A New Conflict? The Religious Dimension of the Rising Tension Between Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots.

MUSTAFA SAVOGLU

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Abstract

This thesis aims to investigate the *reddediyoruz* demonstrations that took place in the Northern Cyprus in 2016. As Turkey seems to be moving towards a totalitarian Islamist regime, this research aims to study the relation between the Turkish Cypriot community and Turkey. It seems that the relations between the two parties have been tense since the intention of Turkey to open a coordination office in North Cyprus to control the youth, sports and cultural activities with a power over the Turkish Cypriot institutions. The research explores the religious dimension of the tension between the two parties. Results have shown that the main concern of the demonstrations have been the Islamist policies of Turkey on Turkish Cypriots along with granting Turkey an unrestricted power over certain Turkish Cypriot institutions.

Key words: North Cyprus, Religion, Conflict, Turkey, Reddediyoruz, Policies

Contact: msavoglu@gmail.com

I.   A Historical Background of Cyprus and the Problem

Cyprus has been a divided island since 1974. As a multicultural, multi-ethnic, multilingual and multi-religious island, the Cypriot communities were, in fact, segregated based on their religious identities long before the division in 1974. This segregation dates back to the Ottoman period when the *millet* system was also used in the island, where the people were divided into *millets* based on their religious identity. This system, first, divided the society into Muslims and non-Muslims; for the non-Muslims in Cyprus, Greek Orthodox Church was in charge, and therefore it held a representative role of the Hellenic population too. This, rather passive political power of the Church then strengthened the role of the Church in the Hellenic population of Cyprus. In 1960, when Cyprus gained its independence from the United Kingdom, the first President of the Republic of Cyprus, not by coincidence, was the Archbishop Makarios and the Vice-president, who was a member of the Turkish Cypriot community, was Dr. Fazıl Küçük. Despite Makarios, who has not only been a political leader but a religious leader too, Dr. Küçük was a secular politician who was turned to the West as a Kemalist since the reforms of Atatürk in Turkey to secularize and Westernize the Turkish Society was also accepted by the Turkish Cypriots.

The above-mentioned differences became more obvious after the independence of the island, and the rising Greek and Turkish nationalism in Cyprus resulted in the failure of the two communities to construct a common national identity. This failure is explained in the best way possible by Niyazi Kızılyürek as in the following quotation:

> *"The two communities` dependence on the corresponding mainlands resulted in the denial of state-building within Cyprus and the development of two mutually exclusive ethnocultural communities. Cyprus was not perceived as a self-contained territory, in which an independent state could be created, but as a piece of territory, which assumes meaning only as a part of the `supra-family` of the Greek and/or Turkish nation."*[1]

The complex issue of the state and nation building in Cyprus did not, however, come to an end after the division of the island in 1974. Ever since the island has been divided, the state and the nation-building process has been reshaped for Turkish Cypriots too. Although Turkish Cypriots declared their independence in 1983 and established the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), which became a partially recognized republic (recognized only by Turkey), this did

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[1] Kizilyurek and Gautier qtd. in Constadina Charalambus, *Learning the language of 'The Other' in Conflict-Ridden Cyprus: Exploring Barriers and Possibilities*, in Hillary A. Footit & Michael Kelly (eds.), *Languages and the Military: Alliances, Occupation and Peace Building*, London 2012.

not deconstruct the flow of the ideologies on the identity of the Turkish Cypriot community as being part of the big Turkish nation. Not too long after the establishment of the Turkish Republic of North Cyprus (TRNC), the Turkish Cypriots faced a second failure of state and nation building, thus the Turkish Cypriots fell into the depression of national identity. This second failure, since the TRNC is yet to be recognized, resulted in the self-despair in the Turkish Cypriot community that led to the fact that their state became a *"front organization"* of Turkey. The issues related to the recognition of the republic left no choice to the Turkish Cypriots, but to lose their faith in the state as the majority could not establish almost any bounds with their state; the unrecognition of the republic and the embargos brought to lack of the means for bounding an individual with a state or nation such.

After briefly discussing the internal struggles of the Turkish Cypriot identity, external factors must be underlined too; North Cyprus has been receiving immigrants from the so-called "motherland" -referring to Turkey- since the division of the island in 1974. Those who were already residing in the island before the war in 1974 can be considered as 'indigenous' Turkish Cypriots (TCs), and those who arrived in the island after 1974 are the ones that are referred as *Türkiyeli* -meaning the one who comes from Turkey- by the TCs. Although such line is not strict and can be defined in various different ways by the others, it is important to underline that the bottom line for being a Turkish Cypriot, in a sense that is perceived by the TCs, is not parallel to the citizenship of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), but rather being able to have the Cypriot citizenship that is granted by the Republic of Cyprus, where the main requirement is to be born in Cyprus before 1974, or if after and is born in the North, then to descend from Cypriot parents/grandparents.

After 1974 Turkish governments and TC leader(s)/governments agreed on populating the empty Greek Cypriot villages in North Cyprus by the settlers from Turkey and increasing the population of the Turkish Cypriot community with the objective of speeding up the process of the Turkification of the TCs and their integration to their motherland. Whether the given reasons were declared openly or not is debatable, but when we look at the case today, the reasons given above are more than obvious. Moreover, the migration from Turkey to North Cyprus has not been stopped even today and is used as a political power by Turkey over North Cyprus. For instance, the close ties between the Turkish governments and the Turkish migrants who are living in North Cyprus grant Turkey a power on the elections, as most of the Turkish governments point out a political party to be supported in North Cyprus.

Rauf R. Denktash, who was an important Turkish Cypriot politician and the founder of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), stated his famous sentence *"there is no such thing as Cypriot, the only true Cypriots are Cyprus Donkey"* in different interviews, platforms and every opportunity possible. According to Denktash, Cyprus was populated by Greeks and Turks who were living next to each other, but never to be considered as a nation. As he considered Turkish Cypriots brothers of the Turkish people from Anatolia, he also claimed that there is no difference between a Turkish from Anatolia and a Turkish from Cyprus in terms of language, culture, religion, etc.

Declining the existence of a Turkish Cypriot identity and considering it as part of the Great Turkish Nation, and also considering the Anatolian people same as the Turkish Cypriots, resulting in a problem of an unintegrated Turkish community in North Cyprus. Firstly, the Turkish Cypriots failed to institutionalize their national identity. This failure then led to the failure of policies; North Cyprus failed and still fails to produce any policies on the integration of the immigrants, which is not a surprise considering that the confusion of "who Turkish Cypriots are" also created the lack of a national or communal identity in which the immigrants could be integrated to. Thus, not only the Turkish Community but none of the other ethnicities are going under an official integration period.

Already, in 2004, when Turkish Cypriots voted for the reunification of the island in a referendum which was rejected by the Greek Cypriots, in certain Turkish Cypriot campaigns, one can observe slogans referring Turkey as an occupying force in Cyprus. It is also true that there has been a discourse on Turkish Population being sent back to Turkey with ships, which today became a metaphoric statement of the 2000s. Even today, the number of those immigrants who arrived after 1974 are being negotiated at the negotiation tables and thousands are expected to be sent back in case of a settlement. The given evidence also stress the unknown and problematic place of the Turkish community in North Cyprus.

After the failed referendum, relations between Turkey and TRNC did not improve, however, the tension was high in different periods. Only ten years after the referendum, in 2014, the Turkish and Greek Cypriot leaders signed a joint declaration that is considered as the basis of a future settlement in Cyprus. A paragraph from the declaration is worth a closer look;

"The status quo is unacceptable, and its prolongation will have negative consequences for the Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. The leaders affirmed that a settlement would have a positive impact on the entire

region, while first and foremost benefiting Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots, respecting democratic principles, human rights, and fundamental freedoms, as well as each other's distinct identity and integrity and ensuring their common future in a united Cyprus within the European Union."[2]

While the paragraph can be reviewed different from the Greek Cypriot perspective, when it comes to the Turkish Cypriot front, it is very clear that by declaring the current status quo unacceptable, they declared TRNC as unacceptable too. Whereas TRNC was founded despite the Greek Cypriots to provide an independent state for Turkish Cypriots in Cyprus. Thus, we can see that there is a will in the TC community for a change in Cyprus. However, the main question here to be asked is; what made/makes Turkish Cypriots after all the struggles they have gone through to want a reunification with the Greek Cypriots? Why does the Turkish Cypriot community not wish for a reunification with the motherland or to be recognized as an independent state? Is this related to a disappointment of the Turkish Policies in North Cyprus? Or is there a disappointment caused by the expected sameness in terms of being Turkish?

