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Mobile Diasporas, Postcolonial Identities: The Green Line in Cyprus

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Abstract

This paper explores the scope for understanding postcolonial and hybrid identities through the theory of ontological security in International Relations. It examines the circulation of identity for a dispersed postcolonial population, namely Cypriots. This circulation happens amongst a deterritorialised public, through media and movement of people. It carries meaning that is formative of the identity of the diaspora and of the identity of the home state, implicating both in a complex and relational ontological security comprising identity, memory, state and society. The Green Line dividing North from South in Cyprus represents the bifurcation of the island, rupturing the possibility of a territorially unified Cypriot identity. The line also represents a rupturing of contiguous ethnic identities, marking the creation of refugee populations and Cypriot diasporas. The Green Line is both a physical location and circulating symbol of ontological insecurity. On one hand the Green Line marks the creation of Cypriot refugees and diasporas. On the other it marks a gateway to Europe for asylum seekers attempting to enter the Southern part of the island. I theorise the Green Line as an emblem of ontological insecurity whose meaning is (re)constituted in the lived experience of Cypriot diaspora and migrants seeking security, revealing a hybrid and fluid identity.

One hot day in July in the early 1990s my sister and I were in a small taverna that my grandparents ran, below the Apollo Hotel in Paphos on the dusty road that ran to the sea shore, the old lighthouse and the ancient Odeon. My grandparents were at a funeral so my parents had taken over the running of the taverna for the day. My sister was waiting on tables; I was adding up the bills and helping myself to ice cream. During a quiet moment in the late morning we stumbled upon a set of beer mats that bore the image of the outline of Cyprus with blood dripping from the top, and the message ‘δεν ξεχνώ’. We had seen this picture before and we knew what the words said – “I don’t forget”.¹ The image represented the Turkish ‘occupation’ of the Northern part of the island. The blood dripping represented the blood of both Greek and Turkish Cypriots who had died in the fighting and who had lost homes, family members and friends. We knew that you couldn’t cross the dividing line in the island if you were Cypriot but that sometimes tourists could cross over. We decided to give out these drink mats with the drinks in the taverna and explain to the tourists who came into the taverna why they shouldn’t visit the northern occupied territory.

My childhood was saturated with images of the Cyprus conflict. I spent every summer in Paphos with my grandparents. My grandfather is from a village to the north east of Paphos named Anavargos although in recent years it has been consumed by the growing city. I remember my grandfather showing me what had formerly been the house of his childhood friend, a Turkish Cypriot, telling tales of the fun they used to have. My parents took my sister and me to Lefkosia when I was about eight or nine years old. I remember being appalled by the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus flag (the inverse colours of the Turkish flag) imposed on the hillside overlooking the city as a constant reminder of the division – a view that became normal to me later when I lived in Lefkosia as a student. On a different occasion we took a trip to Polis via a road that passed through an abandoned Turkish Cypriot village. ‘Smelly village, they call it’ my grandmother chuckled ‘because farmers keep their animals in the houses’. In 1996 we were visiting my mother’s godmother, watching the news as Greek Cypriot Solomos Solomou was shot from a flagpole. Two of her children were at the demonstrations and the violence gave cause for concern.

The division of Cyprus into two parts was physically completed in 1974 following a Greek nationalist coup that ousted the president, Archbishop Makarios, and the subsequent invasion / intervention by Turkey. The processes that led to the division began earlier – some would argue in 1964 when Turkish Cypriots were forced into enclaves designed both to protect them from Greek nationalism and to imprison, or in 1964 when British Major General Peter Young first conceived of the ceasefire zone and drew a line – supposedly with a green crayon – across a map of Cyprus, dividing the country in two. Some would argue the process began in 1963 when Archbishop Makarios proposed thirteen amendments to the Constitution that would remove the veto power of the Turkish Cypriot minority, or in 1960 when the independent country adopted an unworkable constitution that fixed ethnic identity into separate interest groups. Some would argue the process began in the struggle for independence that pitted Greek EOKA and aims for *enosis* (unity with Greece) against Turkish Cypriot interests and *taksim* (partition), or when the British colonial administration created Turkish Cypriot police forces to combat growing EOKA militarization and fostered discord between the two groups. Some would argue the process began in 1571 when Cyprus was annexed to the Ottoman Empire. Others would argue that Cyprus, because of its geographic location, will always be at the centre of a territorial struggle and thus division is to be expected.

The history of the division is complex and multifaceted and the effect of the division even more so. The UN buffer zone known as the Green Line that divides Cyprus has become

a symbol of the intractable conflict on the island. It is a symbol of the inability of people to return to their homes. It is the symbol of missing people, wartime atrocities, mass graves, death and loss. Images of the line circulate – barbed wire, dripping blood – in everyday life in Cyprus and amongst Cypriots outside of the island.

