversial issue, strongly criticised by the Greek-Cypriot side as a violation of international law. The figures tend to be over-estimated from the Greek-Cypriot authorities, sometimes reaching 160,000. According to a report by Mete Hatay based on his research and the 2006 census in the north, the number of these 'settlers' from Turkey who have received citizenship (and hence the right to vote) is around 42,000 or 24% of the population. This number does not include temporary residents from Turkey, for example, students or immigrant workers. He argues that the figures from the Greek-Cypriot authorities are misleading as they include Turkish nationals who do not have voting rights. Mete Hatay, *Is the Turkish Cypriot Population Shrinking? An Overview of the Ethno – Demography of Cyprus in the Light of the Preliminary Results of the 2006 Turkish-Cypriot Census*. PRIO Cyprus Centre Report 2 (Oslo: International Peace Research Institute, 2007).

³⁰ Jean Christou, 'Stelios Award for "The Ultimate Bicomunal Project: Life"', *Cyprus Mail*, October 26, 2015. <http://cyprus-mail.com/2015/10/26/stelios-award-for-the-ultimate-bicomunal-project-life/>. 2015 was the first year that this foundation awarded a couple for their intercommunal marriage under the category 'life'. According to the founder, Sir Stelios Hadji-loannou, their marriage was the 'ultimate form' of bicomunal co-operation and their child 'one of the first bi-communal babies' since 1974. Since 2017, there is a new category specific to awarding couples and it is called 'Married couples/partners in life'. From 2015 to 2017, the Foundation has given a total number of 14 such awards. <http://stelios.org/stelios-award-cyprus/blog.html>.

³¹ Nathalie Tocci, *EU Accession Dynamics and Conflict Resolution: Catalysing Peace or Consolidating Partition in Cyprus* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).

collapse of the UN-brokered peace talks in the summer of 2017, giving rise to speculations that Cyprus 'may have missed its last chance for reunification'.³²

The Greek-Cypriot educational context

After the division of the island, the two segregated education systems (no provisions were made for common education in the 1960 constitution) continued and education was used as a conduit for strengthening nationalist sentiments, strongly influenced by their respective 'motherland'. For example, on the Greek-Cypriot side school textbooks were produced in Greece, teachers were educated in Greece, had common national and religious celebrations with Greece, etc. A core element in history textbooks and classroom practices was the presentation of an essentialist and inevitable thread of continuity of Hellenism in Cyprus since ancient Greece,³³ precisely because the Cypriots were Greeks, united not only with the same blood, the same destiny but also the same language and Orthodox religion. For the Greek Cypriots, the official construction of the past needed to remember the negative events in order to create the preconditions for their reversal in a desirable future, i.e. a change of the status quo imposed since the 1974 war.³⁴ Therefore, in a way, looking backwards was even more vital for them than it was for the Turkish Cypriots.

Contrary to the Turkish-Cypriot students, who are taught about a 'happy peace operation' which saved them from the Greek Cypriots and whose official history justifies and legitimises the events of 1974 so as to ensure the permanence of the division, the Greek Cypriots are taught how the barbaric Turks invaded their land, which has been elevated to an almost 'holy land'-like status. Students learn that it was and is their duty to remember the struggle of their heroes and they are called upon to honour the sacrifices of their ancestors by doing the best they can to fight for the restoration of justice.³⁵ It is a two-way process: the adults have a duty to teach the young, and the young have a duty to 'tune in', unquestionably soaking up the official narrative so as to one day liberate those lands. At the core of educational policy vis-à-vis the conflict became the theme of 'I do not forget, and I struggle' (*Den Xechno kai Agonizomai*) focusing on keeping the memory of the invasion, of the refugees, of the human rights abuses, the missing persons, the destruction of religious sites and of the lost lands in order to be able to claim them back. This slogan signalled 'the creation of a new national imaginary attached to the urgency for national survival'.³⁶ In 1981, the government even started providing primary school students with free exercise books featuring pictures of sites in the 'occupied areas' under the title of 'I do not forget' (e.g. the Kyrenia harbour, or the Apostolos Andreas Monastery). Although the past decade has seen a significant watering-down of this

³²'Cyprus may have missed its last chance for reunification', *The Economist*, July 9, 2017. <https://www.economist.com/news/europe/21724899-collapse-talks-turkish-occupied-north-makes-deal-look-unattainable-cyprus-may>.

³³Niyazi Kizilyürek, 'National Memory and Turkish-Cypriot Textbooks', *Internationale Schulbuchforschung* 21, no. 4 (1999): 388.

³⁴Rebecca Bryant, *Imagining the Modern: The Cultures of Nationalism in Cyprus* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004).

³⁵Contrary to the Greek-Cypriot struggle to revert the status quo, in the north there is a struggle to make the partition permanent. This policy of permanence for the northern part is reflected in the way the Turkish-Cypriot street names of heroes replaced the Greek-Cypriot ones, only Turkish place names were used, and new memorials were built that strengthened the nationalist sentiment. Yiannis Papadakis, *Echoes from the Dead Zone: Across the Cyprus Divide* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2005), 149.

