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Drawing Cyprus: Power-sharing, identity and expectations among the next generation in northern Cyprus

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ABSTRACT

In order to capture how young people in northern Cyprus see the Cyprus Question, we asked more than 300 students to 'draw Cyprus' and surveyed their political attitudes, as well as their identities and preferences for the future of the island. The results show that the Turkish Cypriot students, in comparison with the students from Turkey and from the other countries, are more supportive of a decentralized federative structure, identify themselves with the Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot identities, and more willing to embrace a consociational approach to the Cyprus Question.

As a protracted conflict, the Cyprus Question occupies a central place in the realm of conflict resolution and peace-building efforts in the international community. Since the de facto break-up of the Republic of Cyprus (RoC) in 1963, Cyprus has ironically begun to epitomize a case where the failed consociational democracy needs to be revitalized through a 'federal bi-zonal, bi-communal power-sharing' model based on the political equality of both communities. Various power-sharing models have been proposed over the years in the hope of nourishing compromise between the Turkish and Greek Cypriot communities. In 2004, the UN-sponsored Annan Plan – prepared by UN secretary general Kofi Annan – brought the two parties to a settlement, but was rejected in a referendum when 75 per cent of Greek Cypriots voted 'No', compared to 64 per cent of Turkish Cypriots who voted 'Yes' (Annan Plan, 2004; Anastasiou, 2009: 130). Nevertheless, negotiations continue at intervals, with the aim of achieving a durable and comprehensive solution based on a power-sharing model. Since then, the Cyprus Question has been reshaped and transformed by various internal and international dynamics, such as the accession of Cyprus to the European Union (EU) in 2004, natural gas exploration in the Mediterranean region since

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2011, and election of pro-resolution presidential candidate Mustafa Akıncı by the Turkish Cypriot community in May 2015 – a development welcomed by the Greek Cypriot community and its leader Nicos Anastasiadis, who had campaigned in favour of the Annan Plan in 2004.

In this complex political context, this article raises an important question regarding how the next generation in Cyprus sees the political future of the island. While it is known that the post-Annan Turkish Cypriot generation is 'in favour of a federal solution and reconciliation' more than 'their grandparents' and 'Greek Cypriots' (Hatay & Charalambous, 2015: v), further investigation is required to understand the dynamics behind this claim. To do so, this research originally asked more than 300 students to 'draw Cyprus' and respond to a survey about their political attitudes, identities and institutional preferences. This two-fold technique offers a meaningful way to capture how the young generation perceives Cyprus, its internal boundary, its divided capital Nicosia and more generally their preferences regarding resolution of the Cyprus Question. In doing so, this article seeks to observe the 'parallelism' in the ongoing peace talks between the Turkish and Greek Cypriot community leaders Akıncı and Anastasiadis, which are based on a consociational democratic power-sharing model. Triangulating the data from the students' mental maps and survey responses, and comparing the results from Turkish Cypriot students to those of students from Turkey and other countries, allows us to discuss why a power-sharing model still seems to be a viable resolution to the Cyprus Question.¹

The conflict

The British colony of Cyprus was granted its independence in 1960, and the constitution of the Republic of Cyprus (RoC) was established with the support of international treaties – the Treaties of Alliance and Guarantee – which outlined relations with the guarantor powers of Greece, Turkey and the United Kingdom. The population of Cyprus is officially composed of Greek Cypriots, Turkish Cypriots and recognized minority groups: Maronites, Latins and Armenians (Constitution, 1960). Upon achieving independence in 1960, the majority Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities founded the RoC on the principle of consociationalism, which recognized and protected the distinct identities of each community. However, the 1960 Constitution and the political system were not able to generate cohesion and mutual understanding between the two communities, instead injecting sources of fragmentation. Inter-communal divisions and misperceptions on both sides became an obstacle to the formation of a multi-ethnic national identity, i.e., 'Cypriot identity' (Tocci, 2002a). To understand the lack of an overarching Cypriot identity one can look to the 1960 Constitution, which granted the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities the right to elect their representatives separately (Constitution, 1960; Erhürman, 2012). This division culminated in the de facto collapse of the republic hitherto.

While it finds its roots in earlier history, the Cyprus conflict deepened during the 1950s, with a Greek Cypriot move towards *enosis* (union between Greece and Cyprus), to which Turkish Cypriots responded by opting for *taksim* (partition of the island). As Anastasiou (2002: 582) put it, 'nationalist conflict in Cyprus has brought with it a legacy of pain and suffering resulting from the violence ... which continues to affect communication between two sides'. And 'more powerful factors have emerged since the 1960s and early 1970s, hugely exacerbating the inter-communal dispute between the new generations of the Greek and Turkish Cypriots' (Tocci, 2002a: 60). The antagonism between the two communities came to a head on 15 July 1974 when a coup by army officers from Greece attempted to achieve *enosis*, which resulted in the overthrow of the President of the Republic, Archbishop Makarios. This then paved the way for Turkey's unilateral intervention on 20 July 1974 (Sözen, 2007; Gürel, 2012: 3). In addition, the rise in external powers' influence on the island and the implications of the political problems between the motherlands of Greece and Turkey exacerbated the ethnic and religious cleavages between the two communities.

Due to the inter-communal violence which first erupted in 1963, the island of Cyprus is de facto divided between Greek and Turkish Cypriot administrations, wherein the RoC governs the South while a Turkish Cypriot administration governs the North. The Turkish Cypriot community first established the Autonomous Cyprus Turkish Authority and the Turkish Federated State of Cyprus in 1975 (Sözen, 2007; Gürel, 2012: 4). With the aim of resolving the dispute, Makarios and Denktaş, respectively, the Greek and Turkish Cypriot leaders, agreed on a set of principles to launch inter-communal talks at the 1977 High Level Agreements. The Agreements set a clear agenda for resolution on the basis of a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation, which have since been described as the UN parameters for a comprehensive settlement. However, the declaration of the Turkish Republic of northern Cyprus (TRNC) in 1983 by Turkish Cypriots was perceived as a secessionist move by Greek Cypriots. This consolidated the division of the island (Sözen, 2007; Gürel, 2012: 7). In addition, the establishment of TRNC provoked an international response – a UN Security Council Resolution declared that 'the attempt to create a Turkish Republic of northern Cyprus is invalid' (UN 541, 1983; UN 550, 1984). The position of the UN Security Council is directly intertwined with the mutually agreed UN parameters for settling the conflict with a bi-zonal and bi-communal federal government (ICG, 2014).