In this paper I consider the circulation of the symbol of the Green Line. The Green Line is a border, but is not a conventional border. Work in critical border studies recognises that borders are performative and processual, their meanings shift and change.² As in-group and out-group identities are performed, so borders are made and remade. Here, rather than examining the bordering processes of the Green Line, I posit that the Green Line is a symbol of ontological insecurity that circulates and by drawing attention to that symbol of ontological insecurity, it becomes apparent that the theory of ontological security in international relations can offer some insight into hybrid and fluid identities that characterize postcolonial, transnational, diasporic and migrant experience. I draw attention to how the Green Line, in many different guises, constitutes Cypriot identity in different contexts and in different encounters. The subjects of the symbol of the Green Line are various, thus giving the line multiple meanings that merge together around this complex circulating signifier. Circulation happens amongst a deterritorialised public outside and inside of Cyprus through media and movement and represents the hybrid and multiple identities attached to Cyprus and encountering the line – Greek, Turkish, Cypriot, Commonwealth, European, postcolonial. The symbol of the line carries meaning that is formative and productive of the identity of Cypriots, implicating a complex and relational ontological security comprising identity, memory, state and society. The Green Line is both a physical location and circulating symbol of ontological insecurity. On one hand the Green Line marks the creation of Cypriot refugees and diasporas. On the other it marks a gateway to Europe for asylum seekers attempting to enter the Southern part of the island. A third dimension presents the Green Line as a tourist destination, a site of contemporary history to be consumed alongside the Ancient and Byzantine relics that testify to the Greek cultural heritage of the island, discounting and silencing the years of Ottoman Cyprus. I theorise the Green Line as an emblem of ontological (in)security whose meaning is (re)constituted in the lived experience of Cypriots inside and outside of Cyprus, of migrants seeking security within European borders, and of tourists seeking to consume history and culture.

In what follows I offer a brief discussion of memory, trauma and ontological security in international relations, grounding this study in a critique of the tacit assumption of linear

identity in ontological security theory in international relations in which the state is the primary subject of security.³ I then turn to the Green Line in Cyprus as a circulating symbol of ontological (in)security. Rebecca Bryant argues that the opening of the border in 2003 made the border more real for Greek Cypriots in Cyprus.⁴ Prior to that, Greek Cypriots imagined an empty and deprived zone, an ‘open air prison’ where life remained stagnant waiting for the return of their communities.⁵ When the border opened, the physical act of crossing it, of showing a passport in order to go to homes people still considered their own, made the border more real – the border was not a zone of oppression or imprisonment that was outside of regular politics. The border was recreated as a functional space and gained a sense of legitimacy. Thus, in 2003 the line became a de facto border at which one would perform the normal rituals of immigration. The view of Turkish Cypriot life, of towns and villages and populations who continued to exist forced a reshaping of the vision that many Greek Cypriots had maintained for three decades.⁶ This re-shaping can be understood as a moment of change – the opening and regularization of travel across the border reconstituted the border as a permanent functional part of the island rather than an aberration or scar on the landscape.

With this in mind, I consider the line in different guises: the first as a symbol of the violence that divided the island, with particular attention to how the line is discussed in a documentary named *Our Wall* (1993), which was made collaboratively by a Greek Cypriot and a Turkish Cypriot to mark the 20th anniversary of the division, and reflects on the meaning of the wall for Cypriot identities. I examine how the line circulates as a symbol of violence and in doing so reproduces Cypriot identities that are afflicted by violence. The trauma that results serves, in turn, to reproduce the Green Line. I then look to the line in contemporary international guises – I consider first the line as it is constituted as a border of Europe differentiating the Republic of Cyprus from the territory of the TRNC, analysing the annual reports from the European Commission on the Green Line Regulation from 2006-2011 (most recent). These reports monitor the passing of people and goods across the line as a de facto border of Europe, while refraining from establishing it with that official designation. Here, I argue that the line constitutes Cypriot identity as simultaneously European and Other. It also replicates the division of the island, making the Republic of Cyprus part of desirable and developed Europe, and the North, conversely, part of the global south, a transit zone through which move refugees. I then turn to a more benign but no less significant rendering of the wall as a tourist destination, considering its coverage and reviews

on tourist websites *Trip Adviser*, *Rough Guide* and *Virtual Tourist*. Here the symbol of the line serves to mark Cypriot identity as simultaneously European (where tourists can experience a conflict zone from the comfort of a European holiday resort) and Other as the line remains the marker of difference, of the exotic and the dangerous. I argue that these renderings of the line both reflect and produce a fluid and intersectional Cypriot identity that can usefully complicate ontological security theory in international relations.