In 2016 Summer, there was an agreement to be signed by the Turkish government and the TC government to open a coordination office in North Cyprus which would control and manage the youth, sports, and cultural activities in North Cyprus. This was strongly rejected by the civils in North Cyprus, a platform called *Reddediyoruz* 'We Reject' was founded by some activists, and later became a platform supported by numerous NGOs, civil society organizations and political parties which became to be the organizing committee of the big demonstration against Turkey and its government. I personally had the opportunity to observe the events closely and there has been a great promotion of Turkish Cypriot identity trying to cross the line between Turkish and Turkish Cypriot. This includes promoting Turkish Cypriot dialect in written and spoken form, cultural elements such as food (halloumi, kolokas, molehiya), songs, dances, etc. While being peaceful the events strengthened the gap between the TCs and Turkish immigrants in Cyprus. The relations since then have been very tense between the two communities.

In 2018 already, there was a newly established political party joining the general elections in North Cyprus in January which is named as Reborn Party (ideology: Turkish Nationalism). This party was established by those who are Turkish citizens (and even their

[2] *Joint declaration for a future settlement in Cyprus* signed on 11th February 2014, Retrieved on 2018 May 6th from http://www.uncyprustalks.org/11-february-2014-joint-declaration-on-cyprus/

TRNC citizenship is under investigation for not being legal) and they identify themselves as the voice of the Turkish immigrants in Cyprus. This party currently holds 2 seats out of 50 in the TC parliament which is an important number. Right after the elections where Reborn Party was subject of being in a coalition with the National Unity Party, Turkey started its olive branch operation to Afrin. In February 2018 when a Turkish Cypriot newspaper called *Afrika* criticized Erdogan for entering Afrin and calling the "Olive branch operation" *an occupation like in North Cyprus*. The same day Erdogan called the 'Northern Cypriots' -so not the Turkish Cypriots- to give the necessary punishment to the newspaper and the reaction that they deserve. The Turkish Community gathered in front of the newspaper the next day and attacked the building. Not only the building but to the TC President who has been there to observe the events. The same group also attacked the TC parliament and put a Turkish flag and a Turkish party flag to the top of the parliament. Following these events, same night TCs marched in front of the parliament and again this demonstration was supported by different political parties and organizations, NGOs, etc. Nicosia suddenly witnessed a police force being the border between the TCs and the Turkish immigrants or maybe, in this case, the settlers living in Cyprus.

As mentioned in the two examples above today there is a very high tension between the Turkish population and Turkish Cypriots in North Cyprus and between Turkish Cypriots and the Turkish government. Nicosia has its walled city functioning as a ghetto of Turkish immigrants, there are schools whose pupils are only Turkish immigrants with no exception of Turkish Cypriots, therefore one cannot talk about integration at any level**.** My research interest is to study the Turkish Population in North Cyprus and the image of Turkey in Turkish Cypriot society. In this research, I would like to study the rising tension between the Turkish Cypriots and the Turkish government, hence I chose to study the *Reddediyoruz* demonstrations. My main research question is; what are the religious dimensions of the *Reddediyoruz* demonstrations?

Sub-questions:

- Is the conservative/Islamist attitude of the Turkish Government perceived as a threat by Turkish Cypriots to their identity? If this is the case, then what is the ground of it, and does this threat strengthen the Turkish Cypriot national identity?

- Does this intercommunal conflict bring the Greek and the Turkish Cypriot communities closer? And does it anyhow effect the approach of the Turkish Cypriots to a settlement?

II.   Collection of Data and Methodology

The research questions of this thesis will be answered mainly by the data collected from the social media; namely the Facebook page of the *Reddediyoruz* platform. The Facebook comments of the people commenting on the posts of the platform will be analyzed through discourse analysis. Discourse analysis is the analysis of the patterns of the people's statements according to their social backgrounds[3]. One would structure consciously or unconsciously his/her language according to his/her social life, and discourse analysis is the method that focuses on these patterns in order to analyze them.

Given the fact that discourse analysis is the method that analyzes the vocabulary, grammar, or semantics that we use, it is important to stress such expressions as 'point of view' and 'perspective'. A certain phenomenon would be described by the person according to their political discourse, social background, etc. depending on what has been interpreted. Having said that, it must be noted that our interpretation of things should not be treated as the single and the objective fact[4]. Bourdieu (1991) also argues that in social sciences, regardless of the field we are working on, it is important to understand that one can never ever be fully natural or objective, also, the words and the concepts can construct the reality, even if it does not exist at all[5]. Therefore, there are always differences between the reality and the interpretation of it. This is where we can apply the discourse analysis method in order to focus on how a certain phenomenon can be perceived by groups, individuals, etc. In the light of this knowledge, I am going to analyze the Facebook comments to figure out what are the main concerns of the activists regarding the coordination office. Although using Facebook can have some disadvantages, I believe that there could not have been a better platform where the reactions of the people could be collected to be analyzed.

After Facebook comments, I am going to analyze the two videos that were prepared by the *Reddediyoruz* with the aim that they would promote the demonstrations and spread the word. The analysis of the video will be focusing on how the Turkish Cypriot identity is presented. After the visual sources, I am going to represent you with a questionnaire conducted by me and an interview conducted by a local television in North Cyprus. Unfortunately, I did not have the

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[3] Jørgensen M. & Phillips L. *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, London: Sage Publications (2002).

[4] Gergen qtd in Jørgensen and Phillips 2002 Jørgensen M. & Phillips L. *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, London: Sage Publications (2002).

[5] Bourdieu P. *Language and Symbolic Power*, Harvard University Press (1993).

opportunity to go for a field trip where I could conduct interviews myself. Considering people's busy working schedule, it was not possible to conduct online interviews. However, as an alternative, I could only manage to receive answers from an activist of the platform and since I am aware of the limitations of one questionnaire, additionally I am going to present my analysis on an interview that the two of the *Reddediyoruz* representatives conducted with the local television. This way, I hope to bring out some more information about the main concerns of the platform, try to understand where the question of religion is situated in these demonstrations. Finally, at the end of the analysis, I will present a critical discourse analysis of two online articles. I aim to enrich my findings by including the representation of the demonstrations in the media.

III. Turkish Community in North Cyprus

How the relations between the Turkish Cypriots and the Turkish newcomers make a direct impact on how Turkey is perceived by the Turkish Cypriots. The failed integration of the Turkish community in North Cyprus can also be considered as a signal of rather a negative image of Turkey in North Cyprus. We quite often hear the discussion on the Turkish community living in North Cyprus, place and the people can change but the problem and the questions remain; - Who are the Turkish People in North Cyprus and where should they be placed in the Turkish Cypriot Society? The above-mentioned failure of the state-building and the idea of '*no difference'* between the Turkish Cypriots and the Turkish community caused in producing no policy at all or very weak policies on culture, identity and integration in North Cyprus, and it resulted in a vicious circle that having no or very weak policies causes the problem of not finding a definition and a place for the Turkish Community in the Turkish Cypriot Community as the two communities do have obvious dialectal, religious and cultural differences.

Today, the Turkish Community can be referred with several different names and definitions in official and political discourses. In my collection which may be expanded, these names are *settlers, immigrants* and *Türkiyeli, Northern Cypriot.* Every single label fosters a political ideology behind as the Turkish community in North Cyprus is highly politicized by Turkey, Northern Cyprus, and Southern Cyprus. It is not a coincidence that the question of the Turkish community is a negotiation topic for the reunification talks. As a result of this, the Annan Plan which was rejected by the Greek Cypriots in 2004 has a detailed regulation on Residence of Greek and Turkish nationals. This explanation limits the number of the Turkish and Greek nationals to the 5% and cannot be exceeded[6]. The word *settler* is a discourse mainly used by the Greek Cypriots and it refers to anyone who came to Cyprus after 1974 is considered as a *settler* by the Greek Cypriot political discourse. As they are considered to be illegally residing in the occupied area and even if they were born in North Cyprus, they cannot be granted the Cypriot Citizenship.