Then, under the presidency of Giorgios Vassiliou, the RoC applied for membership to the European Union (EU) in 1990. Accession negotiations started in 1998 and Cyprus was admitted as a full member on 1 May 2004. The road to EU membership was 'expected to pave the way to a resolution' (Tocci, 2002b: 104), but 'Brussels did not manage to become a catalyst for reconciliation' (Kyris, 2012: 90). Following the failure of the UN-sponsored Annan Plan in 2004, the EU accession of the whole island as the RoC paved the way for reinvigoration of a new power-sharing model, which would sustain political stability. In other words, the

EU became a new actor in the Cyprus Question, and accession can be said to have triggered additional conflict over misrepresentation of the Turkish Cypriot community to the EU, as well as the suspension of the *acquis communautaire* in the northern part of the island. This was done through the addition of Protocol 10 to the Accession Treaty of 2003, which stipulated that, 'in the areas in which the Government of Cyprus does not exercise effective control, the EU legislation is suspended' (Anastasiou, 2009: 130; EU, 2015). Although the Turkish and Greek community leaders have, at intervals, been engaged in negotiations based on the UN parameters, no agreement has been reached yet, creating what is mostly considered as a 'long-standing and protracted conflict' (Müftüler-Bac, 1999: 560). Since then, the Turkish Cypriots have lived in economic and political isolation, lacking international trade – given the fact that TRNC is an unrecognized state – and with an economy heavily dependent on financial aid from Turkey. With the failure of the Annan Plan, the salience of Cyprus Question decreased in northern Cyprus, but this has begun to change more recently as a result of various internal and external dynamics (Bozkurt, 2015).

Exploration for natural gas in the Mediterranean Sea beginning in 2011 brought a new dimension to the Cyprus Question, prompting the leaders of both Cypriot communities to release a Joint Declaration on 11 February 2014 reading 'the status quo is unacceptable and its prolongation will have negative consequences for the Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots', and continuation of the process would have consequences for the entire region (Cyprus Mail, 2014). Although it had been predicted that the natural gas reserves would revitalize negotiations, the issue instead exacerbated tensions on both sides, culminating in the decision of Greek Cypriot leader Nicos Anastasiadis to leave the negotiation table in October 2014. With the election of President Mustafa Akıncı, the platform for reunification of the island has been refreshed (BBC, 2015a).

Consociational democracy and power-sharing

As in most divided societies, the people in Cyprus share the experience of being separated by ethnic (Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot), religious (Orthodox, Christian and Muslim) and linguistic (Greek and Turkish) differences, to which are attached opposing demands for security, political power, sovereignty and territory. The political stability and consociational power-sharing that had been achieved with independence and establishment of the RoC in 1960, failed within three years because of 'the Greek Cypriots' lack of willingness to share power with the minority Turkish Cypriots. However, most Turkish Cypriots felt vulnerable and became protective of their constitutional rights (Yakinthou, 2009: 53). With the failure of the common republic, the Turkish Cypriots advocated a federal system to safeguard their equal rights with the Greek Cypriots on the island. Thus, the interplay of various local and supra-state identities in Cyprus have found resonance in nationalist forms where even the leftist patriotism in

the Greek Cypriot community addressed 'inherently resistant character of the Greek nation' (Karakatsanis and Papadogiannis, 2017: 15) while neglecting the other communities.

In a research on the Cyprus problem, Hadjipavlou (2007: 352–354) stated that 'external factors' like 'Greece and Turkey expansionism' were 'the most important reasons of the conflict and responsible for the separation of the two communities', even if 'internal factors' or 'contextual factors' like ethnic or religious differences creating self vs. other cleavages also played a role. After the failure of the Annan Plan in 2004, 'the new dividing and unifying elements in Cypriot politics can be best understood through analysing ... sovereignty, territoriality, identity and power-sharing' concepts (Vural and Peristianis, 2008: 40). The Greek Cypriot leadership stated that the Annan Plan had failed to guarantee 'the single, sovereign character of Cyprus', and 'to address the serious concerns of the Greek-Cypriot community regarding their security and the effective implementation of the plan' (Vural and Peristianis, 2008: 39–40).

Lipset et al. (1987) argue that the limits of building stable democracies are constructed by the historical development, i.e., legacies of the past. For such deeply divided societies, Lijphart proposed consociational democracy as a way to achieve a stable democracy. This rests on four main principles as power-sharing in a grand coalition (where the Turkish and Greek Cypriots are guaranteed a permanent share of power, preventing any group from dominating the political system); segmental autonomy (such as a bi-zonal and bi-communal federal structure); minority veto (to ensure political equality among both communities); and proportionality and public opportunities for the represented communities (such as the Greek Cypriots comprising 60 per cent of the police force, with the Turkish Cypriots comprising 40 per cent) (Lijphart, 2008; Cyprus Mail, 2014). Thus, the shared past, subsequent breakdown of the republic, and de facto division of the island since the mid-1960s have culminated in increased mistrust, and antagonistic discourses and practices among the political elites from both communities. For instance, the President of the RoC, Tassos Papadopoulos, in a televised speech, publicly called on the Greek Cypriots to reject the Annan Plan, saying that, 'Taking up my duties, I was given an internationally recognized state. I am not going to give back "a Community" ... I urge you to defend the Republic of Cyprus, saying NO to its abolition' (Sözen and Özersay, 2007: 131–132). In contrast, during the referendum, former Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf R. Denktaş said that the plan would be unacceptable 'unless important changes are made to it', and that 'The Turkish Republic of northern Cyprus (KKTC – TRNC) will continue to exist and will go on its way together with Turkey' (Hürriyet Daily News, 2003).

