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# Non-Apologies and prolonged silences in post-conflict settings: the case of post-colonial Cyprus

**Kathleen Ireton and Iosif Kovras**

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**Abstract**

Despite the growing use of apologies in post-conflict settings, cases of non-apology remain unaddressed and continue to puzzle academics and peace builders. This article focuses on the absence of apology by non-state, anti-state actors through the case of EOKA (1955-59) in Cyprus. Since the independence of the island (1960), EOKA has been reluctant to offer an apology to its civilian victims of the 'anti-colonial' struggle. Using field data, parliamentary debates, and drawing on comparisons, this paper analyzes the factors which contributed to a lack of apology. The article points out that the inherited timelessness of Greek nationalism, and the impression of a perpetual need for defence set up perfect conditions for the development of a hegemonic discourse. This illustrates how groups can avoid rehabilitation of victims, reconciliation and societal cooperation, and the results can serve as a lesson to other cases of non-apology.

**Equal contribution to this article was given by both authors.*

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**Key Words**: Political Apologies; Cyprus; post-conflict; nationalism; reconciliation.
**Disciplines**: International Politics; Ethnic Conflict; History / Anthropology.

## Introduction

In 1996, following 30 years of fighting against Apartheid in South Africa, the African National Congress (ANC) offered an apology to its victims, when Thabo Mbeki, on behalf of the ANC, apologized to the innocent people killed by ANC activities and to the families of the men killed in the party's detention camps outside South Africa. Similarly, in Guatemala, the guerrilla group Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG – Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity) apologized in 1999 for its violent role in the conflict against the oppressive military dictatorship which had lasted from 1960 to 1996. Following the publication of a report that attributed three percent of murders to the URNG, the group apologized for its excessive use of violence. In 2002, the (Provisional) Irish Republican Army issued an apology on the thirtieth anniversary of Bloody Friday to all non-combatant casualties of the three-decade-long campaign to unite Ireland, which ended in 1998 with the signing of the Good Friday Agreement. These apologies were all offered shortly after their respective conflicts ended, and made a significant contribution to addressing past injustices, reconciling society and healing victims by acknowledging wrongs.

Our contemporary era has been called the "Age of Apology" (Shapiro, 1997; Brooks, 1999, p.3). There are myriad examples of states, corporations and individuals coming to terms with their negative actions through the use of apologies. Globally, we see the increasing use of apologies between states and between state leaders and their citizens over current and historical matters of policy, culture and security. Most of the current literature focuses on the state-level use of apologies and moral or instrumental factors influencing the delivery of the apology and its success (Barkan & Karn, 2006; Gibney et.Al, 2008; Nobels, 2008). However, apologies by non-state or anti-state actors are increasingly common and, as such, should be added to the literature.

The examples above suggest that in post-conflict societies when the regime is stable and a consolidated democracy has emerged, apologies by rebel or paramilitary groups are helpful to the peace process by renewing civic trust. Such apologies are not always forthcoming, however. Unlike the organizations mentioned above, EOKA (*Εθνική Οργάνωση Κυπρίων Αγωνιστών* - National Organization of Cypriot Fighters), a Cypriot anti-colonial armed group active in 1955-1959, remain extremely reluctant to apologize for injustices even now, more than 50 years after the conclusion of its activities.

The case of EOKA is particularly instructive since persistent non-apologies constitute an understudied process. Examination of EOKA's reluctance to apologize will provide useful insights into the pattern(s) of 'silence', and the conditions which block the acknowledgment of truth in post-conflict settings. This article considers the ramifications of the non-apology, both in the Cypriot case and more generally. The article is divided into three parts. The first provides a comprehensive assessment of the literature on apologies and shows that present explanations fail to illuminate the situation of EOKA. The second presents the historical conditions within which EOKA carried out its civilian casualties and asks why, despite the state's acknowledgment of other prickly issues related to past violence, this was not possible in the case of EOKA. The last part of the article provides a new explanation, highlighting the mechanism that has prevented EOKA from apologizing.