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[6] *The Comprehensive Settlement of The Cyprus Problem*, 2004. Retrieved on 2018 April 10th from https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/Annan_Plan_MARCH_30_2004.pdf

IV.   Analysis of the Social Media Sources

In this chapter, an analysis of the collected data based on the primary sources will be presented. One of the most important sources of data that had been collected is the Facebook page of *Reddediyoruz* platform. The Facebook page is liked by 7,735[7] people and is open for comments and posts by anyone. The following data is going to be analyzed to find out whether this demonstration(s) foster a religious conflict; what are the fears and the concerns of the TCs and how does this impact the TC identity. The chosen post is a post that received one of the most comments, likes, and shares. However, the reason of choosing this specific post and its comments to be analyzed is also related to the fact that post has an attachment of a sample protocol, from which people can be more inspired to express their opinion.

The following post is published on the 12th of July 2016, only two days after the first demonstrations of *Reddediyoruz*. The post says "*Have a look at what are the programmes and projects of the Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Youth and Sports that TRNC will be choosing from! Please pay close attention to the Prayer schedule! Please share and spread it!*" The attached document in the post is the protocol signed between the Ministry of Youth and Sport and the Presidency of Religious Affairs in Turkey. As it is stated in the aims of the protocol, the main goal of this cooperation is to contribute the moral and spiritual development of the youth[8]. Therefore, the protocol underlines various religious activities that would possibly contribute in the moral and spiritual development of the youth in Turkey, however, the same protocol could also be used if the coordination office would start its duty in North Cyprus. The platform shares this post with the intention to show what sort of activities are to be expected. The *reddediyoruz* platform uploaded the document underlining such clauses as Qur'an courses to be offered, religious trips, school schedules to be set according to prayer time (Namaz) etc. In the description of the post, the platform calls the close attention of its followers to the pray times which is again a religious element. As it can be observed in this post there is an obvious concern of the platform in terms of religion and religion-related activities.

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[7] Retrieved on 2018 May 13th from https://www.facebook.com/ReddediyoruzKibris/
[8] Protocol signed between Ministry of Youth and Sport and the Presidency of Religious Affairs in Turkey on February 26, 2015, retrieved on 2018 May 11th from
https://www.facebook.com/ReddediyoruzKibris/photos/pcb.1408117289489818/1408117172823163/?type=3&theater

The aforementioned post received thirty-two comments and fifteen out of thirty-two comments have at least one word, which is related to religion. I chose to go through all the comments from the first to the last one.

“Wake up Cypriots wake up.”

“Are these people crazy or what…”

“so sad”

“Excellent, for a prayerful youth yay!”

“Under the supervision of a tutor forced prayer how beautiful (there is no forcing in religion)”

“Are the tutors under this ministry expected to comply with this program too…”

"First, let's see the children of those in these camps and courses who signed this protocol and then the children of those whoever accepted this"

[9] *Figure I.*

The first comment calls "Cypriots" to act against the protocol by saying 'wake up', the commenter uses the word "Cypriots" and not "Turkish Cypriots". The second comment clearly expresses that the protocol is not anything ordinary and it appears as an insane action. The third comment expresses a sadness in the given problem and the expression used also bears a fearful meaning. The fourth commenter uses a sarcastic approach to the topic and apart from using icons he emphasizes the absurdity of the protocol. The fifth commenter is specifically concerned about the enforcement of the prayer which also indicates that he assumes such religious practices is not welcomed by the majority of Turkish Cypriots as he underlines that this would be only an enforcement of the religion and religion should have no enforcement. The sixth commenter (it is the same commenter as the second commenter) tries to underline her disappointment on the authorities who would enforce this program. The seventh commenter expresses his anger against the authorities and whoever would be involved in enforcing the given activities.

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[9] Retrieved on 2018 May 6th from *https://www.facebook.com/ReddediyoruzKibris/posts/*

Mehmet Şah Davulcu Çok tehlikeli şeylerr 👍 1	*"Very dangerous stuff"*
Like · Reply · 1y	
Serap Kasaboğlu Yuh artık 👍 1	*"Hooting"*
Like · Reply · 1y	
Asil Yahi Dj rab is başında... 🙂	*"DJ Rab is on duty"*
Like · Reply · 1y	
Murat Beyit Özcevher #tasvipetmiyoruz #onayvermiyoruz #istemiyoruz #kabuletmiyoruz #çünküKIBRISLIYIZ #REDDEDIYORUZZZ GABISH	*"#wedonotapprove #wedonotconfirm #wedonotwantit #wedonotacceptit #beacauseWEARECYPRIOTS #werejectit"*
Like · Reply · 1y	
Salih Spurs Emirali Demek sporcularimiz seriat olimpiyatlarinda yarisacak. 👍 2	*"So, now our athletes will be competing at Sharia Olympics"*
Like · Reply · 1y	
Serdar Demirdoven En çok kafayı kim keserse 👍 1	*"Whoever cuts the most head off"*
Like · Reply · 1y	
🙂 Write a reply... 😊 📷 GIF 🎟	*-Untranslatable, a very slang way of saying "they are over the boundaries".*
Mustafa Kemal Alpler Rahmedliyi sıçırtdılar..	

[10] *Figure II.*

As the comments continue, we can see more people reacting on religious aspects of the problem, yet there are no other arguments on why such protocol is or expectedly would be bad and threatful for the Turkish Cypriots. The first comment of figure II, which is the continuation of figure I, uses the word '*dangerous*' which presumably refers to the fact that religion is put in a position to be forced upon the youth whereas the second commenter remains speechless by expressing 'hoots'. The third comment might be one of the most interesting ones. The Turkish Cypriot dialect uses DJ as a pejorative title for people who are up to a show but in fact, they are not important at all. The commenter uses this title in front of *Rab,* which is an Arabic loanword in Turkish and it refers to the God. In this case, the comment can be even perceived as an insulting comment for the Islamic Religion. However, as we can see he has not received any reaction from none of the sides. The fourth comment is a comment with hashtags only. The commenter uses second person plural for his statements, he makes it very clear he is absolutely against the coordination office to be established. However, while all the hashtags mean something about rejecting and/or not accepting the protocol and the coordination office, only

one hashtag states a reason for rejection; "*because we are Cypriots*". The commenter uses the capital letters to emphasize his pride for being Cypriot. Moreover, the commenter does not feel the need of using '*Turkish*' as an identification in front of Cypriot. Finally, the commenter ends his conversation with the hashtag of *Reddediyoruz* which means '*we reject*'.

The following comments are rough comments with rather Islamophobic humor. The commenter uses a language that rather expresses an inferiority for being religious because if the given protocol is enforced, the athletes will become more religious and instead of going to Olympics they can compete for sharia laws. In fact, his argument is very clear. The commenter assumes that a conservative policy on sports would bring the existing sports' level to an end. The additional comment that was made right under this comment is, perhaps, more interesting. The commenter radicalizes Islam by joining the sense of humor of the previous commenter. He brings into discussion one of the most well-known stereotypes; Muslims cut heads. Although sharia law is mentioned here, when we look at the entire context of the comment, one can easily see that comment tries to express that being a conservative Muslim would mean violence and is bad by using the humor that sharia is about taking lives. Finally, the last comment of this section is a Turkish Cypriot expression which means that there are no words left to say for this ridiculousness.

¹¹ *Figure III.*

"Sports and Religion can only be together in these people's mentality!!! Also, there is no force in religion!! They'll make us put something on that does not even suit us!!!"

"Every like count as a rejection"

"Are these buggers going to turn our youth into bigots… Let me leave before I start swearing. And the authorities are not awake yet. Since their pockets are filled, ignorance is on stage. They're all sold out."

"Fuck off"

"A lot of bigots will be appearing"

"What the heck is this!!! They'll soon order the women to cover themselves"

"We are trying to develop while these people are selling the remaining part of the island thinking that they're developing"

"You people are you joking us all, where does it say Cyprus or isn't TRNC aware of TR's interior agreements, are you trying to make us buy this, from now on the best is the infidel"

The first comment emphasizes that sports and religion cannot be engaged as he says, "*sports and religion can only be together in these people's mentality*" the commenter expresses an anger through the Turkish government by '*these people*'. Then the commenter goes ahead and states that the religion cannot be forced upon people. However, especially the last part of the comment bares numerous conflicts. First, the commenter uses "*us*" referring to a collective identity which in this case, presumably, refers to the Turkish Cypriots. Therefore, he draws a line between the group that he identifies himself with and the group that is the 'others'. Second, as he talks about of '*us*', he also believes that Islam is not a religion for them and the values of Islam do not suit with their identity as he uses the metaphor "*They'll make us put something on that does not even suit us*". The verb in the original Turkish sentence refers to a cloth to be put on.