Memory, trauma and identity: the production of the Green Line

Memory has long been established as part of the practice of national identity. Benedict Anderson's 'imagined communities' foregrounded the role of memory and the reproduction of shared historical myths and memories in national identity. Maurice Halbwachs conceptualised the collective nature of memory and Jenny Edkins' seminal work on memory and trauma in international politics elaborated the specifics of how particular traumas are mourned and memorialised in the national and collective imaginary.⁷ Edkins draws a distinction between the act of remembering (such as in testimony and memoir) and the process and aesthetics of memorialisation that one might find in monuments and museums. Yet, in both of these cases 'the production of memory is a performative practice, and inevitably social'.⁸ The social practice of remembering is not only about memory but also about forgetting. As a dominant narrative of memory is accepted as the master narrative or hegemonic narrative of events, other events and ways of remembering might be overlooked or willingly and actively forgotten. For example, experiences of war are often retold and established as heroism and national glory, effectively 'forgetting' the unpleasant aspects of warfare, or potentially establishing right on the side of the victors, overlooking fault and blame.⁹

As Brent Steele discusses, a biographical narrative of collective memory that reproduces state identity establishes an ontological security for a state collective that is intimately tied to how that state sees itself.¹⁰ The biographical narrative produces and reproduces the collective identity of the state, creating a social construction that performs a particular identity when interacting with and relating to its peers, that is, other states. A biographical identity (and corresponding ontological security) is produced both internally to the state and externally in the social relations of the state and the surrounding context in

which the state exists.¹¹ Trauma, in disrupting the linear time upon which a state's biographical narrative is based, destabilises the ontological security of the state that relies on that narrative and creates an 'opening' for a re-writing of the narrative.¹² The re-writing is necessary in order to process the trauma – whether exogenously generated or linked to 'shameful' acts that do not correspond to the biographical identity narrative – and to re-establish ontological security. Traumatic experiences not only create an opening but also resonate because of the deep emotional effect of trauma on individuals, on witnesses, and on the collective experience. But memory is imperfect: as a social process of remembering and forgetting, and as a process that involves people who might form a collective but have vastly different frames of reference, the narrative becomes a space of political contestation.¹³ Power is part of the production of a narrative but also saturates the acceptance of the narrative by the audience or society for whom it is produced.¹⁴

Because the narrative of identity must be fixed and stable for ontological security to be produced and reproduced for the nation, by necessity state identity must be fixed for a national collective to have ontological security. Even when the identity *narrative* changes, change happens to re-establish and even reinforce a fixed, static identity – a state's idea of itself. The focus on narrative identity in many ways presumes a linear narrative and a national collective that shares intersubjective collective memories that are constitutive of identity. Indeed, markers and monuments serve to reconstitute a national imaginary and hold particular events as sacred in the memory *of the nation*, such as the London Cenotaph and the Vietnam Wall.¹⁵ Memory of trauma as constitutive of the national imaginary suggests that national collectives – or the nation state as agent – can experience human emotion as a single entity.

Transnational identity such as that of diaspora communities disrupts the simple linear narrative of state identity. A diasporic collective memory establishes and reproduces the ties of the diaspora to the homeland and to the hostland.¹⁶ As memory writes a state's biographical narrative and trauma provides an opening, a space for contestation, and a potential rewriting (or a need for rewriting) of the state's identity narrative, memory also functions to write the collective identity of the diaspora. Diaspora identity is connected to the home state but is also separate from the home state and based on different experiences. Thus, in cases where the trauma is formative of the diaspora, it follows that the identity of the diaspora depends on a particular narrative of the trauma in order to continue to exist as a

cohesive collective with ties to a home state (rather than being assimilated into a receiving state). That memory is reproduced over time. At times the host state is implicated in the trauma – for example, in the case of Vietnamese refugees in the United States or Afghani and Iraqi refugees in the United States and the UK. Where the host state is implicated in causing the trauma, the memory narrative is more complicated; for example, the host state might be positioned as both the aggressor and the ‘saviour’.