**Apologies and non-apologies**

Since the early 1990s a normative turn has informed the priorities of the international community, making reconciliation, transitional justice, apologies and a moral scrutiny of the past central tenets of post-conflict societies. The changing nature of violence in civil wars, involving not only regular soldiers but irregulars/civilians, often results in

massive civilian casualties. Therefore, in the aftermath of the cessation of hostilities, the objective is no longer merely 'negative peace' – or the absence of violence – but social transformation that will restore broken social bonds and reinstate collapsed institutions (Hamber, 2003, p.155). In this dual normative context, apologies have become a useful tool of peace-building.

Contemporary literature has tended to focus on cases where there has been an apology, seeking to determine their effectiveness in promoting reconciliation and victim healing (Tavuchis, 1999; Lazare, 2004; Smith, 2008). Evaluation criteria highlight the extent of truth recovery and the genuineness of the apologizer (James, 2008; Macleod, 2007). It ignores cases where an apology is lacking in its bid to understand the obstacles which are overcome to bring about the apology, including in Germany, Japan, South Africa and America.

Pressure is the most likely motivator of an apology, including solicitation from victim or third party groups (i.e. government, reconciliation tribunals). In other cases, apologies are used as a trade off – the expression of remorse in exchange for a mitigation of consequences or amnesty. The timing of an apology could indicate its use as a public relations tactic to gain votes or general sympathy and support (Bilder, 2008, p.24-27). While these are genuine motivators, such 'quasi-apologies' - tactical, explanatory or formalistic – are seen as self-serving and therefore insincere (Macleod, 2007, p.v).

A second more positive motivation revolves around a desire to create a new or bridging dialogue, which is then used for multiple functions. The most important is that it reduces or eliminates the injustice gap by allowing truth recovery and the end of the victim's silence (Exline et Al., 2007, p.481). This allows for education of the issues behind and consequences of the conflict. A more inclusive group narrative can

be created, revising the dominant discourse through public ownership and redefining national membership (Barkan & Karn, 2006, p.27). The healing created by this reconstruction helps prevent future obstructions in social relationships (Tavuchis, 1991) and breaks the cycle of hatred (Minow, 2003).

Finally, a perpetrator group may apologize to demonstrate *bona fide* empathy for its victims. This is the most genuine type of apology and is the most likely to succeed; however, it is the least common in the political sphere. It attests to a re-evaluation of their actions by the offenders and to their commitment to cooperation and change (Bilder, 2008, p.24-27).

There are many logistical challenges to apologies. Political systems which force people to make alliances or hinder open and critical debate can easily prevent apologies by discouraging political elites from tackling the issue and risking the loss of coalition or voter support. No matter how strong the civil support for an apology, without elite subscription, an apology will never occur (Nobles, 2008, p.108). Judicial repercussions and a fear of reprisal through the court system can prevent an apology, as can the fear of backlash and punishment by the perpetrator's own group (Macleod, 2007, p.xv; Lind, 2008). Additionally, knowing that a victim group will be empowered by an apology can hinder perpetrators from speaking out, especially if they are not prepared to give up the power they wield through the media or the political system.

Even worse, perpetrator groups may (dangerously) believe that they have nothing to apologize for (Nobles, 2008, p.3). They might believe that their cause justified any means or that the victims deserved the violence they suffered. This point of view demonstrates a lack of respect for the victims and their families (Coicaud & Jönsson, 2008, p.87) as well as an inability to admit that even if the violence towards

the victim could somehow be justified, the family did not deserve to suffer. It speaks to the pride of the perpetrator group and its hesitation to weaken the glory or legitimacy of its actions; simply stated, the perpetrators fear humiliation (Dundes Renteln, 2008).