³⁶Miranda Christou, 'A Double Imagination: Memory and Education in Cyprus', *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 24, no. 2 (2006): 290. This article also discusses interpretations of the slogan in schools as well as the modifications it has been subjected to over the years.

campaign,³⁷ and even an end to the printing of these notebooks in 2015, this has in fact been used as an excuse by the more extreme right-wing nationalists to react with the slogan ‘I do not forget the “I do not forget”’, printing and disseminating relevant stickers and posters.³⁸

A plethora of studies have shown that school textbooks and curricula, pedagogical practices, educational policies, and national celebrations at schools and museums exacerbate the conflict by promoting demonised, negative and stereotypical categorisations of the Other, inflaming ethnic hatred and delegitimising their historical narrative.³⁹ An analysis of current textbooks or educational policies is beyond the scope of this article. However, history textbooks are the educational media that seem to cause most controversy and as we shall see this reflects dominant perceptions about the content, nature and purpose of history education. History education is an extremely sensitive topic, and seems to be the Achilles’ heel of peace education in Cyprus. Both the state and the public are aware that the textbook is a major educational vehicle for reproducing the dominant Greek-Cypriot historical narrative and for excluding marginalised narratives, whether these stem from Greek Cypriots, or from the Turkish-Cypriot community. The state can permit or restrict what is included in a textbook and thus strengthen its bonds with its citizens through the production of a national identity and collective memory.⁴⁰ The public educated using these textbooks is often resistant to acknowledging their shortcomings.

Since the early 1990s, history textbooks of both the primary and secondary school level remain largely the same, with new editions having no or minimal changes.⁴¹ As we shall see, after 2004, the concept of history textbook revision as part of promoting a culture of peace has been met with strong resistance and has never materialised.⁴² Thus, the resistance is not over a particular new history textbook that has been published, not even over a preliminary design, but over *proposed* or *imagined* history textbook revisions. By imagined, I am not referring to an illusion or fantasy but rather to a proposal which in the course of public debate has become prey to extremes of the imagination.

Methodology

In order to understand why the Greek Cypriots have adopted such a negative stance regarding history textbook revisions, a qualitative methodology was employed, and in

³⁷For a discussion of changes to the dynamics of the communal narrative of the missing persons after the exhumations that began in 2004, see Christalla Yakinthou, ‘The Quiet Deflation of Den Xehno? Changes in the Greek Cypriot Communal Narrative on the Missing Persons in Cyprus’, *Cyprus Review* 20, no. 1 (2008): 15–34.

³⁸‘Δεν Ξεχνώ το «Δεν Ξεχνώ»’ 25 September, 2016. http://www.antepithesi.gr/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=2321:den-ksexno-to-den-ksexno&Itemid=303.

³⁹See inter alia Loris Koullapis, ‘The Subject of History in the Greek Cypriot Educational System: A Subset of the Greek Nation’ in *Clio in the Balkans: The Politics of History Education*, ed. Christina Koullouri (Thessaloniki: CDRSCE, 2002), 406–422; Spyros Spyrou, ‘Constructing “the Turk” as an Enemy: The Complexity of Stereotypes in Children’s Everyday Worlds’, *South European Society and Politics* 11, no. 1 (2006): 95–110; Papadakis, *History Education in Divided Cyprus*; Bekerman and Zembylas, *Teaching Contested Narratives*.

⁴⁰Eleftherios Klerides, ‘Thinking Comparatively about the Textbook: Oscillating between the National, the International and the Global’, *Journal of International Cooperation in Education* 14, no. 2 (2011): 51–65.

⁴¹A case in point is the history textbook ‘History of Cyprus’ used for the lower secondary school level which has remained largely the same (just reprinted) since 1994. *History of Cyprus, 7th–9th Grade*. 2013. A. Pantelidou, K. Protopapa & S. Giallourides. Nicosia: Curriculum Development Unit (CDU), Ministry of Education and Culture.

⁴²In the northern part of the island, revised and improved history textbooks were quickly withdrawn after the change of government. Although the left-wing Republican Turkish Party (CTP) published new textbooks in 2004, that were supporting unification of the island and even had a critical stance towards Turkey, this educational policy change was short-lived and was reversed as soon as a right-wing party came to power again. See POST RI, *Textual and Visual Analysis of the Lower Secondary School Cyprus History Textbooks Studied Between 2004 and 2009* (Nicosia: POST RI, 2010).

particular an ethnographic discourse analysis.⁴³ The ethnographic element and ‘thick description’ allowed for the exposition of particular discursive ‘situated’ practices at a point in time as well as the meanings attributed to them, whilst giving adequate attention to the historical and socio-political context.⁴⁴ The ethnographic role I adopted was one of ‘participant-as-observer’, i.e. ‘a fully functioning member of the social setting’, with an overt research status.⁴⁵ In trying to understand the complex power dynamics of educational governance in a sensitive conflict setting and to observe emotional reactions and behaviours, an immersion into the local setting, became not only inevitable but essential.

Data collection took place from 2011 to 2014 and from 2016 to 2017 in the form of ethnographic field notes, 48 semi-structured ‘face to face’ interviews,⁴⁶ and document and media analysis such as policy reports, circulars, radio shows and newspapers. The participants were selected according to purposive sampling, i.e. important stakeholders such as teachers, parents, academics, political elites, religious leaders and NGO representatives. The data were examined for recurrent patterns and themes using a Foucauldian discourse analysis. This allowed me to expose the processes by which power relations are reconstituted through mechanisms of knowledge production and exclusion.⁴⁷ Discourses are historically located yet contingent systems of representations that affect how people talk, think and construct social realities.⁴⁸ They matter as they form both the content and the context for social constructions. Consistent with a Foucauldian approach, discourses were viewed as relatively autonomous, lacking a clear sense of origin or pre-existing subject. It was therefore not the various actors as such at the focus of the analysis, but the discourses deployed through them.