Lijphart also argued that strong cleavages among segments of society, a balance of power among multiple subgroups, popular attitudes favourable to government by grand coalition, external threats to the nation's existence, and a light load on the political system and a small population are the characteristics of divided societies (Lijphart, 1968). In line with this approach, there were

distinct lines of cleavage among segments of the society in Cyprus. Especially during the 1950s, the lack of trust between Turkish and Greek Cypriots led to 'unabsorbed' communities. On the other hand, due to the lack of a common national identity in Cyprus, the interpretation of external threat varies from one community to another. For instance, Turkey may be seen an external threat by the Greek Cypriots, while Greece may be regarded as an external threat by the Turkish Cypriots. Moreover, political and socio-economic power distribution between the communities was not equal. Finally, for consociationalism to function in small societies, there should not be a need for an active foreign policy. However, it is very likely that the island of Cyprus would need to formulate an effective foreign policy to handle natural gas resources, as well as to build relations with the EU and NATO. Although consociationalism failed in Cyprus once, this article aims to explore the likelihood of establishing a well-functioning power-sharing model in Cyprus through the perspectives of the young generation in northern Cyprus.

Method and data

On the background of this protracted conflict, the objective of this article is to explore how young people currently living in northern Cyprus see the Cyprus Question. To do so, we asked more than 300 students to 'draw Cyprus' and surveyed their political attitudes, as well as their identities and their preferences for the future of the island. The originality of this research is to compare the opinions of young people who born in Cyprus with young people who born in Turkey or elsewhere, in order to have three comparable groups.

In 2014, we surveyed 302 higher education students from two northern Cyprus universities, as well as a few students from another university institution². As shown in Table 1, 55 per cent of respondents are female and 45 per cent male. Their age varies between 19 and 35 with a mean age of 24. 56 per cent are undergraduate and 44 per cent graduate students. Students mainly

Table 1. Socio-demographics.

Socio-demographics		<i>N</i>	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	167	55
	Male	134	45
Age	19–35	302	100
Education	Undergraduate	169	56
	Graduate	133	44
Department	International relations and political science	164	54
	Social sciences	80	27
	Other	58	19
Country of birth	Cyprus	90	30
	Turkey	107	35
	Other	105	35
Total		302	100

come from international relations and political science or other social sciences faculties such as the business administration, communication and sociology, as well as the health care and engineering faculties. We reached three comparably sized groups of students born in Cyprus, in Turkey and in 'other countries' (mostly Asian and African, and a few European).

In this research, we used the 'mental maps' technique to grasp the students' 'mental representation' of a 'given object or space' (Haas, 2004: 621) by asking the respondents to 'draw or write ... the representation of a given object' (Breux et al., 2010: 12). Doing so, it is key to target a group with comparable drawing abilities (Breux et al., 2010, 2011), so for this we asked only students to participate in our survey. The students were given a questionnaire in which the first page contains only the note 'draw Cyprus' (in Turkish or in English, according to the native language of the respondent) in order to, potentially, reveal their perceptions and preferences of and for Cyprus. Following the research design of a study on another divided society – namely Belgium (Reuchamps et al., 2009, 2014) – the students were given five minutes for this task, and were provided with no further guidelines. Once they had done their drawing, they were asked to answer 30 questions about socio-demographics, attitudes concerning Cyprus and its future, identities, political interest and voting behaviour. Triangulating the data collected by both methods increases the explanatory leverage of the mental mapping exercise. All questions, other than those on demographics, were measured by a Likert scale from '0' ('not at all' or 'disagree strongly') to '11' ('very' or 'agree strongly') and grouped into three categories. The differences were cross-tabulated according to country of birth as 'Cyprus', 'Turkey' and 'other' (for each with a 'chi-square' significance test, $p < 0.05$).

Findings

Political interest and political solutions

The question 'How interested would you say you are in politics?' was answered by 53 per cent of the students with 'much or very' interested. But fewer students from Cyprus answered 'much or very' interested in politics (11 per cent of all students), which is roughly half the rate of students from Turkey (20 per cent) or students from other countries (22 per cent) ($p < 0.01$) (Figure 1).

In fact, interest in politics among the Cypriot public also declined by almost 50 per cent in six years, from 2.2 in 2004 to 1.7 in 2010 (Kanol, 2013: 67). This survey's results run parallel with the low voter turnout rate in the first (62.34 per cent) and second (56 per cent) rounds of the 2015 presidential elections in northern Cyprus (BBC, 2015b). Similarly, voter participation in the 2011 parliamentary and 2013 presidential elections had fallen (Kanol, 2013: 59). Voter turnout for the parliamentary elections had been 86 per cent in 2003 and 69.4 per cent in 2013 in the North, in contrast with 89 per cent in 2006 and 66.7 per cent in 2016 in the South (Hatay and Charalambous, 2015: 5). After more than 40 years of

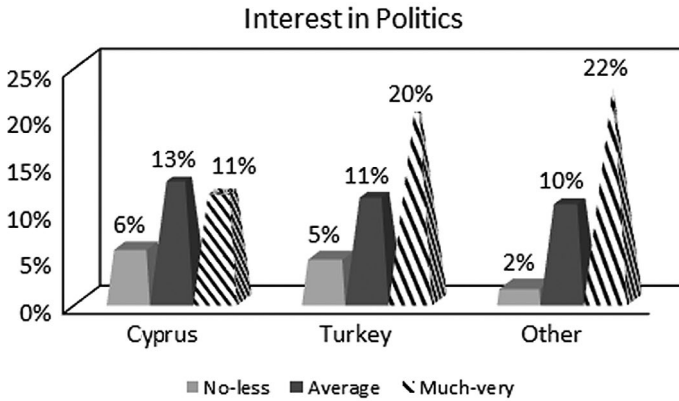


Figure 1. Interest in politics.

unresolved conflict, the continuing status quo and a loss of hope for the unity of the island, students from Cyprus might have lost interest in politics.