The second comment is a support towards the platform and does not have any religious discourse. However, the third comment is an accusatory comment as the commenter does not

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¹¹ Retrieved on 2018 May 15th from https://www.facebook.com/ReddediyoruzKibris/photos/.

express any concerns related to the protocol aiming to create a conservative youth, but it accuses the people in charge for aiming to turn the youth into bigots by saying *"Are these buggers going to turn our youth into bigots"*. The rest of the commenter's words refer to the authorities in North Cyprus, namely the government in 2016, who would accept such office to oversee the youth and culture activities in North Cyprus. The commenter also uses a strong expression towards the authorities which can be considered as an accusation that the authorities are remaining silent because they are corrupt and sold out. The fourth commenter uses an expression that expresses his anger towards the office. The fifth commenter mentions the word *bigots* as in the previous comment and she is convinced that the given protocol is going to result at having a bigot society in the future. The sixth comment is no different from the other comment in terms of the meaning. However, there is again a connection made by the commenter between being religious and suppressive. The commenter perceives the opening of an office, which would have such protocol in its background, as a threat to the religion as he expresses that *'soon women will be forced to wear hijab'*. The same commenter adds another comment where he uses *'we'* and *'these people'* where the use of *we* supposedly refer to the civil and the use of *these people* refers the Turkish Cypriot governments. He also refers to the division of the island he uses *'the remaining parts'*. Therefore, he sees North Cyprus as a part that could remain under the control of the Turkish Cypriots and it is now subject to be sold to the Turkish government. The last commenter of the section is an opposition to the *Reddediyoruz* platform. He tries to stress that this uploaded protocol document in the post is not part of the office to be opened. He also expresses his anger towards to the other commenters and the platform by saying that *"from now on the best is the infidel"*. Although it is an opposition, he also chooses to connect these discussions to religion by using the word *infidel* which is a word used in Turkish to humiliate someone's moral values or even if it is said in the most positive way possible, it still fosters a deep othering meaning.

"Damn it those who signed this and the bigots"

"Who is going to join these? Mosques, prayers, give up. First, fix the government, fix the roads, hospitals, and clinics, put some order there, then come up with this stuff!"

"This is an internal agreement for Turkey, the protocol to be signed with Cyprus is different. This is a regulation demanded by the parents in Turkey, it has nothing to do with here. But you just aim to create perception and slander, so every way to do so is licit for redçis"

"Comments including swearing words will be removed, friends. Reddediyoruz practices its demonstrations within the frame of respect. Thank you for your understanding.

"We reject!"

"Which respect? Is there any respect left

¹² *Figure IV.*

As the discussion continues, we can see more and more concerns about the religious suppression in Turkey. The first comment uses the *bigots* again which puts the concerns of the religion being used as an element to manipulate the society. The second comment opposes a question asking that who would ever join the activities and the trips mentioned in the most. He then calls the authorities to give up talking about mosques or the Namaz schedules as it is a waste of time, and he asks for some better infrastructure in the country. As he lists his priorities, he also shows that religion is a non-important element of his life, therefore he expects no service in respect to that. The third comment is opposing the given post and saying that the platform uses an irrelevant document to impose their will on people. While he is correct at the fact that the document was a sample of an internal protocol from Turkey, the commenter is wrong that the platform had tried to use this document to manipulate people. Because the platform opposes the opening of a coordination office of Turkey in North Cyprus which would oversee the sport, youth and culture activities. So, if such agreement would have been signed between the TC government and the Turkish government the protocol that was attached in the

post could be realized in North Cyprus if the Turkish authorities would approve. Therefore, the post intended to draw people's attention to the danger of making such an agreement with Turkey. The rest of the opposing comment then blames the supporters of *reddediyoruz* (by referring to them as *redçi*) for playing an unfair game.

The following comment is done by the platform itself in order to warn people to use a careful language. The importance of the comment for this thesis is that the analyzed comments have been the comments that were not erased by the platform. More precisely the comments, that had any sort of swear words in it, had been removed by the admins of the page, and whatever was seen as no danger remained under the post. The fifth comment is again to show a support towards the platform whereas the sixth comment is a reply to the platforms post regarding the bad language used comments. The last commenter draws a line between 'us' and 'them' which shows how fanatic the commenter is about his comment. Interestingly, he says '*after all*' which rather expresses a feeling of being fed up with this topic, and he expresses that the other side, here supposedly referring to the Turkish government, shows no sign of respect towards the Turkish Cypriots.

"It is like they are calling the youth to believe, I cannot understand since when we, the Cyprioots, became over religious and they are trying to make the young people religious. I do not understand what this thing about Presidency of Religious affairs is, sorry."

"You Cyprioots seriously became infidel))"

"It is better than being a bigot"

"Being bigot? Do you mean being Muslim?"

[13] *Figure V.*

The last four comments on the post continue to provide us with the examples of religious fears and conflicts. The first commenter considers herself as a regular Cypriot and expresses her words on behalf of the Cyprioots as she says '*since when we, the Cyprioots*'. She assumes

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[13] Retrieved on 2018 May 18th from https://www.facebook.com/ReddediyoruzKibris/photos/.

that the Turkish Cypriots are not religious and had never been religious, therefore she questions the need of discussing or imposing religion now by saying '*since when we, the Cypriots, became over religious and they are trying to make the young people religious*' in her understanding the not- religious Cypriots are facing a threat of being forced to be religious. The second comment comes from a non-Cypriot who addresses the Cypriots as '*you Cypriots*' by doing so he excludes himself from being Cypriot. When I made a little research on his profile, he appears to be from Ankara, Turkey. He does not only exclude himself, but he also calls the entire Turkish Cypriot community infidel. The way that he states his opinion gives us a feeling that he was trying to be offensive. However, to this comment, the last commenter replies by saying that being an infidel is better than being a bigot. The previous commenter asks the meaning of bigot, whether it means being Muslim or not. The comments under this post end right after the last comment mentioned. However, the similar comments are almost under every post published on the page.

I believe that the chosen post to be a corpus draw us a picture of the conflict and situation which is to be painted in the following parts of the thesis. As we can see from the comments, Turkish Cypriots perceives this office and the affinity of the Turkish government to the interiors of the TRNC as a threat to their secularized cultured Turkish Cypriot identity. If not directly the Turkish government itself, the policies of the Turkish government are perceived as a bigot and religious. Although the posted copy of the protocol does not contain any coercion of religion, but rather a cooperation between the two departments of the government, it is criticized for being a policy of forcing religion upon the young generation. The comments often contain words that draw a boundary between the Turkish Cypriots and the Turkish government if not the people directly, which then leads us to the fact there is certainly a conflict that is not acknowledged yet.

V.   Analysis of the Visual Sources

As the *reddediyoruz* started receiving more support after the first demonstration, in order to reach more people across the country the platform decided to release some advertisements, hence visual sources, which call the people to join *reddediyoruz.* There have been two videos published and spread on the social media by the platform. The first video that was shot by the platform is named as *Bir aydınlık galabalık[14]* which can be translated into English as "*a bright crowd*". The title of the video is written in the Turkish Cypriot; the standard Turkish would use a different syntax, and therefore the title would be "Aydınlık bir kalabalık". Apart from the word order itself, we can see that the word crowd '*kalabalık'* is used with *g* instead of *k* in the Turkish Cypriot dialect, which is, by the way, a common feature of the dialect as most Turkish words starting with the letter '*k'* is used with '*g'* in the TC dialect.

This video aims to draw a picture of the Turkish Cypriot cultural identity. It is crucial to define what an identity is or what an identity is not. As Hobsbawm says identity is flux[15], therefore it is under a constant change. Thus, when we talk about any sort of identity; personal, cultural and/or national, we must be aware that identity does not go any further than what one shows to the others and what is perceived by the others at the time. Identity can be constructed, especially the image of the identity. When it comes to constructing an identity, the most common way to be used is to concretely define certain elements of the identity such as language, food, music, etc. As Gellner argues education is one of the best tools to be used to construct a national identity. In order to use the education as a tool standardization is inevitable[16]. In the propaganda of the *reddediyoruz* platform, we can see that there is an intention to construct an image of the Turkish Cypriot identity which also aims to define the borders between the Turkish and the Turkish Cypriot identity.