Finally, in the case of delayed apologies, the issue of collective guilt and responsibility throws up enormous barriers. With time, the original leadership, decision-makers or even group members pass away leaving only those who try to keep the spirit and memory of the original perpetrator group alive or at least benefit from their activities. Members of new generations often reject apologies with the argument that they can't be held responsible for deeds they or their contemporaries did not commit. This argument is challenged by the idea that a structured organization is an agent whose existence transcends the individuals who make it up (Thompson, 2008, p.37).The literature on apologies is mostly confined to a small number of well-known cases where an apology (either clearly stated or symbolic) has been made, frequently with a relative degree of success. Because the literature focuses on specific debates, such as the timing and the functions of apologies – all of which presuppose the existence of apologies – other fundamental questions remain under-studied, such as why some societies 'silence' certain aspects of their past and defer truth recovery. By solving some of the multi-level puzzles of EOKA, we can provide important insights into apologies generally and the prevention of truth recovery in societies emerging from conflict more specifically.

**EOKA and the 'anti-colonial' struggle**

EOKA was formed in the mid-1950s as a response to British resistance to the demand by the Greek-Cypriot community to achieve *Enosis* (unification) with mainland

Greece. It was led politically by Archbishop Makarios III and militarily by General George Grivas. EOKA's intention was to use guerrilla tactics against the British to force them out of the island and gain international sympathy; with international focus on the 'Cyprus problem', Britain and the United Nations would be forced to solve the issue (Ehrlich, 1974, p.11-2). On 1 April 1955, a series of bombs exploded in government buildings in several locations on the island, as EOKA announced its presence to the British (Holland, 1998, p.52).

At the beginning of the struggle, the focus was on British military installations. The British, seeking an ally to prevent the loss of territory, turned to Turkey and encouraged the Turkish government to take an active interest in protecting Turkish-Cypriot affairs (Clerides, 1989, p.24). A conscious recruitment of Turkish-Cypriots by the police and Special Forces, was seen as collaboration with the enemy and converted the conflict to an inter-communal struggle in which EOKA was pitted not only against the British imperialists but Turkish-Cypriot 'traitors'. The situation was further complicated because the main organisation of the political left, AKEL (*Anorthotikó Kómma Ergazómenou Laoú* – the Cypriot communist party), agreed with EOKA on the overarching objective of *Enosis*, but it vocally disagreed with the use of armed struggle as the means to achieve this end. Instead of violence, AKEL proposed massive rallies that would unite both Cypriot communities. This made them, in the eyes of EOKA (including its anti-communist leader, General Grivas), traitors and conspirators; consequently, leftists were targeted by EOKA as well (Hadjidemetriou, 2007, p.347-8; Purcell, 1969, p.263). At times AKEL labelled EOKA members 'thugs' in turn (Kakkoulis, 1990, p.69).

There has not yet been an authoritative count of the number of casualties resulting from EOKA's activities.[1] The latest investigations based on the examination of British archives show that EOKA executed between 198 and 203 Greek Cypriots and 104 British soldiers during its struggle, a considerable figure if one considers the island's population (Drousiotis, 2005a and 2005b). Irrespective of the precise number, it has been acknowledged that a significant proportion of those executed by EOKA were Greek Cypriots and only a minority British, calling into question the 'anti-colonial' nature of the struggle (Attalides, 1979, p.9; Crawshaw, 1978, p.200-257; Purcell, 1969, p.272). Although the majority of EOKA's victims were executed as 'traitors', in reality, the motivation was often either ideological (anti-communism) or personal vengeance. Paying off old scores is a recurring phenomenon in civil wars (Kalyvas, 2006, p.184).

EOKA's struggle ended with the signing of London-Zurich agreements which formally established the Republic of Cyprus in 1960. Apologies most frequently occur immediately following the transition to peace and democracy in a troubled society. Thus, conventional wisdom assumes that with the establishment of a new republic in Cyprus, the time would be ripe for apology; EOKA could have freely and safely offered an apology without weakening the legitimacy of their struggle. Further, given the profound benefits of apologies, an apology from EOKA would cultivate the ground for societal reconciliation. However, the historical injustice to memory of

[1] Assassination attempts were made against 230 Greek Cypriots; approximately a quarter of those executed by EOKA came from the ranks of Greek-Cypriot traitors (Markides, 1977, p.19). Angelos Vlachos, Greek Ambassador in Cyprus at the time, gives the following figures for civilian casualties as a result of EOKA's struggle: 393 deaths (26 British; 203 Greek (Cypriots); Turkish (Cypriots) 7) (1980, p.96). Daniel Branch – citing information from War Office – provides a slightly different figure; of the 238 civilian casualties, 203 were Greek-Cypriots (2010, p.407).

those who were executed as traitors remains, even after five decades, largely due to EOKA's reluctance to acknowledge its misdeeds.