Data analysis was separated into three stages: an initial coding procedure⁴⁹; a secondary coding procedure, and the development of sub-themes. During the initial coding procedure I did a preliminary reading of a sample of the transcribed interviews and the written documents (e.g. field notes, newspapers, circulars) and started making a list of all the different topics. I then clustered together similar topics and abbreviated these topics as codes. I then did a second reading of the entire data whilst writing the codes next to the appropriate segments of the text. This was to confirm that the preliminary organising scheme fitted the rest of the data and ascertain whether new categories and codes emerged. If they did, I made the necessary changes or additions. I also drew lines between categories in order to show interrelationships. Finally, after this analysis four main sub-themes emerged which helped to make sense of the data; these findings are discussed in the next section.

⁴³Felicitas Macgilchrist & Tom Van Hout, ‘Ethnographic Discourse Analysis and Social Science’, *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 12, no. 1 (January 2011). <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1600/3107> (accessed June 12, 2017).

⁴⁴Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

⁴⁵Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 410.

⁴⁶The interviews were part of a wider study on the politics of peace education in Cyprus. The data analysed here emerged from questions on peoples’ views, attitudes and beliefs regarding the role of history textbooks and (resistance to) proposed textbook revisions.

⁴⁷Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language* (New York: Pantheon, 1972).

⁴⁸Milliken, ‘The Study of Discourse’, 229.

⁴⁹Adapted from John, W. Cresswell, *Research Design: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1994), 155.

Findings

Revision of history textbooks is itself a social construct and therefore involves more than just one possible meaning and interpretation. Greek Cypriots perceive the revision of history textbooks, broadly speaking, in two ways: either as something dangerous and hence in a negative lens of resistance, or as a necessary reconciliation tool and thus a positive and desirable initiative. The hegemonic negative discourse revolves around the Greekness of Cypriots, often attributed to those on the 'right' of the political spectrum, (who often use the Greek flag as a symbol at important events), and predominantly emanating from the public, the majority of the media, political elites and certain religious leaders. The marginalised positive discourse comes largely (but not solely⁵⁰) from those on the 'left' of the political spectrum, historically at the forefront of the reconciliation movement, and from peacebuilding NGOs such as the Association for Historical Dialogue and Research (AHDR). These actors often identify themselves primarily as 'Cypriots'. Doing so is in itself a significant discursive act that weakens their attachment to Greece as a 'motherland', and at the same time opens up a common space for the construction of an identity that can include Turkish Cypriots. Although recent research⁵¹ has shown that these discourses are neither complete nor uniform and in some instances are 'hybrid', for the purposes of this paper discourses will be treated as 'ideal-type' discourses in the Weberian sense.⁵² Each of the two ideal types is formed by 'one-sidedly emphasised viewpoints' arranged 'into a unified analytical construct'.⁵³ The focus here is solely on the discourse (s) of resistance; I will not seek to establish the degree of negativity or resistance but rather the 'why' of it, and different ways in which it is being enacted.

Before delving into the four sub-themes of these discourses it is important to mention three turning points in the educational arena that feature prominently in them. Firstly, in 2004 an academic committee appointed by the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC), the Education Reform Committee (ERC), proposed the ideological reorientation of what was found to be an ethnocentric and culturally monolithic framework towards a multicultural approach that endorsed the principles of 'inclusive democracy' and included the Turkish-Cypriot community. In particular, the Committee proposed the revision of history textbooks by a joint committee of both Greek and Turkish Cypriots.⁵⁴ Secondly, in 2008–2009, when the left-wing party AKEL – which was in power until February 2013 – tried to use its pro-rapprochement ideology to promote an educational emphasis on shared 'Cypriotness' rather than the dominant 'Hellenocentric' norm there was a huge

⁵⁰More recently these discourses are being expressed by the more 'progressive' members of the conservative party DISY, of which the party's previous leader Nicos Anastasiades has been president since 2013. Anastasiades has so far shown strong commitment to the UN peace talks.

⁵¹Eleni Christodoulou, 'The Politics of Peace Education in Cyprus' (PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 2015).

⁵²Max Weber, transl. Edward A. Shils and Henry A. Finch, *The Methodology of the Social Sciences* (New York: Free Press, 1949), 90.

⁵³The aim is to expose the nature of predominant interpretations while demonstrating the inherently political nature of these discourses (see Milliken, 'The Study of Discourse'). However, I do not claim that all negative representations fall neatly under this 'ideal-type' category. This approach is useful as it allows certain common patterns, themes and strategies to emerge from the empirical analysis, which though may not be shared by all hegemonic discourses and to the same degree, they nevertheless seem to have persisted over time and across policy, regardless of which political party was in power.

⁵⁴Education Reform Committee (ERC), 'Democratic and Human Education in the Euro-Cypriot State', *Report of the Educational Reform Committee* (Nicosia: MOEC, 2004).

outcry.⁵⁵ The Ministry of Education issued a circular in August 2008 setting the ‘fostering [of] a culture of peaceful coexistence, mutual respect and cooperation between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots’ as a main educational objective of the school year 2008–2009, stirring heated educational, social and political debates.⁵⁶ The circular was unprecedented in nature, and indeed the then Minister of Education and Culture, Andreas Demetriou, proposed the realisation of the recommendations of the ERC, including changes to the history textbooks. However, fierce hostility and public contestation ensued, with the primary school teachers’ union even asking its members to defy the education targets set by the Ministry, and unsurprisingly, most initiatives were not implemented, including visits between schools of each side.⁵⁷ Thirdly, there was an external development (which demonstrates the events transnational impact): the ‘Repoussi scandal’ (‘to skanthalo me tin Repoussi’), as it was referred to by the interviewees, arose around a new primary school history textbook introduced in Greece in 2006 (and withdrawn a year after), arguably the most intense history textbook debate in both Greece and Cyprus (the book was intended for use in Cyprus too). Its authoring team, led by the academic Maria Repoussi, was fiercely accused of many shortcomings, including ‘concealing the historical truth through painting a rosy picture of the coexistence’ of Greeks and Turks and of belittling or embellishing tragic events, for example by using ‘softer’ terms such as ‘jostling’ or ‘recruitment’ instead of the terms used earlier such as ‘slaughter’ or ‘kidnapping’.⁵⁸