Attending to diasporas and transnational populations in itself disrupts the possibility of a simple linear narrative of state identity. Turning to postcolonial states similarly disrupts such a linear narrative indicating a different experience of identity. National identity through the reproduction of the linear narrative for the state becomes emblematic of modernisation and is a way of unifying cultural identity.¹⁷ A national identity that exists in a biographical narrative and constitutes the state amongst its peers is a requisite of a modern nation state. In postcolonial states, subject to the requisite of a unified cultural identity and linear identity narrative, Frantz Fanon’s postcolonial subject can offer insight into the diverse practices of identity as they might both counteract and produce the practice of constituting the national identity. The profile of the post/colonial subject is a hybrid of contradictions posited by visibility. The black man in a white world experiences himself through the perceptions of others, is rendered a subject position before his or her humanity: “When people like me, they tell me it is in spite of my colour. When they dislike me, they point out it is not because of my colour [...] We have a Senegalese history teacher ... he is quite bright... Our doctor is coloured. He is very gentle”.¹⁸ If this visibility and subjectification is shifted to the post/colonial state, the subject position of the post/colonial state comes prior to that state’s historical narrative identity which is dissected into the pre-colonial – colonised – postcolonial parts and so cannot be a continuous narrative. The coloniser is positioned as the ‘civilising force’ and the colonised state as chaotic, emotional, undeveloped and uncivilised. This positioning is experienced in the post/colonial state as a series of contradictions in a hybrid identity: pride and shame, arrogance and resentment, self-esteem and self-disgust.¹⁹ As Borg and Figueroa depict, the post/colonial ‘state’ (state of being) is to exist in contradiction and internal asymmetry manifested in a reluctance and undecidability in whether to fully embrace or fully reject the West.²⁰ Thus to situate this asymmetry in the language of ontological security and identity requires a shift away from the linear biographical narrative instead to look at the meaning ascribed to a symbol of identity that circulates and, as it represents and memorialises aspects of identity the movement and change can capture the undecidability,

hybridity and asymmetry of identity. The capacity for fluidity then underwrites the ontological security of hybrid identities that are manifested in multiple guises. A postcolonial transnational identity must maintain hybridity and multiplicity in order to make sense in the fragmented experiences of dispersed postcolonial diaspora and transnational lived experience.

Narratives of identity are complicated by movement and borders. Postcolonial identity narratives problematize the notion of a linear biographical identity and draw attention to the implicit reification of the state in some renderings of ontological security in international relations. Identities can be hybrid and incorporate multiple subject positions and contradictions. Facets of identity are collective and mutual but it is necessary to recognise identity as fluid and changeable rather than fixed onto a linear narrative.²¹ Identities become dispersed over space, generations and cultural experiences. An ontological security that moves away from linearity and fixed notions of collective identity can offer a deeper understanding of security in lived experience and the potential for a security that moves beyond the state and can be mutually but still diversely experienced. To explore the mutual and diverse experience of ontological security I turn to a symbol rather than a narrative of identity. A symbol circulates amongst populations and resist fixity as its meaning is made in encounters. In the following analysis, the circulating symbol of ontological insecurity allows insight into how ontological security and insecurity is produced and tied to identity amongst people with hybrid and fluid identities.

The Line as a Symbol: Conflict, Sanctuary, Recreation

The Green Line

Officially, the Green Line is the UN Buffer Zone that separates territory in the north of the island of Cyprus and home to the de facto state of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus from territory in the south of the island that forms the Republic of Cyprus. The line was drawn initially in 1964 by British Major General Peter Young as a ceasefire zone during intercommunal violence. The line was then established as an impassable border in 1974 following the Turkish invasion / intervention in the island. The line bisects the island into the Republic of Cyprus and the de facto state the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), which is recognised only by Turkey and Azerbaijan. The Green Line dividing North from South in Cyprus represents the bifurcation of the island, rupturing the possibility of a

territorially unified Cypriot identity. The line also represents a rupturing of contiguous ethnic identities, marking the creation of refugee populations and Cypriot diasporas. The line is a border, but also a process of bordering: the line represents the constitution of separate Greek and Turkish Cypriots but it also constitutes Cypriot identity in relation to Europe and liberal democracy, and in relation to refugee and migrant 'others.' The line, a circulating symbol of ontological insecurity, reveals multifaceted and hybrid identities under the umbrella of 'Cypriot identity.'

Symbols of the line circulate quite literally in everyday life; for example, every letter posted in the Southern part of the island requires a refugee stamp, which shows a crouching barefoot figure hunched in front of barbed wire that represents the Green Line, bearing the year 1974. The cost of the stamp is donated to the national refugee fund. Every letter or postcard mailed requires an act of memory. The stamp depicting the line then circulates internationally on mail amongst families, and on postcards sent by tourists reminding the recipients of the political conflict and associated suffering in the popular holiday destination. The figure of the Cypriot refugee simultaneously recognizes and rejects the division. A refugee is a person *outside of their country of origin* yet the refugee fund assists people displaced on the island. The act of labelling people refugees acknowledges that the territory from which the displacement has happened is not part of the Republic of Cyprus. The Green Line is then produced as a hard border that divides territory and literally circulates in that guise, as barbed wire on the postage stamp. The line is crucial in the making of the refugee, yet the naming of the refugee also constitutes the division: displaced persons might be inside one sovereign territory; refugees are always outside of their country of origin. In this way, naming refugees in Cyprus includes displacement and rupture in national identity. The line on the stamp circulates as symbol of ontological insecurity associated with a cohesive Cypriot identity. The line ruptures the sovereign contiguity of the island and produces refugee identities.