**The timelessness of Greek (Cypriot) nationalism: explaining the low supply**

If we wish to explain the persistent reluctance of the 'Association of EOKA Combatants' (*SomatíoAghonistón tis EOKA*) to apologize for past misdeeds to both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, we need to consider the passage of time as it relates to Greek-Cypriot nationalism. The absence of a comprehensive political settlement on the Cyprus problem, in combination with the absence of apologies from TMT (Turkish Resistance Organization) for Greek-Cypriot casualties in the same period (1955-1959) could partly explain EOKA's unwillingness to issue an apology to Turkish-Cypriot victims. However, the puzzle remains for EOKA's Greek-Cypriot victims.

The passage of time was a catalyst for the solution of other more intractable issues, such as the problem of missing persons (Kovras, 2008), since it facilitated a change in the normative context within which domestic policy-makers and politicians in the two communities approached this humanitarian problem. The function of time, however, is not deterministic. In fact, in the case of EOKA's struggle, the passage of time had the reverse function, namely, blocking apologies and the acknowledgment of past misdeeds. The conception of time is of paramount importance in Greek-Cypriot nationalism – epitomized by EOKA's struggle – and has two overlapping expressions. It perceives the national community to be in a *constant* struggle to defend the nation from potential 'traitors' that could harm the 'community'. This perception of time precludes introspection and excludes the possibility of re-evaluating past actions. Furthermore, time was the necessary ingredient which permitted these ideas to acquire

hegemonic status, thereby preventing anyone from challenging this 'heroic' reading of the EOKA struggle.

In *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson discusses the paradox of the 'objective modernity of nations to the historian's eye' and the subjective antiquity of nations to the nationalist's eye (1991, p.5). Walker Connor, also highlights the 'timelessness' of nations in popular perceptions (1990 and 2004), and juxtaposes the often conflicting factual/chronological historical approaches to the study of nationalism adopted by scholars with the omnitemporal presence of the nation in the hearts and minds of its members (Connor, 2004, p.44).

In essence, it would be analytically incoherent to attempt to explain in rational/history terms the decisions taken by EOKA association. An explanation should reveal the texture of nationalism that EOKA represents and its conception of time. It has been argued that there are two principal identities within the Greek-Cypriot community. The first (*Hellenocentric*) highlights the ethnic affiliation to the Greek nation while the other (*Cyprioteness*) points to the civic form of identification with the state, irrespective of the ethnic origin of its citizens (Peristianis, 2006; Mavratsas, 1999). EOKA's struggle – and its leadership – represents the former (*Hellenocentric*) identity; a discussion of its basic features will be useful to explain its reluctance to apologize for past misdeeds. According to Greek (Cypriot) nationalism, the Greek-Cypriot community constitutes an integral part of the (mainland) Greek nation, based on a common historical descent. Greek nationalism claims a linear and undisrupted continuity since ancient Greece (6 BC). As the inheritor of 'the most glorious civilization', the Greek nation is a 'brotherless nation' (*έθνος ανάδελφο*), and wages a 'constant struggle' (Heraclides, 2007, p.23) against barbaric invaders who repeatedly occupy Greece (and Cyprus).

A recurrent topic in Greek (nationalist) history and collective memory is the existence of 'traitors' (domestic and foreign) who betray the nation. The most recent and traumatic experience of national 'betrayal' occurred in Cyprus in the summer of 1974 when international powers, the US and Britain, acting in league with the Greek Junta (seen as their puppet), paved the way for the Turkish invasion. Hence, betrayal is a particularly sensitive and central element in the Greek-Cypriot version of Greek nationalism. For example, during the 2004 referendums for the reunification plan proposed by the (then) UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, Tassos Papadopoulos, President of the Republic of Cyprus (2003-2008), labelled those supporting the Annan plan as *nenekoi*.[2] Dimitrios Nenekos was a Greek chieftain during the Greek war of independence; he defected, followed the enemy for personal profit and inflicted major damage on the Greeks fighting for independence (Phillips, 1897:233). In brief, the existence of internal enemies constitutes an intrinsic feature of Greek nationalism. This 'reality' obliges its members to be personally responsible and in a state of constant alert to protect the nation from traitors.