The first political scenario that was proposed to the respondents – ‘In the context of a federal solution to the Cyprus issue some think that the two communities should get more power, while others think that the federal state should be reinforced’ – was answered quite differently among the three groups. Among the 55 per cent who agreed that the ‘two levels should share power’, 22 per cent were from Turkey, 21 per cent were from other countries and only 12 per cent were from Cyprus. Moreover, among the 21 per cent of students who supported ‘no power for the central state and all competencies for the two communities’, 11 per cent were from Cyprus, 7 per cent were from Turkey and 3 per cent were from other countries. And among the 25 per cent of students who believed in ‘all powers for the central state and no competencies for the communities’, 9 per cent were from Turkey and other countries (for each), compared to 7 per cent from Cyprus ($p < 0.01$) (Figure 2).

The students’ answers to this question confirm that the students from Cyprus support both a decentralized federative structure in which the communities should have more power than the central state, and the communities should share power equally. But their support for a strong central state is low. A similar result was found in another study that Turkish Cypriot students support for a ‘bi-zonal and bi-communal federation’ at the rate of ‘74.7 per cent’, which is higher than the Greek Cypriot students’ rate of support at ‘44.1 per cent’ (Hatay and Charalambous, 2015: 12). On the other hand, most of the students from Turkey and other countries either believe that the ‘two levels should share power’ or believe in ‘all powers for the central state and fewer competencies for the communities’, which may mean a more centralized – federative – structure. Since the island is de facto divided, the notion of ‘division’ may not refer only to ‘partition’. This could also take the form of a grand coalition within which both

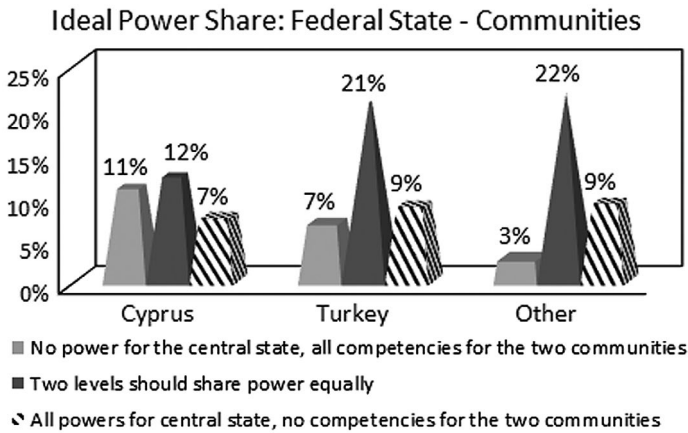


Figure 2. Ideal power share: federal state – communities.

communities share governmental power equally in a bi-communal and bi-zonal federation (in accordance with UN parameters) where the representation of each group is institutionally guaranteed on the basis of consociational democracy. Here the key point is that the past 40 years of partition has not brought resolution to Cyprus Question.

There were two questions on Turkish and Greek Cypriots in the survey. The first one was 'It is often said that the Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots are different. What is your opinion on this? According to you, how big is the difference between the Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots?' Among the 22 per cent of students who responded 'no or little' difference, 12 per cent were from Cyprus, 6 per cent were from Turkey and 4 per cent were from other countries. The students from Cyprus' answers for 'average' and 'much or high' levels of differences between the two communities were less than their counterparts as 8 per cent (compared to 10 and 11), and 10 per cent (compared to 19 and 20), respectively, ($p < 0.0001$) (Figure 3).

While the Green Line Regulation guarantees the free movement of Turkish Cypriot students who have opportunities to establish contacts with Greek Cypriots, it is found that the Turkish Cypriot university students cross the border for the South more often than Greek Cypriot students for the North. According to the literature, the number of students from the North who have 'never' visited the South is very low compared to the reverse (Hatay and Charalambous, 2015) and trust in institutions is low among the students from Cyprus (Kanol, 2013). Moreover, the trust of Greek Cypriots in the Church is related to their belief that 'Hellenism and Orthodoxy are interlinked and form part of their national identity' (Hadjipavlou, 2007: 354). Both Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot students named universities as the most trusted institutions. The Turkish Cypriot students named the 'media' and 'justice system' and the Greek Cypriot students

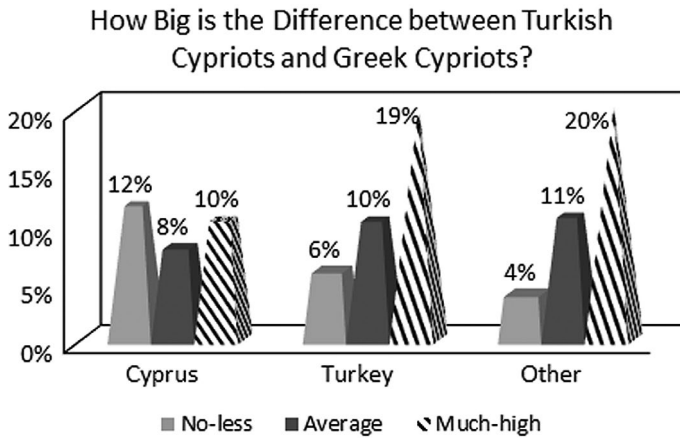


Figure 3. Difference between Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots.

named the 'justice system' and 'Church' as their second and third most trusted institutions (Hatay and Charalambous, 2015: 8). Contrary to these studies, our research results confirm that the Turkish Cypriot students do not discriminate or discriminate less against the Greek Cypriots, and do not perceive many differences between them, which may be the result of their daily contact with the Greek Cypriots or their desire to shift the future of the island towards unification.