The video starts with a woman who is fortune telling after they had a cup of coffee. Drinking coffee several times per day is a daily routine for the most of Cypriots. Most people after finishing their coffee would ask for a fortunetelling from a friend that they had a coffee with. Therefore, the figure of the coffee is used here to express that this is just a regular day. It is also the first element used to start drawing an image of the Turkish Cypriot cultural identity.

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[14] Retrieved on 2018 May 17th from
https://www.facebook.com/ReddediyoruzKibris/videos/1408623809439166/
[15] Eric Hobsbawm, Language, Culture, and National Identity, Social Research, Vol. 63, No.4, 1996. p.1066.
[16] Ernest Gellner, The Coming of Nationalism and Its Interpretation: The Myths of Nation and Class, Mapping the Nation, Verso, 2012.

The Turkish Cypriot dialect is used during the entire video. Unfortunately, there are no researches on the reduced use of TC dialect on the TV shows, advertisements during the last years. However, my observations on the issue are that the TC dialect is being abandoned by many TCs lately, especially on the television we can see that the reporters are trying their best to fake the Istanbul accent which is accepted as the standard Turkish, although it is also just a variation of Turkish. Therefore, use of the TC dialect is a strong way of expressing the features of the Turkish Cypriot identity. By using the TC dialect in the video, they also intend to reconstruct the identity as an independent identity from the Turkish identity. Which then leads to the strengthening of the identity.

The background music is a traditional folk music that is mostly used in weddings or during the folk dances show. Therefore, the use of this music underlines that the Turkish Cypriot culture has a past. While the music is playing in the background and the fortune telling continues, we see different scenes where different elements of the Turkish Cypriot culture is presented. For instance, there is a mother who is speaking on the phone with her daughter and inviting her daughter and her daughter's friends to go to her place and eat dinner. Hereby the video tries to refer to a Turkish Cypriot habit, then we see the food that is prepared by the mother. The food part is especially interesting because the Turkish and Turkish Cypriot cuisine is very similar to each other. However, there are some foods that are common to the Turkish Cypriot cuisine. The video bares shows us the three foods; stuffed zucchini flowers, fried meatballs and green cowpea with olive oil and zucchini. The zucchini flower is very common in Turkish Cypriot gastronomy, but not in Turkish, the same applies to the meatballs as they are typical from Cyprus because of the ingredients and the way of preparation. The green cowpea was also prepared in Cypriot style which is also not common to be eaten as green in Turkey. Therefore, the food was also used as a tool to help build the image of the Turkish Cypriot cultural identity.

The video carefully uses the Turkish Cypriot dialect; however, this also expands to the written form of the dialect. On the one hand, most Cypriots use their dialects in their daily life, they use standard Turkish when it comes to writing and standard Turkish is also the language of instruction at school. On the other hand, most Cypriots might use the Turkish Cypriot dialect when messaging with their friend. Either way, placing a messaging that occurs in the TC dialect cannot be a coincidence.

As the video continues, we also see some reference to the friendships between the characters; for example, there are two young males playing play station while talking about how excited there "*to be going for rejection*" tonight. The video also contains a scene from the beach. The use of the beach can be understood as underlining the geographical conditions and the importance of the see for Cyprus. The scene of the beach also contains a person writing *#Reddediyoruz* on the sands which despite the waves survive, this can also be understood as a metaphor for rejecting the suppression that comes from the other side of the see. It is crucial to underline here that Turkey is on the opposite side of the see when one would stand at the beach in North Cyprus.

The second video to promote the *reddediyoruz* platform was a song sang by a group of the members of the platform. The music of the song is also a local one from the 1980s, whereas the lyrics were changed. The song is named as *Kıbrıs Gençliği 'Cypriot Youth'.* A translation of the changed lyrics of the song will be analyzed.

Davullar çalar güm güm	*Drums play boom boom*
Her yanlar çınlar	*It chimes everywhere*
Gençlik sokakta	*The youth is out there*
Burada isyan var.	*There's rebellion there*
Ofisi mofisi açma boşuna	*The office, don't bother to open*
Açarsan yıkarız elbet başına	*We'll demolish it once you open*
Dansıma, sporuma	*Hands off!*
Sakın dokunma	*My dance, my sport*
Ödersin ey vekil	*You'll pay for this*
Bunu sonunda	*You representative*
Davular çalar güm güm	*At the end of this*
Her yanlar çınlar	*Drums play boom boom*
Satıyor gençliği	*It chimes everywhere*
Bu onursuzlar	*They're selling the youth*
Güçlüdür birliktir	*These undignified*
Kıbrıs gençliği	*There's rebellion*
Üretir yönetir	*The youth of Cyprus*
Kendi kendini	*Is strong and united*
Dansıma, sporuma	*They produce and administrate*
Sakın dokunma	*Themselves*
Ödersin ey vekil	*Hands off!*
Bunu Sonunda	*My dance, my sport*
[17]	*You'll pay for this*

It is necessary to add that the given translation of the lyrics aimed to be at the closest meaning to the original lyrics rather than being poetic as my goal is to show which discourse has been used. At the very beginning of the video, an MP in 2016, and the Minister of the Work and Social Affairs in 2008 makes a small speech saying that the following song is for the PM and MPs. Therefore, the lyrics are written against the Turkish Cypriot government of 2016. The most interesting word that is used in the lyrics is the word *rebellion,* the song claims that now there is a rebellion because their culture is facing a threat as it continues with "*hands off*

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[17] Retrieved on 2018 May 17th from
https://www.facebook.com/ReddediyoruzKibris/videos/1408623809439166/ .

my dance and my sports". The rebellion can also be considered as a strengthening of the difference between the 'us' and 'them', therefore the Turkish Cypriot identity. The government is called *undignified* for accepting such cooperation with the Turkish government. It is interesting to see that in 1950s Turkish Cypriots wanted to become part of Turkey, however, in 2018, this platform with thousands of Turkish Cypriot supports calls their government undignified for their intention of letting the Turkish government control certain areas. What has changed since then that the Turkish Cypriots changed their desires can be a question of another research, but certainly religion is a decisive actor as it all turns around the religion here? Furthermore, the song defines the characteristics of the Cypriot youth which is painted as productive and united.

In conclusion, the analysis of the two videos, which was prepared to call for people to demonstrate against the coordination office agreement, contained a high number of cultural elements that aimed to construct a positive image of the Turkish Cypriot cultural identity. First of all, the TC dialect was used, second, there was a Turkish Cypriot folk song playing in the background, then the visuals of the video were carefully chosen, the food, the daily routine which would refer to the habit of a Cypriot was expressed, and finally the video called for unity against the office which indirectly refers to the Turkish government. It is also important to note that the video did not bear any religious sign or element, the female characters were wearing their skirts and shorts which would also lead one to question whether this was planned in terms of underlining the secular society or not. Finally, the video shows a great example of an attitude towards how the suppression of the Turkish governments led the TC community to feel the necessity of stressing the importance of their identity and consequently showing a protective attitude of their identity.

VI. Analysis of the Questionnaire and the TV Interview

The original plan for collecting interview data was to visit North Cyprus and interview the activists of the *Reddediyoruz*. However, due to my tight schedule, the field trip was not successful. For the same reason, an online interview could not be realized. Therefore, I created a questionnaire for the activists with ten questions and tried to reach them for answering them. However, this process took longer and with the help of some friends I could manage to receive the answers from only one activist, which I believe can be a supportive data after all the other primary sources. Therefore, in this section, I would like to analyze the answers of the questionnaire and since one questionnaire might be seen as weak, I am going to analyze an interview of three activists that was a live stream on the TV. By this analysis, I aim to bring out some inner information.

The questionnaire was filled by Mustafa who is an activist for the *Reddediyoruz* platform. The questionnaire was prepared and answered in the Turkish language. However, I will be analyzing a translated version of the questionnaire.

1- <u>What does the platform mean to you and what is the importance of it?</u>
   - *Struggle*

It is very interesting to see that the platform is a struggle for Mustafa. Obviously, this struggle will be better explained in the following parts of the questionnaire.

2- <u>How did the platform get organized?</u>
   - *With the unitary organizations' voluntary intervention.*

3- <u>What or who was originally meant to be opposed by movement?</u>
   - *The external interventions and the obscurantism were meant to be opposed to protect our culture and decide for our future.*

As the analysis of the Facebook comments shown us, the main threat is perceived as the external intervention and the obscurantism. Therefore, when Mustafa mentioned struggle, he meant a struggle against the external intervention which can only refer to Turkey as TRNC is only recognized by Turkey and has no diplomatic relations with any other state. The obscurantism is also a threat that comes from the Turkish state.