The preservation of the (official) memory is the central tool of resistance to potential sources of betrayal. The central role of memory preservation in safeguarding the nation is epitomized in the official educational doctrine of *Dhen Ksehn* (I don't forget) entrenched in the education in the Republic of Cyprus (Christou, 2006, p.286). Any attempt to revise the official memory is perceived as revisionism and, as such, constitutes a form of betrayal.

The maintenance of the official (national) memory is a stated objective of EOKA. The declared principles of the 'Foundation of the Liberation Struggle of

[2] *Ephialtes* is another symbol of betrayal, referring to the defeat of the Greeks in the Battle of Thermopylae (408 BC) when Greek positions were revealed to Persian forces.

EOKA 1955-1959' include the 'national and physical survival of Hellenism in Cyprus through the preservation and cultivation of Greco-Orthodox values and traditions', including, of course, the struggle of EOKA.[3] In other words, the texture of Greek (Cypriot) nationalism significantly decreases both the prospect and the scope of introspection and acknowledgment of past misdeeds, since such an activity would be seen as a betrayal. This attitude is also informed and reinforced by the fact that the Cyprus conflict is interpreted through the lens of broader historical antagonisms between Greece and Turkey, making it even more difficult to navigate atrocities. So long as EOKA's struggle is seen as part of the Greco-Turkish conflict, any effort to scrutinize 'our own community' will be seen as exculpating the other side. Since all sides have an interest in political agendas that perpetuate crude representations, this linkage makes it more difficult for EOKA to apologize.

What emerges from this discussion is an idiosyncratic conception of time. In effect, this struggle to protect the community is never-ending/constant. A 'traitor' who has betrayed the nation in the past certainly cannot rejoin the community. Yiannis Papadakis shows in his extensive study of history textbooks, because 'the Self (and enemy) were the same throughout history, any injury to the National Self in the past is an injury to the current Self too' (2008, p.143). This conclusion is particularly relevant to understanding EOKA's intransigence to acknowledge its responsibility for its crimes in the 1950s.

So long as those individuals executed by EOKA 'betrayed' the struggle, and taking into consideration that the noble cause of the 'anti-colonial struggle' was morally flawless, there is no reason for EOKA to justify its acts. A leading member of the 'Foundation of the Liberation Struggle of EOKA 1955-1959' revealed in a

[3] Further information at: http://myweb.cytanet.com.cy/iaae5559/greek_main.htm, last accessed 1 October 2010.

personal interview that those executed during the 'anti-colonial' struggle 'were not killed because of their political beliefs but because they were traitors', although she admitted that, in several instances, the executions 'could be attributed to mistakes, or personal rivalries that we cannot control'.[4] This was confirmed by other members of EOKA who agreed that 'some civilians were executed by EOKA because they were traitors; EOKA had to defend itself... so there is no reason to say sorry'.[5] In another case, the official association insisted on labelling all its victims as 'traitors' and denying their families an acknowledgment of the truth. The association's response to the children of a Greek-Cypriot victim of EOKA is revealing:

> [W]e believe that even if it were possible to reveal the information, it would not be of any use to learn that their relative did A or B, nor they would have been relieved to know that their father was the cause for someone else to be arrested, tortured, imprisoned or even executed. We are sorry but the issue is closed for us. (cited in Poumpouris, 1994, p.163)

The decision of EOKA leaders and a considerable number of right-wing thinkers of the time to treat the left as 'unpatriotic' was most certainly influenced by developments in mainland Greece. During the Greek Civil war (1946-1949), the political leaders of EAM (National Liberation Front), the primary rebel group which was guided by the Greek Communist Party (KKE), allied themselves with 'Slavomacedonians' (Slavic speaking Orthodox). Allegedly EAM and KKE were planning the establishment of a multi-national federation in Macedonia in the aftermath of the conflict. The majority of the Greek population perceived such a position to be treasonous, given the bloody struggle of the Greek nation during the Balkan wars and the First World War to capture these places.