The Line: Cypriots Dispersed

A circulating symbol of identity might fulfil the role of national monuments and memorials to maintain and reproduce an alternative collective identity. For example, in the case of the Cypriot diaspora in London, Greek Cypriots who left Cyprus as a consequence of events in 1974 merged into the already-established Cypriot diaspora. Prior to 1974 the diaspora

population existed as a collective united by cultural practices such as attending Greek Orthodox churches and Greek language schools, partaking in business enterprises and coalescing around community centres in particular parts of the city. After 1974 the diaspora became tied to the conflict through the testimony of those exiled and through relationships with people dispersed by the conflict. Of course, witnesses to trauma – people who experience it second hand through observing, concern for relatives, and bereavement – still experience the trauma although in a different way.²² The opening in a collective biographical identity narrative that is provoked by trauma allows, even requires, the narrative to be rewritten to account for the changed way a collective sees itself. Thus, in 1974 the identity of the Greek Cypriot diaspora was reformed and reproduced to incorporate the exiled and to understand the meaning of the division of the island as it relates to the diaspora population. For example, the two biggest Greek Cypriot organisations in the UK formed following the conflict despite the presence of a Cypriot diaspora for decades prior. The National Federation for Cypriots in the UK was formed immediately after the 1974 division of the island with the dual objective of promoting the cause of a reunited Cyprus free from Turkish troops and ‘colonists’, and for coordinating the work of UK Cypriots in political, social, cultural and educational spheres.²³ The logo of the National Federation of Cypriots in the UK depicts the Green Line comprising a picture of the map of Cyprus with the Northern part cast in shadow, bearing the imperative ‘do not forget.’ Indeed, the Greek language reads “I do not forget” and the English language orders “Do not forget”. This perhaps indicates the Greek Cypriots displaced by the conflict compelling their English-speaking children and grandchildren not to forget. Lobby for Cyprus was formed in 1992 by Greek Cypriot refugee communities from northern towns Agios Ambrosios, Akanthou, Lapithos and Karavas. The stated objectives of Lobby for Cyprus are to remove all Turkish troops from the island, to repatriate all the ‘colonists’, and to return all the refugees to their land in the north. The changed geography of the homeland changes and challenges diasporic links to the homeland and remakes those links in pursuit of a united, undivided Cyprus. The villages that Greek Cypriots had ties to in the North of the island could no longer be understood unproblematically as Greek villages. Thus ties to the homeland had to be reconfigured and reproduced in pursuit of reclaiming those territories. The emblem of the line circulates among the diaspora community physically in the logo of the National Federation of Cypriots in the UK and ideationally in the geography of Lobby for Cyprus. It simultaneously makes *insecurity* in the memory of conflict and *security* in providing the diaspora community a unique sense of identity.

Over the course of four decades the memory, testimony and narrative of the Cyprus conflict have been reproduced through generations that assume the responsibility for preserving the memory and narrative of the division. The intergenerational inheritance of the trauma is fundamental to identity because the lived identity of second and third generation migrants is ruptured in terms of the imaginary of what life *should* be if the division of the island had not occurred. That is, they have not experienced the trauma in their lifetime having been born post 1974 but have inherited an already-ruptured identity. As national identity is made, memorialized and remade in the remembrance of war and conflict with national monuments and commemorations, it follows that diasporic identity is remade; however, as a minority population in a different country the diaspora does not have the capacity to build monuments or commemorations. Instead, testimony and narrative memorialisation takes on particular importance as the memory is communicated in discourse and practice and infused with the emotion generated by trauma.

In the case of Cypriots in London, identity is complicated because of Britain's role in the conflict. Cypriots fought Britain in the 1950s in pursuit of independence from Britain and *enosis* with Greece. The British troops on the island hired Turkish Cypriots as police and practiced a politics of aggravating ethnic differences as a means of attempting to suppress the Greek Cypriot movement. After independence Britain was named as a protectorate state, yet did not act to prevent the Turkish invasion / intervention, thus giving it an ambivalent role in Greek Cypriot histories. Yet, because the Greek Cypriot diaspora is present in London (and existed in London before Cyprus was independent of Britain) the attachment to Britain serves to absolve responsibility and place the blame for the conflict squarely on Turkey. The 'colonists' Lobby for Cyprus refers to are mainland Turkish citizens who have settled on the island rather than the British former colonisers. In the Greek Cypriot narrative of the conflict, Turkish Cypriots often feature as victims of the violence, expansionist politics and pursuit of power enacted by Turkey who is unfailingly positioned as the culprit.²⁴

The trauma of 1974 and the division of the island is formative of contemporary Cypriot identity and is memorialized and circulates. The London Cypriot diaspora is linked to and shares mutual understanding with Cypriot diaspora communities in various places, with notable communities in the UK, Greece, the USA, Canada, South Africa and Australia. As Cypriot transnational identity contains diverse attachments and is experienced in different ways by different collectives, generations, families and people, turning to the symbol of the line can offer insight into the circulation of an identity that transcends bordered national

communities, and shifts and changes over time, across generations, across space, and across culture. The line represents the division of Cyprus but takes on alternate meaning as a symbol that feeds into Cypriot identity.