4- <u>According to you, what sort of threat or inconvenience would the coordination office create against the Turkish Cypriots? Why?</u>

- *By opening a coordination office, such departments related to education, culture, and sports would go under the control of a bureaucrat with immunity who would be appointed by the Turkish Republic. This would result in having the self-determination of the Turkish Cypriots removed. It would also bring together the youth with the Islamic obscurantism that is active in the Turkish Republic.*

As this thesis discussed before it is very interesting to see how Turkish Cypriots no longer talk about becoming part of Turkey, they are for their independence. Mustafa's words in terms of perceiving Turkey as a threat to their self-determination is just one example. Mustafa is again mentioning a fear about the *Islamic obscurantism* and nothing more than that. He has been mentioning culture for several times, but in his words, we cannot see any fear regarding the Turkish Cypriot dialect being reshaped or the Turkish Cypriot songs being affected by the Turkish songs, Turkish Cypriot literature being affected or replaced by the Turkish literature. However, he repeats himself about the Islamic obscurantism. This also necessarily reminds us the hypothesis of Turkish Cypriots being revolt against the conservative new Turkey. They use not being religious and being secularized as the most important part of their identity and they do care for it more than any other parts of the identity.

5- Had the platform been supported by various political circles? If so, can you elaborate on it?
- *Yes, actually, in terms of its gathering it was coordinated by TDP and Bağımsızlık Yolu from the beginning and CTP had joined later than HP expressed its support. If being organized, unorganized and even being apolitical means being political, would it be possible to have a political circle that would support a process?*

As we can see from Mustafa's words there had been several different political parties involved in the process and it is, in fact, interesting to see that all the three political parties mentioned above are in the coalition government after the parliamentary elections in North Cyprus on January 7th, 2018.

6- What is the most worrying aspect for you that Turkey would open a coordination office in Cyprus?
- *To be made to become weak as Turkish Cypriots.*

As we can see that there is certainly a damage to the image of Turkey in North Cyprus as it is considered as a threat by the member of the platform. This again proves that there is a conflict that is yet to be acknowledged and to be worked on.

7- <u>Which one of the choices given below explains the relation between the Turkish Culture and the Turkish Cypriot Culture? Please explain your reasons after making your choice. The choices (TK refers to Turkish Culture and KTK refers to Turkish Cypriot Culture):</u>
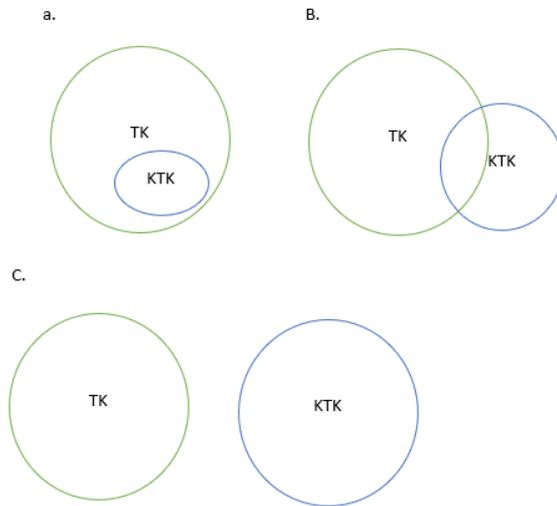
- *B. But not Kıbrıs Türk Kültürü, Kıbrıslı Türk kültürü[18]. Every culture, regardless of where ever they are on earth, has similarities. Especially if it is about the two peoples as in this case that is geographically and historically very close. However, our history is also the history of conflict. The Turkification and the Islamization policies of the rulers of the Turkish Republic (TR) against the Turkish Cypriots and the reaction of the Turkish Cypriots to such phenomenon changed the Turkish Cypriot culture. Also, the fact that they stood up against the neoliberal economic imposition of TR brought the Turkish Cypriot culture to a different ground. The Turkish Cypriot culture is formed from their interaction with the Hellenic Cypriots and their rulers and also their contacts with the peoples of Turkey and its rulers, as well as from their prosperity and environment.*

The above question is very important in various aspects. I chose to use 'Kıbrıs Türk Kültürü' as an expression to refer to the Turkish Cypriot culture in Cyprus. In fact, I did have the intention to create a small provocation as I am aware of the different forms of language used in Turkish to refer to the Turkish Cypriots. There are in fact two main options 'Kıbrıs Türkü' *Turkish of Cyprus* and 'Kıbrıslı Türk' *Turkish Cypriot*. I, personally, use the term *Kıbrıslı Türk* as it seems to be more accurate to me. However, when we would like to express the Turkish Cypriot culture, the Turkish language

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[18] The expression of Kıbrıs Türk Kültürü was used for Turkish Cypriot Culture, which was disliked by Mustafa.

grammar does not allow us to say *Kıbrıslı Türk kültürü,* but it must be *Kıbrıs Türk kültürü.* However, without any linguistic consultation there have been ideological meanings put on the given expression, therefore Mustafa feels the necessity to impose his opinion as he says *"not the culture of the Turks of Cyprus and the Turkish Cypriot culture"* which would make a big difference in terms of his understanding of the Turkish Cypriot identity. When *Kıbrıslı Türk* is used, it refers to being Cypriot while specifying the ethnicity. When *Kıbrıs Türkü* is used it means that the person comes from Cyprus but is Turkish. In fact, in linguistic terms, both would mean the same, but ideologically one distances itself from being part of the Turkish nation whereas the other one expresses the sameness with the Turkish nation.

Mustafa's answer to this specific question is very calm and he draws a very general picture of the cultures and the relations between the cultures. I can sense that he tries to express to us that the relation between the Turkish and the Turkish Cypriot culture is reasonable, natural and balanced. He had chosen the option B, which shows that – as he also explains- Turkish and the Turkish Cypriot culture is two cultures sharing some commons, but in fact, they are two separate culture. So, for him the Turkish Cypriot culture is not a sub-culture of the Turkish culture, it is more than being a sub-culture. He also uses the word *Islamization* again, but this time he adds another word *Turkification.* So, according to Mustafa, Turkish Cypriots have been under Islamization and Turkification processes. Regardless of its accuracy, we must focus on the discourse used here. First of all, he talks about the Turkish Republic having a constant plan since the very beginning to Turkify and Islamize the Turkish Cypriots. The way that he uses these terms we can feel an insulting approach because he thinks that the secularized Cypriots are being forced to be Muslims. Also, he talks about TCs as if they were all Turkified by the Turkish state which also is, in his opinion, a threat and an unfortunate phenomenon. He also refers to the Greek Cypriots as Hellenic Cypriots, which in fact bears the same ideology as the word games used in referring to the Turkish Cypriots. So, he uses the word Hellen in order to specify the ethnic background of the Cypriots.

8. *When we look at the Facebook page of the platform, we see that the use of such words as a bigot, infidel, religious, prayer, Quran courses, Christian, Muslim, etc. to be used very often. Majority of these words fosters a negative meaning. What is your comment on this? According to your opinion who uses the given words for whom?*

- *Turkish Cypriots had internalized the notion of secularism, insomuch that they can be initiated with laicism at certain points. It is very normal that they would show a reaction against Islamizing the public space and the social structure. Although, I do not think that these notions had been used in many discussions when it was used it was used between the Political Islamists and the regular Turkish Cypriot persons.*

As we have seen during the analysis of the Facebook posts, there have been many people expressing a fear against Islam and some comments can even be considered as Islamophobic sometimes. This time the question is religion related, therefore he necessarily brings up the topic of Turkish Cypriots being Islamized. My observations would agree with the fact that the Turkish Cypriots are secularized, however, this does not mean that they have no belief. However, when we look at his answer we can see at the very end of his answer that he paints a very good picture of the Turkish Cypriots by saying "*the regular Turkish Cypriot"* and a very bad picture of the opposing group by using "*Political Islamists*", although I did not ask his comment on a specific Facebook comment, he leaves no room for some of the opposing people to be just religious people. In his opinion, they are all Political Islamists, and the Turkish Cypriots are not being political here -since they are regulars, but they are rather being the victims of such policies and defending themselves. Whether this is the case or not is the aim of this research, however the way that Mustafa perceives things, especially having said that his name is Mustafa, make it interesting to see how he thinks that the society is forced to be Islamized now.