Deconstructing these discourses of resistance reveals a rich pattern of interdiscursive arguments, assumptions and collective fears that involve educational, social, religious, ethical and political aspects, and span the domestic and international level. The four sub-themes deployed to legitimise the dominant political and cultural order regarding history textbook revisions are: ‘loss of national identity’ (I); ‘loss of historical truth’ (II); ‘impact on the conflict’ (III) and ‘serving foreign interests’ (IV). These sub-discourses are interrelated and complement each other; they are mutually reinforcing, and a variation of combinations is possible. The most powerful and effective results come when securitisation is achieved through the use of all the sub-themes, the one building on the other in a pyramid form. The thread that runs across all four themes implicitly or explicitly is the fear of loss of security, both *physical* and *ontological* security. Whereas physical security (security-as-survival) can be seen as distinct from ontological security (security-as-being, as a consistent sense of the Self),⁵⁹ they are strongly interlinked as both are intrinsically

⁵⁵For a detailed study of this initiative, see 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* 6, no. 1 (2011): 53–67.

⁵⁶Ministry of Education and Culture, *Objectives of the School Year 2008–2009* (Nicosia: MOEC, 2008), 1.

⁵⁷European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), *Fourth Report on Cyprus* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2011), parag. 66.

⁵⁸See Maria Repoussi, ‘Politics Questions History Education. Debates on Greek History Textbooks’, *Historical Consciousness – Historical Culture*, Yearbook 2006/7, International Society for History Didactics, (Frankfurt am Main: Wochenschau Verlag), 99–110. Maria Repoussi later changed some of the terminology and stated that she had no intention of insulting the historical memory of those who lived through the Asia Minor Catastrophe and despite some changes the revised version of the book was still not accepted. See also Emre Metin Bilginer, ‘Recent Debates on Greek History Textbooks: The Case of the Contemporary History Textbook for 6th Grades by Maria Repoussi’, *Eckert Beiträge* (2013/2).

⁵⁹According to Steele, ontological security is achieved by traditions, routines and habits which lead to a cohesive and stable understanding of one’s self through a sense of certainty, continuity and order. Brent Steele, *Ontological Security in International Relations: Self-Identity and the IR State* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 43, 51. ‘Nation-states seek ontological security because they want to maintain consistent self-concepts, and the “Self” of states is constituted and maintained through a narrative which gives life to routinized foreign policy actions’ (p. 3). Applied to the context of this study, both individuals

driven by the need to survive.⁶⁰ The survival of the physical 'body' of the state, such as its territory and citizens, cannot be achieved without the existence of discursive practices, i.e. a consistently enacted biographical self-narrative of a state, recognised as such by both its citizens and other states and individuals, 'the intactness of which is equal to its physical endurance'.⁶¹ Anxiety and insecurity, prevalent in the discursive strategies outlined below shed light on the difficulty of effecting change. The difference between the discursive strategies lies in the particular way that the discourses are mobilised and where the emphasis is placed, although the effect is the same in all the cases, i.e. *securitisation* of history textbook revisions.

'Loss of national identity'

The first theme that emerged from the analysis of the resistance discourse is the fear of losing one's identity and of 'ethnic alienation', and has a socio-cultural focus. Potential identity threats are a source of constant and deep concern for Greek Cypriots, and this is related both to the historical context of colonial rule and the anxiety that is related to an unsolved conflict, but also the future. The argument is that history forms part of one's identity and erasing one's history ultimately means losing this identity. So there is an underlying assumption that history textbook revisions *will* erase history, despite the lack of any concrete evidence that this will occur. As an important task of Greek-Cypriot history textbooks has been to reproduce a narrative that would connect the students to their 'origins' and their 'motherland' in mainland Greece, any other historical narrative amounts to 'castrating [this] Hellenic heritage',⁶² threatening the 'purity' of their own culture, and is therefore marginalised. These history textbooks were born through the need for educated but patriotic citizens who would help preserve and protect their ethnic origins. There is a fear of the Self being engulfed by unfamiliar narratives disrupting its ontological security. According to the dominant discourse in Cyprus, the Hellenic identity is essential for Greek culture, heritage and tradition to 'survive' in *time*, and is thus inextricably linked with visions of not just the present but also the future.

This resistance is further strengthened by a denial that there is anything wrong with current history textbooks. There is an insistence that the history taught 'creates a fertile dialogue with other cultures' at the same time as 'cultivating and strengthening our national identity'⁶³ and accusations of ethnic bias or chauvinism are characterised by

and states therefore, feel that their self-identity is threatened when there is a proposed change or disruption to the historical narrative taught in schools.

⁶⁰See Louiza Odysseos, 'Dangerous Ontologies: The Ethos of Survival and Ethical Theorising in International Relations', *Review of International Studies* 28, no. 2 (2002): 403–18; Jennifer Mitzen, 'Ontological Security in World Politics: State Identity and the Security Dilemma', *European Journal of International Relations* 12, no. 2 (2006): 341–70; Steele, 'Ontological Security'; Bahar Rumelili, 'Identity and Desecuritisation: The Pitfalls of Conflating Ontological and Physical Security', *Journal of International Relations and Development* 18, no. 1 (2015): 52–74.

⁶¹Mälksoo, 'Memory', 224.

⁶²'Cyprus History Book Rewrite Sparks Outcry', *Agence France Presse*, 10 December, 2008. <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/cyprus-history-book-rewrite-sparks-outcry.aspx?pageID=438&n=cyprus-history-book-rewrite-sparks-outcry-2008-10-13>.