Culture and conflict: Our Wall

The 1993 documentary *Our Wall* was made by Panicos Chrysanthou, a well-known Cypriot film maker who has made several films about the Cyprus problem, and Niyazi Kızılyürek, a Turkish Cypriot academic and activist. This documentary was made two decades after the division of the island and comprises personal narratives and memoirs. It departs from conventional narratives of the conflict by positing the wall as something that is formative of Cypriot identity and a product of Cypriotness. The claiming of the wall in the use of the possessive ‘our’ in the title indicates a departure from the narratives of the wall that look to British colonialism and American interventionism. The title of this documentary ‘Our Wall’ indicates ownership – it does not seek to posit Cypriots as passive victims but to understand the role of the wall in Cypriot identity and experience.

Identity features prominently as a theme in this documentary. *Our Wall* begins with the line as a place where the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities come together in the form of the two film makers – Panicos Chrysanthou and Niyazi Kızılyürek – coming together in Ledra Palace, the checkpoint in Nicosia where the line could be crossed only with special permission between 1974 and 2003. The buffer zone and the division is simultaneously represented as a problem as Kızılyürek, who had recently been travelling in France and had been accused of being a terrorist, describes. The Turkish Cypriot academic was carrying his Cypriot passport issued before 1974, his passport of the TRNC, and his Turkish passport, issued to TRNC Cypriots for travel purposes. He remarks that by the time he had explained himself to the border officer the officer had listened to ‘the history of Cyprus.’ Chrysanthou elaborates on the absurdity that while when he travels he is from the Republic of Cyprus and Kızılyürek is from the TRNC, Chrysanthou is actually from the northern part of the island and Kızılyürek from the south, and they are both refugees. Kızılyürek observes that the misunderstanding is not the mistake of border authorities but is the mistake is the island itself.²⁵ Thus, immediately this documentary centres on the island and the lives and experiences of Cypriots, departing from the realpolitik explanations for the conflict. It looks to the humanity of the conflict rather than the politics. The line is not a military scar but is part of the peculiarity of the island and is reconfigured as the zone of

communication, as the only space on the island where people from the North and from the South could communicate with each other. Yet the line immediately manifests its more problematic guise at the same time: the line is the zone of communication only because it is also a barrier that has divided and displaced. The slippery symbolism of the wall is communicated from the outset of the documentary.

The stories in this documentary are primarily stories of closeness between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. A Turkish Cypriot goat-herder named Hasan who remained in the South following the division explains his choices – he married a Christian woman although their marriage could not be official because of their different religions. Hasan's language uses Greek and Turkish phrasing interchangeably. He comments that his children 'blame' him because they cannot speak Turkish and they cannot marry. His explanation of his decision to stay is that he thought the division would be short-lived and everything would go back to normal. Hasan himself represents the mixture of Greek and Turkish in a single person. He is a symbol of Cypriotness that is not qualified by another national description. His language does not differentiate between Greek and Turkish but words from both mingle in his speech. He married a Greek woman and stayed in the southern part of the island. He did not expect the political separation to last because for him ethnic separation was not central to his experience until the separation was spatial, forced and permanent, at which point it impacted his life.

Our Wall documentary is careful not to make a statement about the politics of Cyprus other than to attribute the separation of the island to the 'triumph of divide and rule' of colonial politics. The discussion of *taksim* (partition) and *enosis* (unification with Greece) carry the caveat of how Cypriots supported these political ideas 'without being fully aware,' suggesting the awareness of what *taksim* and *enosis* meant was not possible in practice and involvement in the respective movements, but only came in the aftermath of events. In this way, the line discloses Cypriotness. Following the division, the Northern part of the island did not enjoy the *taksim* that the movement imagined but instead became an unrecognized territory. The Southern part of the island did not unify with Greece but became a truncated independent republic. The idea of Turkish Cypriot identity and Greek Cypriot identity remained an idea and a Cypriot identity was revealed as it was lost.