This finding, as we will see below, is also supported in the mental maps of the Turkish Cypriots: of the 97 per cent of students who characterized union as 'good', 41 per cent were Turkish Cypriots compared to 23 and 33 per cent among the other groups of respondents. On the other hand, the other two groups' high perception of differences between the Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots may be related to their limited contact with the Greek Cypriots. Most of the students in northern Cyprus coming from Turkey, and mainly from Africa and Asia, can participate to activities in the buffer zone organized by the international organizations like the Goethe Institute or Home for Cooperation, but they cannot cross the border to the South.

The second question on the Turkish and Greek Cypriots was 'To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots should live together in the same country?' Among the 52 per cent of students who 'agreed', the highest percentage – 24 per cent – was selected by the students from other countries, compared to 15 per cent from Cyprus and 13 per cent from Turkey. Among the 22 per cent of students who 'disagreed', the rate of students from Turkey – 11 per cent – was nearly double that of the students from Cyprus and other countries, whose rate of disagreement was 5 and 6 per cent, respectively, ($p < 0.0001$) (Figure 4).

The acceptance of the Annan plan by Turkish Cypriots in 2004 can be taken as a hint of the current Cypriot students' desire to live together with the Greek

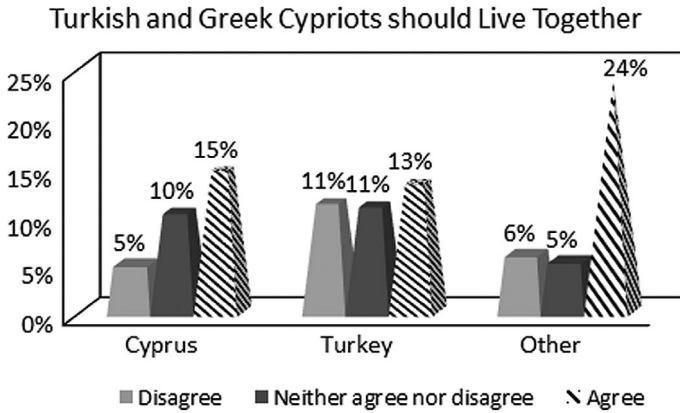


Figure 4. Turkish and Greek Cypriots should live together.

Cypriots. However, their rate of disagreement with the statement above was low compared to that of the students from Turkey. After the amendment of the Green Line Regulation, the students from Cyprus gained more opportunities like having a passport of the RoC or free movement within the EU, but they are not fully integrated into the European Union (ICG, 2014: 34). Moreover, as we will explain in the next section, the Turkish Cypriot students declared 'much or high' affiliation with the European identity in comparison to their counterparts from the other two groups, which can be taken as another sign of their readiness to live with the Greek Cypriots as equal EU citizens.

Identities

Six identities reveal significant differences between the three groups. These identities are the 'Cypriot', which is a common identity for the students living on the island, the 'Turkish Cypriot' for those who are from northern Cyprus and the 'Greek Cypriot' for those who are from the southern Cyprus. In addition, the 'Turkish' identity for students from Turkey and the 'Greek' identity from Greece (who may live in Cyprus or might have a personal attachment to one of these identities). Finally, the 'European' identity was proposed to check whether the students identify themselves with the EU or not.

In a study on the Greek and Turkish Cypriots, Hadjipavlou (2003: 281) mentions that an 'overwhelming proportion of Turkish and Greek Cypriots proudly define themselves as Cypriots' more than their 'prevailing ethnic self-definitions ...' of 'Greekness or Turkishness'. In our research, it is found that the identification of the students from Cyprus with the Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot identities is totally different than those of the students from Turkey and other countries. The students from Cyprus identify themselves at 'much or high' levels with these two identities, at 31 and 30 per cent, respectively, (Figures 5 and 6).

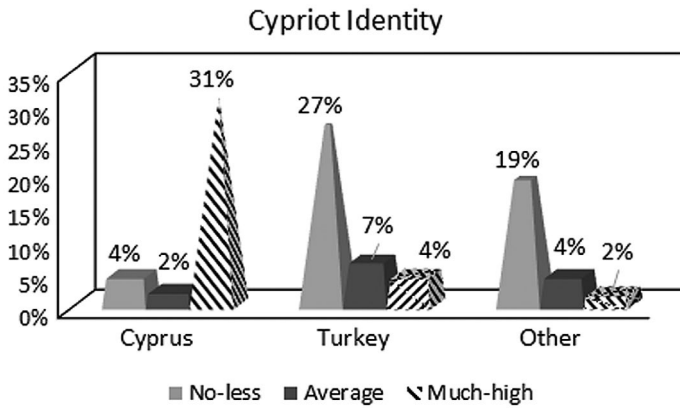


Figure 5. Cypriot identity.

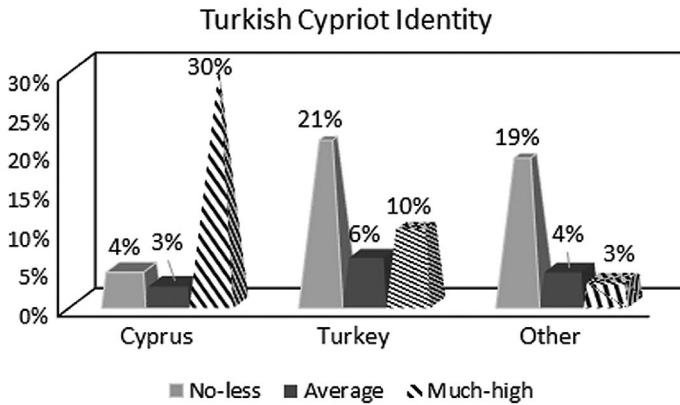


Figure 6. Turkish Cypriot identity.