⁶³Society for the Study of Greek Matters (SSGM), 'The Circular of the Ministry of Education and Culture for the Rapprochement/Reconciliation Measures'. <https://evagorasblog.wordpress.com/2008/09/09/09092008-η-εγκύκλιος-του-υπουργείου-παιδείας/> (September 9, 2008).

academics as ‘unacceptable insults’.⁶⁴ It is important to remember that the current generation was brought up using these textbooks, and that asking them to change this education system is commensurate to asking them to fundamentally question their upbringing, the validity of their long-term understanding of the Self and the Other. As Edward H. Carr notes, ‘[t]he influence of this early unconscious moulding is difficult to exaggerate’.⁶⁵ Insights from psychoanalysis can help us to further comprehend this resistance. After violence, there is what psychoanalysts argue to be an ‘unleashing of primitive anxieties’ and ‘employment of primitive defences’ so when after some time there is an attempt to achieve a change related to the past, people react with ‘dread of a catastrophic loss of equilibrium’.⁶⁶ This equilibrium disruption is key to understanding the fear of lost identity: during the period of adversity, it was this collective equilibrium that acted as a sense of stability amidst chaos, the ‘single anchoring, coherent mental system’ that acted as a coping mechanism, even if knowledge of its existence is subliminal.⁶⁷ There is, therefore, resistance to even the thought of an initiative that will force the disruption of this equilibrium by reconsidering aspects such as core beliefs, self-perceptions, issues of responsibility and guilt, the possibility of letting go; in other words, processing a very difficult past, or in the case of the younger generations, the unlive memory of a difficult past.

‘Loss of historical truth’

The second theme that emerged from the resistance discourse is the fear of loss of ‘historical truth’, and this has both an ethical and an educational focus. There is a persistent belief that the events of the past – and specifically the tragedies that the Greek Cypriots have suffered – will be belittled, distorted or embellished for the sake of pursuing peace. Revising history textbooks was presented as a dangerous and immoral attempt to silence the ‘truth’ of the past. As one of the interviewees pointed out, since the Greek word for ‘truth’ (*alithia*) is derived from the negative prefix ‘*a*’, which means ‘not’ and ‘*lithi*’, which means ‘forgetfulness, oblivion’, then ‘our duty when teaching historical truth is to communicate that which is not forgotten’. In some instances, revisions were associated with the ‘burning’ of our ‘sacred history’, depicted as a dreadful, almost criminal attempt to silence the ‘truth’ of the past and to be avoided at all costs. A quote by Archbishop Chrysostomos II expressed after the Minister of Education and Culture said in 2008 that he was planning to follow the recommendations of the ERC and revise the textbooks is remarkably telling: ‘We will not allow the distortion of history. We shall be totally opposed and will go as far as urging children to throw away such books’.⁶⁸

Within this theme, there is an interdiscursive and transnational/foreign element which draws on the discourse of the ‘Repoussi scandal’ in Greece and was particularly prevalent

⁶⁴Petros Papapolyviou, ‘Η Νεότερη και Σύγχρονη Ιστορία της Κύπρου στα Σχολικά Εγχειρίδια’ [The Modern and Contemporary History of Cyprus in School Textbooks], In *Proceedings of the 10th Conference of the Educational Association of Cyprus on School Textbooks* (Nicosia, 2009), 53.

⁶⁵Edward H. Carr, *The Twenty Years’ Crisis, 1919–1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations* (London: Macmillan, 1940), 134.

⁶⁶Catia Galatariotou, ‘Truth, Memory and the Cypriot Journey Towards a New Past’, in *Cyprus and the Politics of Memory: History, Community and Conflict*, eds. Rebecca Bryant and Yiannis Papadakis (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 242–3, 248.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 248.

⁶⁸‘Archbishop has no place in deciding content of history books’, *Cyprus Mail*, November 11, 2008.

in my interviews with teachers and religious actors, who seemed to be more knowledgeable about it. There is apprehension about history textbook revisions reflecting everything that went 'wrong' with the new history textbook in Greece, and this was referred to in the context of discussions on history content and pedagogies. In fact, this theme reveals important assumptions regarding the nature, content and purpose of history education. Firstly, these discourses reflect what an important role the Greek Cypriots ascribe to history textbooks, viewing them as extremely powerful tools. Secondly, as the following quote illustrates, representations of memory are often presented as fixed and objective historical facts within a modernist lens where there is only a single reality and hence a single narrative that can be scientifically proven, just as the enemy's story is falsified: 'Our history is Greek and this is not negotiable. It cannot change according to the desires and ideological plots and distortions brought by every individual who comes to power.'⁶⁹ Textbook changes, just like the history of the conflict, are perceived within an 'either/or' lens, binary oppositions of 'good' or 'bad' where a change is definitely going to be the latter.

Thirdly, this theme of 'historical truth' exposes assumptions about the perceived purpose of history textbooks. References to the development of skills such as critical thinking or empathy were notable through their absence. Instead, history textbooks are there to be used as tools not just to preserve the national identity as we saw above (theme I), but also to honour national heroes and transmit the traumatic memories of the past. Changing the textbooks was seen as immoral when it came to past heroes and victims, and as one participant put it, 'like adding oil to the fire', causing a second layer of pain to the victims. Another participant said it would be disrespectful to the 'national heroes who sacrificed their lives' for us. In other words, the single narrative needs to be told as a form of tribute to the soldiers who fought in the war. Finally, history textbooks are seen as an important vehicle for pursuing justice. For instance, one elderly woman viewed them as 'a way of transmitting to the students of Cyprus, and to the rest of the world, the harms and atrocities that the Turks have done to us'. This was a prominent issue and is linked to the next theme of the resistance discourse: the impact on the conflict.