[4] Personal Interview, EOKA Member, Nicosia, 2 February 2009.
[5] Personal Interview, EOKA Member, Nicosia, 14 October 2010.

Moreover, as noted above, the leadership of EOKA – particularly General George Grivas – was informed by extreme anti-communist feelings. During the Greek civil war, Grivas was the leader of the anti-communist terrorist group X (*Hites*), and it seems that his previous experiences were injected into the Cyprus context during EOKA's struggle (Papadakis, 1998, p.151). In his memoir, he writes: 'We have to tackle the situation courageously. The communists are enemies irrespectively if we like it or not. It is advisable that we exterminate them as a political entity' (Grivas, 1997, p.198).

Although the passage of time in social scientific terms could create opportunities for normative change and public acknowledgment, this does not hold true for EOKA. The 'symbolic capital' of the (liberating) legacy of EOKA explains its minimal truth recovery, acknowledgment of past mistakes and apologies. Additionally, that EOKA is seen to have won against the British militarily, and that it was the politician's fault that *Enosis* was not achieved[6] passed the blame for failures of the struggle and heroicized the fighters and their actions.

Two questions remain unaddressed. Why did the state not apologize? And more interestingly, why did social groups – usually the main source of truth seeking – remain silent? In other societies, civil society has mobilized, even after several decades, forcing the state to address and apologize for past misdeeds. Consider, for example, the recent mobilization in Spain addressing the Republican memory and seeking an apology for its victims during the Spanish civil war. Why did this not happen in Cyprus?

[6] Personal interview, Renos Lyssotis, Nicosia, 13 October 2010.

**Explaining the minimal demand: hegemonic beliefs and elite consensus**

During transitions, the main tenets of what will be remembered and what will remain excluded from collective memory are set. Given that there have been two major transition periods in Cyprus' modern history (the birth of the Republic in 1960 and the events of July 1974); the study of transition should provide insight into why the state did not apologize for the historical injustices of EOKA.

Examination of the parliamentary debates in the Cyprus House of Representatives and the speeches on the anniversaries of the coup (15 July) and the Turkish invasion (20 July), from 1974 until 2009, indicates that the official discourse adopted since 1974 has three overlapping tenets. First, and most remarkably, there is an absence of any references to intra-communal violence, even though intra-communal violence monopolized parliamentary debates in the period preceding the Turkish invasion. Second, it seems that the traumatic period of 1974 acted as a political lesson on the dangers of intra-communal divisions if the Greek-Cypriot community were to survive. The need for national unity, reconciliation and the strengthening of the legitimacy of state institutions became central in the effort to reunify the island.[7] Third, there is a noticeable effort to accentuate the 'culture of victimhood' which attributed (moral and political) responsibility exclusively to Turkey in such ongoing issues as the missing, refugees and the enclaved.

Apparently, then, an 'invented unity' became a central and consensually accepted element of the elite discourse. This unity was meticulously designed to avoid the problematic situation (inter- or intra-communal incidents of violence) before 1974 (Kovras and Loizides 2011). Any reference to the struggle of EOKA, the inter-communal violence of 1960s or the intra-communal violence of the early 1970s would

have de-legitimized/discredited the official Greek-Cypriot narrative that lent credence to the view that the Cyprus problem began in 1974. Inconvenient issues, such as whether EOKA victims were conspirators, and if they were not, whether their memory should be acknowledged, were excluded from public consideration. In other words, political life entered a state of exception where 'there is always some excuse to avoid the responsibility including the legal culpability of the situation'.[8]

The intra-communal violence of the early 1970s which triggered the Turkish invasion acted as a 'political lesson' for political elites to overcome the old divisions within the Greek-Cypriot community. Focusing exclusively on the wounds opened by the Turkish invasion, while simultaneously forgetting about the intra-communal past, became twin founding tenets of the transition. Unlike other political cleavages, such as left-right, that divided the Greek-Cypriot community, the legacy of EOKA had the potential to unite the community. The disaster of 1974 made room for EOKA to further legitimize the glory and success of the liberation struggle and overshadowed the need to address the intra-communal issues. A study of debates in the House of Representatives reveals that this lesson transcended political ideologies and party affiliations.