Hadjipavlou (2003: 281) had also shown that in contrast to the Greek Cypriots, who had stereotypes about the Turkish Cypriots 'like less cultured, less educated and less ambitious than themselves', the Turkish Cypriots assigned 'both positive and negative attributes' to the Greek Cypriots. Additionally, since the opening of the border 'in April 2003' (Şahin, 2011: 586) and the gates like 'Lokmacı Kapısı, Ledra Palas and Kermia' in Nicosia – as well as others – the Turkish and Greek Cypriots may cross the border to the other side whenever they want by showing their identity cards or passports, which led to mutual links and contacts. Moreover, the negotiation process of the President of Cyprus Anastasiadis, and the President of northern Cyprus Akıncı, might have contributed to the positive perceptions of the Turkish Cypriot students about the Cypriot identity.

By contrast, the students from Turkey affiliated themselves at 'no or less' levels with the Cypriot or Turkish Cypriot identities at 27 and 21 per cent. Also, the

students from other countries affiliated themselves at 'no or less' levels with these two identities at 19 per cent ($p < 0.0001$). Thus, these two groups have little identification with both the Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot identities. This comes in quite sharp contrast with students born in Cyprus.

On this regard, in another study with the Greek- and Turkish-speaking youth (13 to 15 years old) in Nicosia, it was found that the Greek-speaking youth identified themselves as being from Cyprus while most of the Turkish-speaking youth identified themselves as being from northern Cyprus. They mentioned that 'they were Turkish Cypriot rather than simply Cypriot in order to challenge the perception that Cyprus is solely Greek' (Leonard, 2009: 472). Our research findings show that the students born in Cyprus identify themselves at high and almost equal levels with both the Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot identities. Moreover, they see these two identities as equal to each other or alternative identities. On the other hand, the students from Turkey less identify themselves with the Cypriot identity compared to the Turkish Cypriots, which may be related to a desire not to be linked to the Greek identity, which they might think exists in the Cypriot identity.

Related to the 'Turkish' (Figure 7) and 'Greek Cypriot' (Figure 8) identities below, the students from other countries identify themselves at 'no or less' levels with either identity at the rates of 15 and 20 per cent. More striking is the difference between the students from Turkey and Cyprus: their identification with the Turkish identity ('much or high' levels) are 33 and 22 per cent, respectively. Meanwhile, 'no or less' levels of identification with the Greek Cypriot identity were very high in both groups at 34 and 30 per cent, respectively, ($p < 0.0001$ and $p < 0.05$).

While the students from Cyprus identify themselves with the Cypriot, Turkish Cypriot and Turkish identities at high levels, they do not identify with the Greek Cypriot identity. Their Turkish identification can be explained by daily contacts

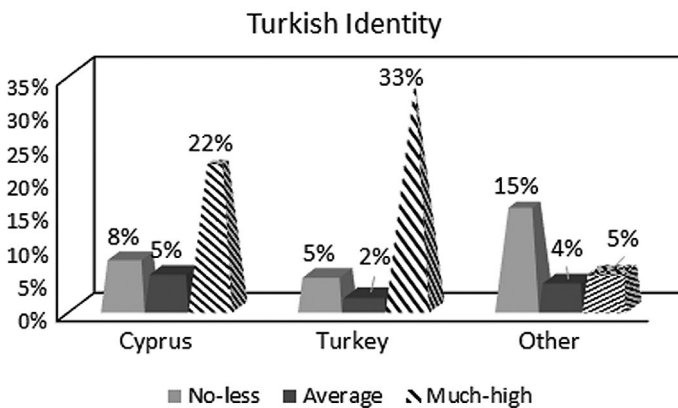


Figure 7. Turkish identity.

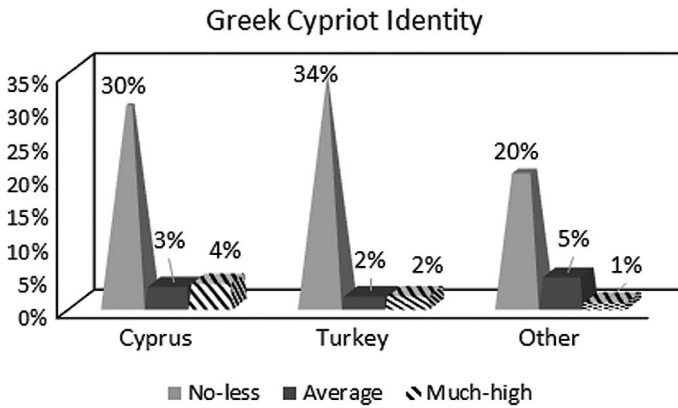


Figure 8. Greek Cypriot identity.

with the Turkish citizens living on the island and also more generally with Turkey. By contrast, the low identification with Greek Cypriot identity echoes the political discourse post-2003. When the border was opened in 2003, the government of northern Cyprus 'claimed that the Greek Cypriots still wanted *enosis* (Şahin, 2011: 586). As happened during the coup in 1974, the Turkish Cypriots and people in Turkey 'perceived it as a dramatic weakening of the Turkish Cypriots' position and a dramatic strengthening of the government of Cyprus' and Greece's position' (Nome, 2013: 57). Although the relationship between Turkey and Greece is better than before, the students from Turkey and Cyprus might remember the 'nationalist' Greek and Greek Cypriot idea of *enosis*, unification of the island with Greece, which possibly affect their identification with the Greek Cypriot identity.

The last identity discussed in this research is the European identity. The students from Cyprus declared 'much or high' levels of identification with the European identity at 17 per cent, which is more than double that of the students from Turkey, at 7 per cent, and almost double that of the students from other countries, at 9 per cent. On the other hand, the students from Turkey declared 'no or less' levels of the European identification at 20 per cent, compared to the students from other countries at 10 per cent and from Cyprus at 9 per cent ($p < 0.01$) (Figure 9).