'Impact on the conflict'

The third theme that emerged from the discourse of resistance was directly linked to the conflict: it refers to the political repercussions of theme II (losing historical truth), which is fear of losing the chance to achieve justice, and thus, in effect self-sabotaging their own struggle. It has two dimensions: domestic and international. The domestic aspect refers to the impact of changing the history textbooks on the Greek-Cypriot citizens, and the international element on the views of the international community vis-à-vis the conflict (see also quote directly above).

As we have already seen, history textbooks reflected the political goal of the reversal of the status quo to the pre-1974 invasion and the return to the homeland, through the 'I do not forget' struggle. It did not matter that the students did not live through any of the violence and hence had no living memory of these events; in fact, it seemed that this was

⁶⁹SSGM, 'The Circular'.

exactly why it was imperative to keep the 'collective memory' alive. Not doing so would risk the loss of memory and thus, according to the logic of this mantra, lose the momentum and determination to restore justice and regain the lost lands. Deconstructing this position showed that there was an implicit and explicit link to physical security. The logic of the implicit argument is that there would be a loss of patriotism, a loss of determination to fight for one's country that the future soldiers needed in order to be adequately prepared, and hence a negative impact on the security forces of the island, endangering its protection. As one participant put it: 'If we do not teach our children how to be patriots, then how do we expect them to get up and fight if there will be a war?' There is an underlying anxiety that the citizens should always be prepared for war, given that there has not been a peace settlement yet, but more importantly given the insecurity felt with the presence of the Turkish troops (the latter reference was present in all the sources of data). There was also the direct argument that not pursuing justice effectively means upholding and perpetuating the existing insecurity. This amounts to an eternal betrayal: betrayal of past national heroes and struggles, present citizens but also the future generation which will 'continue to experience the occupation of their island'.

As Kizilyürek has noted, a main concern of this historical memory is to 'instrumentalize the past for the political aims of the present and future'.⁷⁰ History textbooks are seen as symbolic elements of achieving justice (what researchers would call transitional justice). Rendering the history textbooks of one side less biased, therefore, was seen within a zero-sum lens where this amounted to a loss on one side and a gain on the other, referred to by one participant as 'historical suicide'. Within this theme there was also reference to the 'Other side' and resentment towards the perceived fact that 'they would not reciprocate any changes'.⁷¹ Furthermore, participants become visibly uncomfortable or resentful when discussing that Turkey is trying to promote an education policy in the northern part that justifies or cements partition of the island.

Another finding was that people felt that it was unacceptable to change the history textbooks before transitional justice (addressing human rights violations) was effectively pursued. So history textbook revisions in this respect not only stand in the way of justice, but could only be considered *after* a political solution. This was not just seen as a matter of justice but also as pedagogically challenging: 'how can I teach students about peace when they see the Turkish flag every morning they wake up and when they know that refugees are still not allowed to go back to their homes?' asked one teacher who lived in Nicosia (the divided capital of Cyprus). The perception is that if history textbooks are changed before an agreed peace settlement, then 'we are selling out our historical truth and struggle for justice while refugees and the relatives of the missing persons continue to suffer the consequences of the invasion'. The 'selling out' phrase refers here to the international dimension. Paradoxically, whilst foreign intervention is strongly despised, at the same time it is to the international community that the discourses refer when discussing human rights violations, and in particular the various UN-brokered peace talks. There is little acknowledgement of any injustice or suffering experienced by the Turkish Cypriots,

⁷⁰Kizilyürek, 'National Memory', 394.

⁷¹Most of the data showed a lack of any knowledge of the Turkish-Cypriot textbooks actually being revised, despite their short-lived use.

but rather a strongly driven moral reason for proving to the international community that the Cyprus conflict was and still is a great injustice against the Greek Cypriots that needs to be undone.⁷² Revising the history textbooks is seen as sabotaging this goal.

‘Serving foreign interests’

The final theme that emerged from the discourse of resistance was the persisting claim that history textbook revisions would serve foreign agendas and interests. Even after probing questions, these foreign interests remain quite vague although some journalists mention the United States, Britain and Germany as the main ‘perpetrators’ when it comes to funding or proposals for textbook revisions.⁷³ Some participants mentioned such peace initiatives as ‘leftist propaganda’ that is part of a transnational left movement. In addition, revisions are sometimes resisted as they are perceived to be part of a wider conspiracy to wipe out the Greek identity and/or associated with the perceived malevolent process of globalisation – an attempt to wipe out national identities into a single global identity. This theme is associated with the fear of loss of ontological security. As one participant exclaimed: ‘history textbook revisions occur in the context of globalisation which is a tsunami that takes away everything it finds in its path’. Another organisation called the ‘Society for the Study of Greek Matters’ posted an online condemnation of any history textbook change referring to a ‘New Order of Things that is being prepared by the international cookhouses.’⁷⁴

After deconstructing the discourse of resistance it becomes clear that by resisting history textbook changes Greek Cypriots also resist the Other; they refuse to acknowledge the existence of other narratives, memories and pains; of plurality as a concept; of a history that is not fixed; of the ability to differentiate between the past and the present; of the possibility of history revisions without them ‘losing’ something, being at physical or ontological risk. They are not just resisting foreign intervention, i.e. the liberal peace, but also resisting change to the de facto equilibrium of their comfort zone.⁷⁵

Securitisation of history textbooks: ‘Don’t touch Achilles’ heel!’