Instead of narrating the history, the documentary uses footage of the press statement given following the coup and after the Turkish invasion – thus the reference to the Turkish intervention in Cyprus is made through footage of the televised statement given by the Turkish foreign minister in 1974. The reference to the 'change in government' (the Greek

coup) is made by the new government for the viewer to process. The effect then is to use historical footage as documentary evidence of the terms in which the coup and the invasion/intervention were presented to Cypriot people and internationally at the time of occurrence – not to re-make or re-tell the statements two decades later.

The line featured towards the end of the documentary as a physical line – illustrated by a British soldier who shows where one can stand with a foot on either side of the line – an action of course forbidden to Cypriots in the 1990s when the documentary was made and revealing the power of the colonizer state to fully take ownership. Even after independence Cypriots are prohibited from reaching parts of the territory that are free to British and UN soldiers. Thus the post/colonial identity of Cyprus endures post-independence. The line as a symbol of both security and insecurity is most clearly visible in this guise. The line was created and the population was divided to provide security from ethnic discord and ethnic conflict. The line was drawn and enforced by British and Turkish colonial powers in order to provide security for Cypriots. Yet, the line creates insecurity both in practice by producing displaced people and refugees and in terms of identity by contesting the respective identities of Greek and Turkish Cypriots when *taksim* and *enosis* remained elusive, but the possibility of a Cypriot identity is foreclosed. The endurance of the wall over time then further makes an ontological (in)security. While it remains a symbol of security preventing conflict, the line marks Cyprus as a state that cannot be trusted to manage security and requires external intervention.

The documentary ends with a voiceover recounting a fable of a mouse that had her tail chopped off by a trap but tried to pass off the tail-stump as the latest fashion. Of course, while the other mice pretend they believe her story, really ‘they knew her tail had been cut off by a trap’. The significance of this juxtaposed with footage of the wall suggests that the wall amputates part of the island – the Turkish part for Greek Cypriots and the Greek part for Turkish Cypriots. Not just spatially, but culturally and personally. Perhaps each community professes that this is preferred – it is the fashion of national identities – yet in reality everyone is aware that something is missing, has been cut off in a violent act.

The end of this documentary is enigmatic, with the fable adopting Cypriots into responsibility without allocating blame, calling for reflection on the amputation of the corresponding cultural half of the island and recognising that Cypriot identity is both Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot. The green line in the documentary exists as a symbol of identity but the identity is not static and fixed to the particular national identities: the line both divides and brings together the communities. It provides ontological (in)security. It reveals a

Cypriot identity as it forecloses that identity, meaning that Cypriotness is remade to incorporate the wall as part of the identity, illustrating a complexity and a fluidity that cannot be captured by a linear narrative.

The Line as Route to Sanctuary

The Green Line was a place of restricted movement for Cypriots between 1974 and 2003 when the TRNC opened the border to some degree, allowing travel between the Republic of Cyprus and the TRNC and allowing displaced families to visit (but not reclaim) homes they had lost three decades earlier. The Green Line Regulation published by the European Commission states that the Republic of Cyprus

shall carry out checks on all persons crossing the line with the aim to combat illegal immigration of third country nationals and to detect and prevent any threat to public security and public policy” whereas Article 3 states that "effective surveillance shall be carried out by the Republic of Cyprus all along the [Green] Line, in such a way as to discourage people from circumventing checks at the crossing points.²⁶

The emphasis on combatting ‘illegal immigration’ draws attention to the line as a functional European border, although it is not given official status as a European border, given that such status would require recognising the TRNC as a state. In the 2006 European Commission report, the commission notes that the number of asylum seekers in Cyprus increased by more than 600% from 2002-2005, although no data is given on the success of asylum applicants. The emphasis is placed on the further strengthening of surveillance of the border zone to prohibit unauthorized crossing. Thus, the border shifts from a wall preventing Cypriots from movement within their territory to a border that is internal to the land yet external – it takes on the new function of preventing asylum seekers and other third country nationals from entering European territory. The contested status of the TRNC land is clearly visible in this context – people are present on land that is unrecognized by Europe as anything other than an illegally occupied part of the Republic of Cyprus. Yet their presence on that land is not accepted as presence on European territory, thus asylum seekers in the TRNC do not fall into European jurisdictions of responsibility unless they cross the Green Line. The line is therefore a border without being a border. The land of the TRNC becomes obsolete – it is neither European territory nor foreign territory. Cypriot identity is cast as belonging to the Republic of Cyprus and is therefore European and the presence of the TRNC is silenced.