9. <u>What sort of problems comes forward between the Turkish Cypriots and the people coming from Turkey and how far could *Reddediyoruz* go in terms of touching upon these problems?</u>
   - *They are trying to construct a conflict between the Turkish Cypriots and the immigrants coming from Turkey on purpose. The destiny of the Turkish Cypriots and the migrant Turkish Cypriots is common; we are all being smashed by the neoliberal policies, leaving us with no future is our common problem. The problem is not the migrant issue, it is the issue of labor, capital and the one who is downtrodden and who makes others downtrodden. Although Reddediyoruz does not focus on this issue, along with the strong approach that it has shown it helped to create a common identity for all. In fact, the support of those immigrants who did not fall under the pounce of political Islam had risen.*

Mustafa's answer to the question is certainly important. He argues that the conflict between the two communities is subject to be constructed, therefore he denies the natural evolvement of the conflicting areas. He presents an answer that rather puts his political view on the table, but he also assumes that two communities are suffering through the same; "*The destiny of the Turkish Cypriots and the migrant Turkish Cypriots is common",* however by the end of his answer he excludes some of the immigrants; ". *In fact, the support of those immigrants who did not fall under the pounce of political Islam had risen".* This means that those, who are part of the Political Islamist ideologies, do not share the common destiny with the Turkish Cypriots. It also points out one more time that when Islam comes to the stage, we can start talking about a conflict.

10. <u>Do you think that such conflicts between Turkey and TRNC bring closer the Greek and the Turkish Cypriots?</u>

- *The question is wrong: TRNC and TR have no conflict. Peoples of Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot people have no conflict either. The conflict is between TR state and the Turkish Cypriot people. Namely, a state oppresses a community. This makes Turkish Cypriots to move away from the Turkish state but why should it bring them closer to Hellenic Cypriots? Is it crucial that the Turkish Cypriots would approach to somewhere else in every instance? Turkish Cypriots and Hellenic Cypriots could only become closer if their organizations would show a will to become closer. Not indirect but direct.*

Finally, the last reply, but maybe one of the most interesting ones. After referring to the conflict between the Turkish Cypriots and the Turkish state, and hence the people of that state, even if we cannot generalize, the government of Turkey had been elected by its people. Therefore, it would be very naïve to think that people have nothing to do with the policies of the government. According to Mustafa, the conflict is between TR and TC people. He believes that the Turkish state oppresses Turkish Cypriot, which again makes me think what the Turkish state is if it has nothing to do with the Turkish people as its policies towards North Cyprus had always been somehow conflicting. In his opinion, such events do not bring the two communities of Cyprus together although he agrees that the Turkish Cypriots move away from Turkey. However, I must be critical to this. First of all, Turkish Cypriots are negotiating with Greek Cypriots for a united Cyprus, and they no longer ask for the recognition of their republic TRNC nor

for unification with Turkey. The leaders signed a joint declaration in 2014 stating that the current status-quo is unacceptable, 60% of the Turkish Cypriots voted for Mustafa Akıncı during the presidential elections in 2015 who is fosters Cypriotism as a political ideology and based his campaign on establishing a federal state with the Greek Cypriots. Therefore, we can see that the Turkish Cypriots do not only move away from Turkey but also approach to another partner.

The interview that I chose to present in this research was conducted on June 13th, 2016. The show was given as live stream by Kıbrıs TV and the presenter was Sevim Basri who is a successful TV show presenter (mostly focusing on news or politics) in North Cyprus. The two representatives of the platform were on the show, Atik Kaya, and Kamil İpçiler. As a reply to the reporter's questions, the representatives start talking about their contact with the TRNC's government, and they claim that although they asked for an appointment with the relevant ministers, they did not receive any feedback from them. On the other hand, the opposition parties in the parliament had shown support to the platform and ensured that they will vote no for passing the agreement. After a general view of the parties in the parliament and their attitudes towards the agreement, they summarize the consequences of such an agreement. They stress that the control of the culture, youth and sports activities would be completely given to Turkey. One of the representatives sums up his concerns about the agreement:

"*Our main struggle is… Okay, countries can economically help and support each other. Does Turkey economically help us? Yes, they do, and we do need this help. But what we want is that, if they'll be helping us then they should remain as inspectors. They should not take the control and the management of any of our institutions. We're trying to express this. And because we say these things, we're pointed as being hostile to Turkey*"[19]

So, hereby we can see some other approach to the issue than putting religion and/or cultural identity at the beginning of the list. The representatives argue that Turkey should not intervene with TRNC's interiors, but should rather inspect where the given money is spent at.

When the presenter asks about the diversity of the supporting organizations, activists, and the political parties. They say that the platform is very diverse and people going for demonstrations are just there for humanity regardless of their political background. The presenter also asks about the other organizations who are remaining silent or supporting the

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[19] Retrieved on 2018 May 16th from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W0idcNYQY04&t=819s.

agreement. The answer of the representatives is interesting as they say most of the opposing or silent organizations are just concerned about the investment that Turkey could make if the agreement was signed. For instance, the biggest football clubs are struggling with miserable conditions and signing the agreement would mean facilities in the standards of the 21st century for them, therefore they are more concerned of the benefits of the agreement than its harm. At the half of the program, the representative goes back to the topic that what concerns them most about the agreement is to give all the rights of management to Turkey, he then adds;

> *"This is also against democracy, giving the complete control of a certain institution to another country means ignoring the will of the given society. This would make a remarkable impact on the society. I don't want to be talking about this, but we all know that the living style and the faith of the Cypriots are not approved by some. So, this agreement would allow those to shape the society in a way that they want"*

The topic is necessarily engaged with the religion, therefore even if it was not meant to be talked, we can see that the representatives of the platform also express their concerns regarding the religion. He uses *some* rather than naming a certain group of people, however, since the agreement would allow Turkey to have the complete control of the mentioned institutions, this also means that the last sentence *"So, this agreement would allow those to shape the society in a way that they want"* refers to the Republic of Turkey as they would be in the position to make decisions.

In the later parts of the interview, they talk about the diversity of the organizations in the platform and a brief explanation of its structure; many people are involved, and they are open to anyone who would like to be participating actively in the platform. One of the representatives then says that he would like to underline that they are not doing these demonstrations again in Turkey, but they would do the same whichever country would try to do the same. Finally, they add that they would be open to negotiation, but they are very strict about what they would accept and what they would not.

Although the interview has more of intention to promote the platform rather than trying to understand who they are and what they are about, and the questions asked were not very specific but rather general, the representatives of the platform gave some interesting insights of the situation. First of all, we have seen that they hold back from talking about the cultural differences and the religious aspects of the problem; *"I don't want to be talking about this, but we all know that the living style and the faith of the Cypriots are not approved by some"*. I

believe that the fact that they hesitate to talk about religion is not because of a suppression, but rather to not damage the image of the platform. Because, if they would start by comparing the two cultures and the societies, this could result in them being blamed for promoting hostile opinions against the Turkish immigrants or Turkey. Therefore, they rather talk about their aims instead of their fears. Then we see another example of trying to deny the fact that this platform is against Turkey's policies, and the people supporting it are somehow concerned about the Islamist government of Turkey. He says that they are not against Turkey, which is also very vacuous because the conflicted policy, the agreement, the government and all the other conflicting areas belong to Turkey, therefore, this demonstration is about Turkey, it might not be about the people of Turkey, but it certainly is about Turkey.

VII.   Analysis of the Online News Articles

In this chapter as mentioned before I am going to analyze two articles; one from a Cypriot newspaper, and another one from Turkey. By doing so, I am to draw a pattern of how the demonstrations of "*Reddediyoruz''* are defined and explained by the two newspapers. The two articles were chosen from both Turkey and Cyprus in order to bring in two perspectives. The reason of choosing these specific articles are; in case of the Turkish Cypriot articles I have chosen one of the most selling and the oldest newspaper's online platform; www.kibrisgazetesi.com and when it comes to Turkey, it was rather a forced choice as the Turkish media has been silence about the demonstrations. Therefore, from a few articles found, I had to choose the article that would have the basis of comparison with the Turkish Cypriot one.