Living in an EU member country might have increased the identification of the students from Cyprus with the European identity. As mentioned by Hatay and Charalambous (2015: 8), '62 per cent' of the Turkish Cypriot students cite 'shopping and entertainment' as the most important reason for crossing the border, followed by 'personal conviction, meeting friends, visiting homes or villages'. That is why these students identify themselves more with the Cypriot, Turkish Cypriot and European identities, and demand better opportunities for education or studying abroad, along with the entertainment facilities that can be found in the South or in the European Union. On the other hand, Turkey's

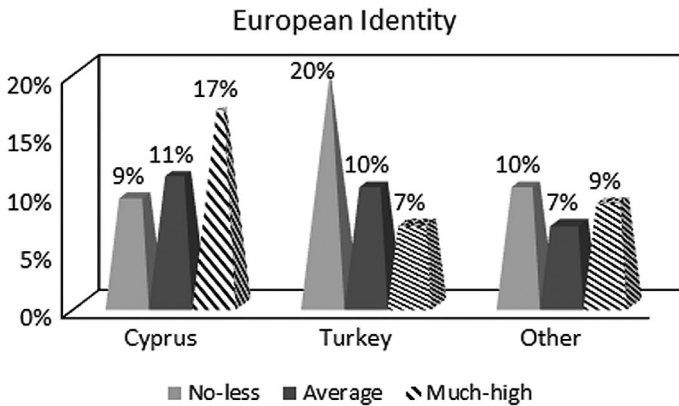


Figure 9. European identity.

slow EU accession process, and continuing ‘ups and downs’ in their relations with the EU (EU-Turkey, 2016), might have resulted in less identification with the EU identity by the students from Turkey. Similarly, in a study on the perceptions of university students in Turkey about the EU, 34 per cent agreed that ‘Turkey will never be a member of the EU’ (Alkan, 2013: 18), which echoes the results of our research findings of high levels of ‘no or less’ identification with the European identity among the students from Turkey.

Cyprus today: Perceptions of power-sharing in Cyprus among the next generation

The drawings made by the students of Cyprus can come as a complement to understand their political opinions and identities. In this perspective, the drawings were analysed and grouped according to the information they contain; that is, whether Nicosia/Lefkosa is on the map (and if so, where), whether there are signs of ‘union is good’ or ‘separation is good’, and whether the drawing includes the Green Line, i.e., the linguistic border. Results are presented for each of the three groups and independent sample T-tests have been generated – only analyses with significant results are discussed below ($p < 0.05$ and $p < 0.01$). As shown in Table 2, out of 302 surveys, 84 per cent included drawings whereas 16 per cent included no drawing.

A first striking finding relates to the place of Nicosia. The capital city of Nicosia was labelled on 28 drawings, and in 64 per cent of cases Nicosia was drawn on the border while in 36 per cent it was depicted in the North. 29 per cent of the students from other countries depicted Nicosia as being in the North, which may be due to lack of familiarity with the geography. Seven per cent of the students from Turkey depicted Nicosia in the North, which may be either a mistake or a political statement. What’s more, there is a correlation between students

Table 2. Drawings.

Criteria	Cyprus		Turkey		Other		Total	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Drawings*	88	29	89	30	76	25	253	84
No drawings*	2	1	18	6	29	10	49	16
Total	90	30	107	35	105	35	302	100
Nicosia in the centre*	5	18	5	18	8	28	18	64
Nicosia in the North*	–	–	2	7	8	29	10	36
Nicosia total	5	18	7	25	16	57	28	100
Union is good*	42	41	26	26	34	33	102	100
Separation is good**	12	50	8	33	4	17	24	100
Linguistic border	17	24	23	33	30	43	70	100

Note: Important totals and subtotals are underlined as bold.

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

who drew the capital city of Nicosia in the centre in their maps and those who identified with the Cypriot identity, in contrast to those who depicted Nicosia in the North ($p < 0.05$). No students from Cyprus depicted Nicosia as being in the North, which may be related to their familiarity with the geography or they did not want to draw attention to indicators of division. Moreover, depicting Nicosia in the centre without dividing it into two could also be evaluated as a desire for the unification of the island (Figures 10 and 11).

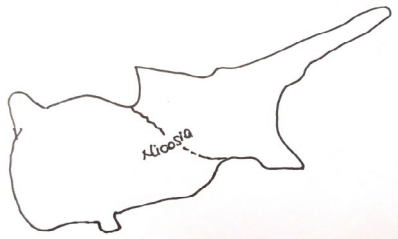


Figure 10. Nicosia in the centre.

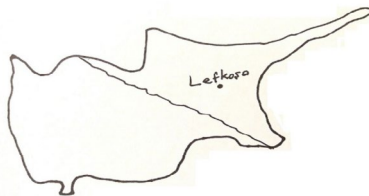


Figure 11. Nicosia in the North.

In 102 of the drawings, there were signs of 'union is good'. Iconography such as peace signs, hands joining together, flowers or a depiction of eliminating

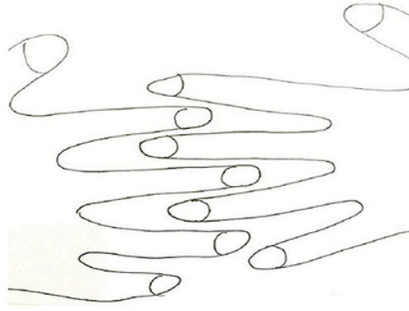


Figure 12. Union is good.