Political learning was gradually ingrained into the political culture, the party system and the political institutions of the republic, ultimately attaining hegemonic status. Glafkos Clerides, leader of right-wing DISY, stressed: 'The primary historical lesson to be learned is….that the division and intolerance are sources of national disasters […] Therefore, today we shall all work hard towards decreasing the tensions of the past and build a real and universal unity'.[9] For his part, AKEL leader Ezekias Papaioannou insisted: 'The current parliament is the product of patriotic democratic

[8] Personal interview, Nicos Trimikliniotis, Nicosia, 20 October 2010.
[9] Parliamentary Speeches, House of Representatives, 15 July 1981, 269.

cooperation. We have to safeguard what has been achieved in the objective of the patriotic democratic cooperation....for the salvation of Cyprus'.[10]

AKEL is a political party with massive grassroots power representing a significant proportion of EOKA victims. In power since 2008, AKEL has made verbal promises to address the issue yet to this point has abstained from doing so. Paradoxically, any attempt by AKEL to restore the memory of the victims of EOKA unilaterally, would reassert the 'traitor' discourse, as it would be perceived as an attempt to undermine the national cause of reunification, revise history and betray the common struggle. Because the anti-colonial struggle of EOKA remains the only legitimate point of reference for Greek-Cypriots, it is very difficult, even for AKEL, to challenge a well-entrenched hegemonic belief.[11] So long as the problem remains framed dichotomously and focused on apportioning blame, historical allegations of betrayal have shaped and continue to shape the political cleavages of the Republic of Cyprus, providing symbolic and moral value. As an example, until recently, AKEL did not dare support its own candidate for presidency lest they be labelled 'semi-loyal' to the regime.

Electoral considerations may also hinder AKEL's movement towards apology since 'the form of government that we have is not facilitating consensus politics'.[12] The Presidential system in the Republic of Cyprus requires that a candidate receive absolute majority; if no candidate reaches this threshold, a second round of elections takes place (Loizides, 2009). It is virtually impossible for any party alone to promote its own candidate; therefore, alliances – especially in the second round – are important to the electoral system. All parties seek to polarize the long-standing cleavages in

[10] Parliamentary Speeches, House of Representatives, 17 October 1976, 149.
[11] Personal interview, Yiannakis Colokasides, Nicosia, 22 October 2010.
[12] Personal interview, Christoforos Fokaides, Nicosia, 18 October 2010.

order to earn the votes of the base of their respective parties. At the same time, it is imperative to design a flexible agenda to permit collaboration with other parties (Loizides, 2007). Any potential unilateral decision, such as acknowledging EOKA's misdeeds, would challenge the foundations of the post-1974 consensus and is perceived as a suicide mission because it might lead to a party's exclusion from making an alliance. Having already initiated an ambitious policy of revising history textbooks, thereby challenging a number of the founding tenets of the *Hellenocentric* identity, it is difficult for AKEL to promote a policy of state acknowledgment for EOKA's atrocities. Such an attempt would thwart electoral alliances with political parties claiming historical affiliations with EOKA -- practically all Greek-Cypriot parties with the exception of AKEL. More importantly, such a move would alienate a significant segment of the electorate, making them less likely to vote for AKEL in the second and more critical round.

**Opportunities and civil society**

As Nancy Bermeo aptly puts it, 'Pacts make democracies more durable, but also make the deepening of democracy more difficult' (2003, p.166). Although the consolidation of the democratic regime succeeded, largely due to the 'pacted' nature of the transition, this was at the expense of the development of a vibrant civil society which often acts as a source of truth seeking for victims' groups. EOKA's stance is explained on the 'supply side' of the story, but what has happened to the 'demand side'? Where is the vocal civil society group that will put the issue on the political agenda?