VII.I. "We Reject: the success story of Turkish Cypriot youth"

This one will be from a Turkish online newspaper called independentTURKEY. The article is named "*We Reject: The success story of Turkish Cypriot youth*". The author uses the word *success* in the title, which already draws a successful image on our minds about the outcome of the given event in her eyes. The title also contains the expression *Turkish Cypriot youth* which interestingly excludes the author but generalizes the whole TC youth. Instead of specifying she generalizes. This can be considered as a result of the pluralistic structure of these events, as it was not only the opposition or a certain political party that started the demonstrations, but rather a group of people who were independently gathered together and tried to make move.

The author then writes the following: "*many Reddediyoruz activists stress that the Turkish Cypriot youth is not religious and the deal opposes their socio-cultural composition*". The given sentence is especially interesting. First of all, the word *many* have been used to underline that not every single activist has the same opinion on the particular subject. However, if we have a look at the article the author often chooses to generalize, rather than pointing out a specific identity. Furthermore, the author chooses to use the verb *to stress* which could be expressed by 'emphasize on' or 'underline/highlight' and even maybe 'to point out'. While the other verbs would stay too neutral, the verb *stress* contains much more tension. The author then reports the statement of the activists, which again contains the *Turkish Cypriot youth*, here we can also see that the activists also refer to themselves as the whole youth. At the very end, there

is the word *their* which again shows how the author excludes herself from them, but the use of *their* also stays grammatically unclear as it can refer to both the activists and the TC youth. The author also writes, *"they also claim that it is against their constitution"*. Now while she keeps referring to the activists, she chooses to use the word *claim.* As Machin and Mayr argue claims are not factual and they can be contested, also claims are accusations and they express the uncertainty, they include doubts[20]. Finally, the use of *their* is also interesting to argue on. Here we cannot be sure if it refers to the activists or the TC youth, most probably the TC youth, however, the constitution belongs to the state and all its citizens, therefore, although both activists or TC youth can be considered as a generalization and not specifying the certain group. It also gives a bit of negative feeling as if the constitution can be interpreted and this is against THEIR constitution.

VII. II. "Get ready, we're going back to the streets"

This article was published in a Turkish Cypriot newspaper, and it is written in Turkish, but the necessary parts will be translated into English. The title already uses a very different path than the previous article; "*Get ready, we're going back to the streets*" The author uses this title from the statement of the *Reddediyoruz* platform which interestingly uses we as an identification.

The article *then* writes the following; "*In the speech which underlines the dangers that the coordination office may cause on our social structure, people were called to demonstrate; "We're going to continue our struggle against the coordination office in order to prevent our country from falling into the darkness of the reactionary minds, as well as to protect and to further improve our free and democratic structure. For painting the streets with the colors of freedom and the songs of our will, we're back on the streets!".* First, the author uses the word 'underline' which does not seem to include much feelings in it, but rather pointing out the fact which was told by the platform. The use of '*our'* seems interesting, as the author includes himself into the society, she avoids using the expression *Turkish Cypriot,* this may have several reasons. In the previous article, the author always distanced herself and talked about the TC society in the form of the third person, whereas here he often includes himself using possessive cases. The previous article was using 'them/they/their' very frequently, in this one we meet

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[20] Machin and Mayr. *How to do critical discourse analysis.* London. 2012.

'us/we/our' in most cases. The author also uses the verb '*called*' which rather sounds revolutionary. I believe it gives us the feeling that now, such a platform is calling us to act immediately.

As we can see both articles give us a sense of identity. Interestingly the second article underlines the importance of the 'free and democratic' structure which again refers to the Turkish government being perceived as a threat to the Turkish Cypriot society. The words of the second author are almost revolt against the Turkish authorities as he says, '*we'll protect our country'.* The first article also mentions about the perceived threat as being the religion which again strengths the argument of this thesis that this demonstration's main concern is the religious/conservative/Islamist attitude of the Turkish government(s).

VIII.   Conclusion

The represented analysis of the collected material had shown us that religion is, certainly, in the center of the concerns raised by the demonstrations. The further analysis had shown that the Turkish Cypriots who supported *Reddediyoruz* platform perceives the current Turkish policies as a threat to their cultural identity and their secular lifestyle. Apart from that, the denial of the rising tension between the Turkish Cypriot community and the Turkish government can be observed too. Defining the reason of such denial would require a further research on the topic, however, from my own observations, the denial can be related to the assumption that the Turkish Cypriot community aims for a peaceful process of crossing the lines between their needs and the Turkish policies. On the other hand, the given phenomenon seems to be the beginning of a greater conflict, and if not well managed, it can easily become more complex, as well as deeper and wider than it has always been.

It must be underlined that, although we can see some politicians being involved in the tension from the Turkish Cypriot side, the tension is rather between the Turkish Cypriots and the Turkish government(s), the majority of the Turkish settlers in North Cyprus. Thus, the conflict is a step away from becoming an inter-communal, the intensiveness of the tension could be seen from the comments of people; there have been numerous hostile comments towards each other. As the main fear of the demonstration reveals as being Islam, the tension moves the Turkish Cypriot community step by step away from Turkey, and this seems to be the case since 1974 as the Turkish Cypriots are neither satisfied with their state nor asking for becoming part of Turkey anymore. Although, based on this research, it would not be fair to state that the growing distance between Turkish Cypriots and Turkey has been caused by the religious differences among the Turkish society and the Turkish Cypriot society, for the period of time being researched in this thesis, it seems that the religious differences play a decisive role under the given circumstances.

The research has also shown us that the Turkish Cypriots are becoming revolt against Turkey, and thus, they are feeling the necessity of protecting and defending their identity from any threat that they would face. The analyzed articles – considering that it was taken from the most read newspapers- had shown us that not only Cypriots are being distanced from Turkey, but it is also *vice versa*. It is important to underline that *Reddediyoruz* did not only simply demonstrate against the possible coordination office to be opened in North Cyprus, but it did also strongly stress the importance of the Turkish Cypriot culture and identity by constructing an image of it through using the most known cultural elements. Hence, the platform, in a sense,

promoted the Turkish Cypriot identity which then contributed to the strengthening of the given identity. Therefore, the platform acted as a raised voice of the TC identity.

Different methods have been used in this research. I believe that every method used to gather materials to be analyzed was useful with a great importance. However, some have been more useful than others. For instance, documenting the Facebook data and collecting the newspaper articles, I believe, enriched the research's findings in a very powerful way. The Facebook comments provided me with the opportunity to focus on people in a very direct way, which had been my aim since the beginning. I cannot, however, say that the use of questionnaires have been as expected as useful. The interviews and the questionnaires had several limitations, first of all, it had been very difficult to find someone willing to complete the questionnaire or willing to be interviewed. Second of all, there have been places where observing the reaction of the one answering the questions would have been much useful for my research. However, due to the time limitation and the fact that I had to complete this thesis beside my fulltime Ph.D. studies, I believe that such limitations are normal as it can occur in any research. The limitation with the interview was, naturally, the fact that it was done by a TV. Therefore, I was limited to the untalented questions of the reporter and most likely the activists were replying the questions in a more standard and prepared way. It must be noted that what the activists would share could have been different if we had been talking in a less official and more discreet space. Despite the limitations the interview was still very useful. Finally, my observations was a great help when it comes to filling in the details of the research. I believe, in a research, where the society was put in the center, the use of observations was inevitable.

When it comes to methodology, the critical discourse analysis was very useful. Analyzing the language of the people; the expressions, metaphors and simply the words that they used was the best way to achieve my research objectives. I chose to use a free style when it comes to the analysis which I believe allowed me to focus on the essence of the issue. By doing critical discourse analysis, while I could bring insights of the issue directly from the people by using the Facebook material, analyzing the newspaper articles helped me to bring insights from the intellectual class, hence the research became much more enriched.

Finally, this research took an initiative to analyze a subject which can be considered as provocative by the certain groups of the society as the research points out something very sensitive. It is also crucial to put the emphasis on the fact that the relation between North Cyprus

and Turkey had not been researched by the academics either which again shows that the topic appears to be a societal and political tabu. It must be noted that the problem is existing, and the Turkish Cypriot society has been struggling with this tension and the impacts of the relations for some time now. As this topic remains a hot and well-researched one, I would like to acknowledge that it can be further developed and detailed in order to understand the relation between the Turkish Cypriots and Turkey. It could be the subject of a Ph.D. thesis or a broader research project to analyze the relation between the two sides since 1974 with its all dimensions. There is certainly a room for the development of the arguments presented in this thesis and a room for further research on the subject. I believe that studying the case of North Cyprus would also contribute to the development of the field of Peace and Conflict studies.

IX.   Bibliography

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