Educational inertia – in this case continued resistance – does not exist *a priori* but is a process that needs to be constantly reproduced and rearticulated. Ultimately, resistance becomes hegemonic by making history textbook revisions impossible through various forms of everyday practices of securitisation: presenting changes to history textbooks as a betrayal of the nationalist struggle and a threat to both physical and ontological security. According to Securitisation Theory, any social entity with adequate authority can position

⁷²These findings coincide with other studies investigating the position of Greek Cypriots regarding reconciliation in general. For a study on Greek-Cypriot teachers’ attitudes, see Michalinos Zembylas, Panayiota Charalambous and Constadina Charalambous, ‘Emerging Stances and Repertoires Towards Reconciliation in Greek-Cypriot Teachers’ Interview Accounts’, *Journal of Peace Education* 8, no. 1 (2011): 19–36.

⁷³See, for example, this article: Michalis Ignatiou, ‘Η Ρεπούση προσβάλλει ξεδιάντροπα την ελληνική ιστορία’ [Repoussi shamelessly insults Greek History], February 2, 2013 <http://www.aixmi.gr/index.php/repoushprosvalleiksediantr/>.

⁷⁴SSGM, ‘The Circular’.

⁷⁵See also Constantinos Adamides and Costas M. Constantinou, ‘Comfortable Conflict and (il)liberal Peace in Cyprus’, in *Hybrid Forms of Peace: From Everyday Agency to Post-Liberalism*, eds. Oliver P. Richmond and Audra Mitchell (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 242–59.

certain ideas, discourses, or problems as 'existential threats' in order to facilitate the implementation of extraordinary policy, in the interests of security.⁷⁶ The security risk that comes with these revisions is one that threatens loss of not just territory (in terms of reclaiming the lost lands but also in the future event of protecting the existing ones) but also of the Self's historical memory, narrative and hence identity.⁷⁷ The acceptance of these norms, arguments and assumptions of the discourses of resistance legitimise 'the consensual and passive transmission of knowledge' just as they present those who do not accept them as 'dysfunctional phenomena', as 'problems' or 'crises' in education.⁷⁸ Therefore, instead of being perceived and appreciated as attempts to shed a critical light on the taken for granted order of things, such initiatives are dismissed as threats that need to be destroyed, to be eradicated so as to protect this security.

This threat construction is an emotional phenomenon, and collective fears, anxieties, and feelings of resentment and anger are 'crucial features of the politics of security' which facilitate securitisation moves.⁷⁹ The fact that history textbook rewrites have not materialised means that the mere idea of such revisions gives rise to gross exaggerations and imaginaries. These securitising acts not only prevent educational change but also further polarise intra-group and inter-group relations, thereby influencing the process of reconciliation. When 'the desire for certainty and predictability in order to ward off anxiety' goes too far taking an approach that rejects plurality and self-reflexivity, then the pursuit of ontological security becomes ethically objectionable insofar as it impedes peacebuilding processes whilst legitimising prejudice and conflict.⁸⁰

A criterion for securitisation is that the securitising move must be enacted by an authoritative entity. Securitisation of the educational identity due to peace education has been presented as a threat for survival by the government, political elites and priests, including the Head of the Church of Cyprus, Archbishop Chrysostomos II. Furthermore, even ordinary people in Cyprus link security – even when this is thought of as military safety – with other seemingly de-politicised issues such as that of education. This shows that the public has responded to the securitisation move. Securitisation not only legitimises the radical subject-positioning within hegemonic discourse and the restriction of discursive space to alternative discourses, but also justifies 'actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure'.⁸¹ This includes social ostracisation, verbal abuse, impending of professional mobility, reverting to even more ethnocentric discourses, humiliation and other violations of human rights of those who promote such history textbook revisions.

Although respect and tolerance do exist in Cyprus, there are limits: they exist only up to the point just before the conflict line. When the conflict is concerned, the people's Achilles heel seems to be hit, and a somewhat aggressive response is perceptible (even in their

⁷⁶Ole Wæver, 'Securitization and Desecuritization', in *On Security*, ed. Ronnie Lipschutz (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 52.

⁷⁷Mälksoo, 'Memory'.

⁷⁸John Eggleston and Denis Gleeson, 'Curriculum Innovation and the Context of the School', in *Identity and Structure: Issues in the Sociology of Education*, ed. Denis Gleeson (Driffield: Nafferton Studies in Education, 1977), 17.

⁷⁹Eric Van Rythoven, 'Learning to Feel, Learning to Fear? Emotions, Imaginaries, and Limits in the Politics of Securitization', *Security Dialogue* 46, no. 5 (2015): 458–75.

⁸⁰Christopher S. Browning, 'Ethics and Ontological Security', in *Ethical Security Studies: A New Research Agenda*, eds. Jonna Nyman and Anthony Burke (Routledge: New York, 2016), 166.

⁸¹Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde, *Security*, 24.

body language there are sudden changes), demonstrating a completely different persona necessitated by the conditions in which (s)he operates. The setting is perceived to change and they enter a 'defensive' mode in order to protect themselves from possible attack. This logic reproduces securitisation practices as both normalised and necessary. This affects not only the private but also the public sphere, reducing the discursive space to which everyone is entitled in an open democratic society.

Brought together under the framework of the 'securitisation of history textbooks', the four themes discussed above are useful for capturing the dynamics which make this resistance possible, framing history revisions as an existential threat, wielding the securitisation capabilities that they do. This framework also shows how the securitisation of peace education makes 'possible' its marginalisation.

Conclusion

The Cyprus case serves to illustrate the sheer extent to which a society can affect and be affected by discussions over *proposed* history textbook revisions. Existing research acknowledges that it is difficult to revise history textbooks when these are used as tools by governments to legitimise their authority. However, as we have seen, such state-centric approaches tend to overlook the decentralised resistance to peace education and cannot explain why history textbook revisions have still not materialised even when there is a related change, such as a more pro-reconciliation government or Education Minister.