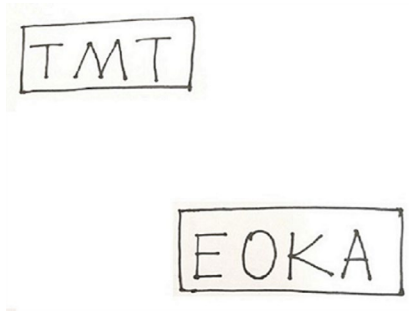


Figure 13. Separation is good.

the border can be mentioned among them (Figure 12). In a study about the youth from both sides, it was found that the majority of Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots believe 'the division of the island' has affected their opportunities like 'schools, good jobs, having friends from both communities, place of preference, standards of living or studying abroad' (UNDP-CHDR, 2009: 131). The unification of the island and living together may bring solutions to many of the problems listed by the students. In our own research, it is found that the students who indicated that 'union is good' have higher Cypriot ($p < 0.0001$) and Turkish Cypriot ($p < 0.05$) identifications compared to the other two groups. As confirmed by another study, 'the civil society in both communities is ready to embrace "Cypriotism", that is, to have Cyprus as their reference point in the event of a solution' rather than referring to the 'historical motherland symbols' (Hadjipavlou, 2007: 362). So, the Turkish Cypriot students' strong identification with Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot identities can also be taken as signs of a demand for unification.

In contrast, in 24 of the drawings, there were signs of 'separation or status quo is good'. Depictions of different roads, different eye glasses, cars driving in different directions, danger signs, mentioning only northern Cyprus (KKTC, TRNC)

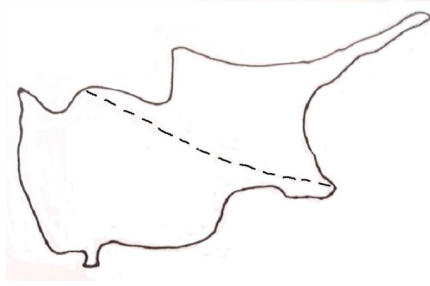


Figure 14. Linguistic border.

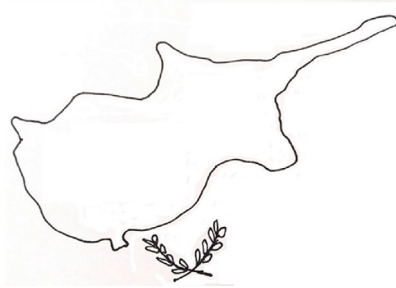


Figure 15. No linguistic border.

or the paramilitary forces from each side (TMT and EOKA) are some examples of this (Figure 13).

Finally, 70 of the drawings depicted a linguistic border (or Green Line), but the analyses did not reveal any significant differences between the students from the three groups despite percentages of 24, 33 and 43 (Figures 14 and 15). However, a correlation was found between the students who did or did not draw a linguistic border and how Nicosia was positioned on the drawings. The students who drew a linguistic border positioned Nicosia in the North at a rate of 28 per cent; compared to those who did not draw a linguistic border, seven per cent of whom positioned Nicosia in the North ($p < 0.001$).

Conclusion: Is a power-sharing model still an alternative to the Cyprus conflict?

From these data, it can be concluded that the Turkish Cypriot students and Turkish students (and other students) form two distinct groups even if they live in the same place. The results from the mental map exercise show that only 24 of the drawings were interpreted as supporting the idea that 'separation or the status quo is good'. On the other hand, 102 of the drawings were interpreted as supporting the idea of 'union is good'. These figures can be evaluated as more

support for the unification of the island. The desire for unity mentioned is almost four times greater than the desire for separation. It is clear that the younger generation of Turkish Cypriots sees no problem in the idea of living with Greek Cypriots. The generations that have come after 1974 in particular have never witnessed war or heated conflict between the two communities, which is an important indicator for building confidence about living together.

The break-up of the political accommodation between Turkish and Greek Cypriots in 1963 and the subsequent de facto partition of the island since 1974 have reinforced ethnic and political tensions between the two communities. As argued, one of the main limitations for maintaining power sharing that became an issue in 1960 was the lack of an 'overarching identity' in Cyprus; instead, the RoC triggered conflict and tensions along ethnic lines (Yakinthou, 2009: 57; Michael, 2013). Although Cyprus has a small population that would be more conducive to consociational democracy, this has been hindered by the protracted conflict on the island. However, the results of the survey, which illustrate that students from Cyprus identify themselves with both Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot identities, is a positive indication that a territorial Cypriot identity may be crystallizing.

The Cyprus Question has occupied a central place in political and scholarly debates for several decades now. In the more than 40 years since the split, political dynamics have evolved quite differently on either side of the Green Line. While several articles have delved into the issue of the negotiations before and after the Annan Plan at the level of the political establishment, less attention has been paid to the perspectives of the younger generations, especially in northern Cyprus. This article has sought to explore the political perceptions and preferences of today's students on the issue of Cyprus and its future, and has done so both through surveys and using a more original approach: mental maps.

Our findings show that there are quite important differences between the perceptions of Turkish Cypriot students and Turkish students, as well as students from other countries. The students from Cyprus support both a decentralized federative structure, in which the communities should have more power than the central state, and also believe the communities should share power equally. On the other hand, they do not intensely support a strong central state, as is the case with the students from Turkey and other countries. In addition, the students from other countries and Turkey mostly support the idea that the 'two levels should share power'. Moreover, the Turkish Cypriot students see fewer differences between the Turkish and Greek Cypriot communities than do students from Turkey or other countries. When these results are considered together alongside the notion of building a territorial Cypriot identity, this might reinforce the notion that consociational government will survive during a transitional period which may end in a decentralized federative structure in the long run. Above all, the question of reconciliation between the two parts of the island is much more present among the representations of Turkish Cypriot youth. The

open question for future research is whether this view is shared by the younger generation of Greek Cypriots.

Notes

1. In this article 'northern Cyprus' will be used for the northern part of Cyprus. The expressions like 'the students from Cyprus' and 'the Turkish Cypriot students' will be equally used for the students who were born in Cyprus, i.e., not having an immigrant background.
2. Especially after the EU accession of the RoC, Turkish Cypriot students have more opportunities to study abroad (EC, 2015) and the universities in northern Cyprus try to attract the students from abroad such as Turkey, Africa and Asia. In 2016–2017 academic year, 93,292 students enrolled in 12 universities (the number has reached to 16): 56 per cent of them are from Turkey, 28 per cent from the other countries, and 15 per cent from northern Cyprus (MEC, 2017).

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