Civil society is considered a new word for Cyprus. While there are recent developments in areas such as volunteering and single issue organizations, social

justice issues have remained off the table. Additionally, issues of a political colour are adopted by groups with pre-existing particular values.[13] The 'small community' intimacy of Cyprus makes social cohesion a foremost value and institutions such as family and the Church perform almost invasive roles to this end.

A civil society group was established in 1995 with the primary objective of forcing EOKA to issue an official apology. As the leader of the group explained in a personal interview, the 'symbolic capital' of EOKA was so immense that any previous attempts to form a similar organization were doomed to fail. Further, the tactics of the group are deliberately moderate to avoid endangering the overarching objective, namely, the apology, for the group is afraid of provoking a nationalist backlash. Michalis Michail, a prominent local journalist, explains:

> We are not interested to know the persons who pulled the trigger, but why this happened and we are not interested in initiating criminal proceedings. Our objective is just an apology, an acknowledgment that these persons were not traitors and that they were murdered either because of mistaken information or for other political reasons.[14]

The association of relatives of people murdered for their political convictions struggle to maintain the debate and influence political elite despite blocks and denial by the EOKA veterans association. Their aim is not condemnation of the perpetrators, simply rehabilitation of the names of their family members and removal of the tarnish on the identity they still carry.[15]

A new window of opportunity for the acknowledgment of these issues opened in the early 2000s. The mobilization of the civil society during the Annan plan in the

[13] Personal interview, George Kazamias, Nicosia, 11 October 2010.
[14] Personal Interview, Michalis Michail, Nicosia, 6 February 2009.
[15] Personal interview, Andreas Demetriou, Nicosia, 21 October 2010.

2002-2004 period brought human rights into the centre of the political agenda on both sides of the divide. This led to the solution of the humanitarian problem of the missing persons and the (subtle) acknowledgment of the Republic of Cyprus of state responsibility for the lack of investigation into the disappearances of Turkish Cypriots in the 1960s (Kovras & Loizides, 2011). However, it remains to be seen whether AKEL take advantage of this partially open window and fully address the remaining issues by the end of its term in 2011.

**Conclusion**

This article adds to and challenges the current literature on political apologies by seeking to discover what prevents apologies. It draws on the case of EOKA, which has persistently objected to apologies, truth recovery and reconciliation, thereby silencing through a dominant discourse the memory and rehabilitation of particular victims of the anti-colonial struggle, to shed light on similar cases.

The article points out that the inherited timelessness of Greek nationalism and the impression of a perpetual need for defence set up perfect conditions for the development of a hegemonic discourse during the transition from British colony to independent republic, and at the time of de facto partition. This, in turn, prevented the development of a civil society able to resist the dominant discourse and challenge the traditions forestalling an apology. Angola (MPLA, UNITA or FLEC), Mozambique (RENAMO) and Nepal (Communist Party of Nepal) face similar challenges with respect to historical memory, truth recovery and reconciliation. Like Cyprus, these countries have not seen apologies. Understanding the obstructions to apology in Cyprus could help clarify resistance to reconciliation and apology in these other cases.

Fears of weakening legitimacy or being labeled a traitor make for convincing arguments within the group for refusing to apologize. Other cases, particularly those mentioned at the beginning show that this can be overcome. Noteworthy is the apology by the ANC in South Africa. When Thabo Mbeki spoke during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to apologize to the victims of the ANC and the families who had suffered losses as a result of the anti-apartheid struggle, it did not diminish the importance of the ANC's historical contribution. Instead it may have even strengthened society's confidence in the group's honesty and loyalty.

While much literature focuses on what reconciliation is and how it occurs, it is important to examine the other side of the coin as well: the prevention of reconciliation. An analysis of the missing EOKA apology and the lack of reconciliation in Cyprus points to the factors preventing these from taking place. It shows how resistance to critical self-reflection and a persistent silencing of truth preclude the rehabilitation of victims and the establishment of a spirit of cooperation in the larger community.

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