Deconstructing these discourses of resistance reveals a rich pattern of interdiscursive arguments, assumptions and collective fears that involve socio-cultural, educational, ethical and political aspects, and span the domestic and international level. In doing so, it has provided new theoretical and empirical leverage on the phenomenon of history textbook inertia in divided societies and its relationship to in(security). Ideological ethnic aspirations are still heavily imbued in the psyche of the Greek Cypriots who have made their shared trauma of the Turkish invasion and its consequences a marker of their present-day identity. Losing this identity essentially means losing a sense of the Self. This intensifies 'a sense of both victimization and entitlement'⁸² whilst attempts to revise history textbooks are viewed as a threat to this marker, producing a collective state of anxiety that makes securitisation of both physical and ontological security possible. Past traumas are part of a 'black box' that few people want to open, to deal with, let alone to consciously alter beliefs, narratives and attitudes towards them. History textbook revision is perceived by some as acquiescing to an act of betrayal, and by others as a distortion of the past to serve the interests of peace and political correctness. It is exactly this appreciation of the importance, power and danger of history that ordinary citizens also exhibit in their resistance towards changing history textbooks. Debates are controversial because they are about power and control; whoever controls the present, will control the teaching of the past which also affects the future. There is a deep suspicion that whoever will be given responsibility of making the revisions will do so in pursuit of certain political (and foreign) agendas. Another finding is that Greek Cypriots see the revision of history textbooks as detrimental to their bargaining power vis-à-vis the conflict.

⁸²Vamik D. Volkan, *Bloodlines: From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 135.

While they emphasise that they cannot allow such revisions until there is a solution, they fail to understand that the education system is a significant impediment to ‘solving’ the Cyprus Problem in the first place.

Deconstructing this resistance, regardless of whether or not it is perceived as ill-founded, can help to better understand and potentially address such concerns. It can also be seen as a first step towards *desecuritis*ing textbook revisions, an extremely difficult undertaking, but one that is facilitated by a constructive approach that tries to bridge the gap between the positive and negative discourse. The current state of affairs whereby peoples’ fears and insecurities are dismissed on the one hand, and textbook revisions are distorted on the other hand, merely leads to the same ‘narrow worn out paths’ that the participant of the First Universal Peace Congress urged us to give up more than a century ago. Deconstructing the resistance is also useful in that it exposes the contingency of these discourses and hence opens up ways of transforming them, without having to directly deal with or solve wider conflict issues first (e.g. sovereignty or territoriality).⁸³

A further step towards desecuritisation is related – somewhat paradoxically – to the ‘abstractness’ that comes with this resistance, i.e. to the way in which the lack of a concrete history textbook, is (ab)used to securitise peace education. In the absence of a new textbook that can be evaluated, peoples’ imaginations and visualisations of how new textbook pages could look like often run wild, reflecting what is for them the worst-case scenario. But this situation also provides a source of optimism: there is currently an untapped potential for clarifying and strengthening the positive peace education discourse. What is missing is not just a concrete example of a new textbook but also the visualisation of positive scenarios where revised textbooks can mean *improved* textbooks for all of the sides concerned. Highlighting existing common ground can be conducive to this: for example, that regardless of the nature of any future political solution, the only way that people will be able to achieve a sustainably peaceful society is if they learn how to live together and unlearn how to hate or fear each other. Past examples of history textbook revisions have exacerbated existing fears and alienated those who perceive them to be an insult to the ‘historical truth’, as well as polarising intra-group relations. Policy makers and researchers need to exercise caution regarding the framing and content of such initiatives, and contribute to the articulation of new discourses through which peace education is seen not as a threat but as an enhancement of one’s security. It is also important where possible to involve the various stakeholders in new initiatives, so that it becomes an organic, transparent, bottom-up project where people do not feel excluded. It is more likely for securitising actors’ own insecurities to be reduced when they feel they are part of the process, thereby having a ripple effect on the audience. Another consideration should be that it is much easier to prevent resistance by framing a policy carefully than trying to reverse or lessen it later. Given the continuing importance of history textbooks in divided societies, and that they are probably the only history books

⁸³This is by no means a simple undertaking, but it is important to take advantage of the small windows of opportunity in order to breathe some fresh air of momentum in to the current educational stagnation. Indeed, issues of identity, sovereignty, military security, territoriality etc. form inadvertently part of the wider conflict discourse (from which textbook discourse cannot be detached), but it is arguably possible to start a progressive move of textbook revision away from the realm of urgency that comes with securitisation without necessarily dealing with them first. In other words, in terms of the education argument, rather than attempting to transform identity perceptions, one first more plausible step would be to first reshape how people visualise these revisions and what they would entail, thereby addressing some of the existing fears and concerns.

that some (if not most) people will ever read, this area merits further attention by interdisciplinary scholars of peace and conflict studies.

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ORCID

Eleni Christodoulou  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-3865-1904>

Notes on contributor

Eleni Christodoulou is a postdoctoral research fellow and coordinator of the research field Peace and Conflict at the Georg Eckert Institute (GEI) for International Textbook Research in Germany. She received a PhD in Political Science (funded by the ESRC) on the 'Politics of Peace Education' from the University of Birmingham, UK. She was also among the lead authors of the UNESCO Guide on Embedding ESD in Textbooks for Sustainable Development, and has worked with government bodies, national and international organisations on issues related to Target 4.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals. She has also worked as a History and Politics teacher at the secondary school level. Currently, she is leading a project on preventing violent extremism through education, funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research.