The 2006 annual report had a single category headed ‘The Crossing of Persons’ in which it detailed the movement of Cypriots and of third country nationals. Each subsequent report has a separate category for ‘illegal migration’ across the line.²⁷ The 2007 annual report narrates falling numbers of asylum seekers, which is attributed to increased cooperation between Cypriot police and UN forces monitoring the line, and increased surveillance including intelligence gathering and the physical presence of helicopters monitoring movement.²⁸ The increased militarization of the crossing point is evident: each year the number of asylum seekers and ‘illegal migrants’ is described as ‘worrying,’ and of ‘serious concern.’ Consequently, the 2006 report recommends increasing detention centres and purchasing more surveillance equipment. The 2007 report introduces helicopter surveillance and sharing of intelligence. By 2010 there are day and night land and air patrols in place as well as ultraviolet surveillance equipment and access to central databases including a ‘stop-list’.²⁹ The report also notes that while the border cannot be considered an external border and therefore eligible for funding under the External Border Fund, the CYPOL staff who police the border participate in all FRONTEX training programmes. Thus, the border that was de-militarized and opened in 2003 is re-militarized and monitored – not for Cypriot crossings but for third country nationals. The line operates as a border of Europe in terms of the legal immigration jurisdiction and international humanitarian responsibilities, yet is not a border of Europe. For the migrant without papers the border is a physical border that represents the edge of Europe, access to sanctuary, asylum, and human rights. For the European Commission the border is not a border of Europe yet migrants should be surveyed and the land protected as though it were one. The access to sanctuary, asylum, and human rights is an attractive pull-factor for unauthorized migrants who travel through Turkey to the TRNC. The line is a place of exception: Cyprus is in Europe, but the Green Line is not European.

In these reports that reproduce a contested status – in which the border is a border that is not a border – Cypriot identity as a European state is contested, thus an ontological insecurity is tied to Cypriot Europeanness. Cyprus requires monitoring of its abnormality, its aberration. The de facto border represents insecurity for Europe as a vulnerable and porous external border. It represents access to security and human rights for people trying to cross the line. The line marks Cyprus as exceptional in Europe and sets Cypriot identity apart from European identity as the monitoring of the line is not undertaken by European border forces but by the UN and Cypriot police. For people attempting to cross the line, the status of the Republic of Cyprus is clearly that of an EU member state contrasting the TRNC, which is

unrecognized and does not afford asylum seekers the protections of Europe. Yet the presence of the line simultaneously contradicts and contests the European identity of Cyprus. Thus, identity is slippery and fluid, is not simply one thing or another. The line again disrupts a linear narrative of identity and circulates instead as a complex symbol of ontological insecurity: a border of Europe that is not a European border.

The line as a tourist destination

Cyprus was already a popular tourist destination before the line was militarized and closed in 1974. Famagusta was a popular growing resort in the 1970s; in fact, from beyond the line one can see the shells of the high-rise hotels in the Varosha tourist resort that have stood empty since the Turkish air campaign on Famagusta in 1974. However, the Green Line, particularly in the capital city of Lefkosia / Lefkosa is a point of fascination for tourists. One can walk along the wall in the shadow of the Greek and Turkish watch-towers and see buildings with bomb-holes, nationalist propaganda and streets cut off with barricades that amount to little more than rubble much of the time. The wall represents a monument for the Greek Cypriot diaspora: as my parents took me to visit the line and learn about the conflict as a child, Greek Cypriot diaspora families visit the line as a place to remember and to look towards homes and property in the North that they cannot access. As Cyprus grew as a tourist destination, viewing the wall became part of the tourist path, with bus tours from all the major resorts taking tourists on a tour of some of the wall, the monument to independence and the scene of the Greek coup at the Archbishopric Palace, before depositing them for lunch and a spot of shopping in city centre. The way tourists encounter the Green Line produces Cyprus and Cypriot identity relationally, in the eyes of visitors.

The *Rough Guide* website advocates visiting the wall and crossing the border in Lefkosia, enabling the tourist ‘to sample two cultures in a single day,’ although warns that the ‘division is still “in your face”, particularly in the derelict areas of the Buffer Zone.’³⁰ The same website describes the Shakolas Tower Observatory, a viewing platform and small museum of the conflict on the eleventh floor of a high rise building that was built in 1996 in the centre of the old town. In 1996 the viewing platform was the only place where one could look over the wall into the streets of the TRNC capital, and into the green line buffer zone. The windows of the viewing platform feature maps that label buildings and geographical landmarks the viewer can then recognise in the view. However, according to the *Rough Guide* website, the observatory has been ‘rendered redundant’ now that the Ledra Street

crossing is available.³¹ Rather than needing a platform from which one can resist the division and view the north, now the tourist can go to the TRNC and satisfy his or her curiosity. This understands the observatory museum only within its political function. It is still described by the *Rough Guide* as ‘the best place from which to view the gigantic and inflammatory TRNC flag painted on the hillside to the North of the City’.³² This flag is difficult to avoid from any of the streets in the southern part of Lefkosia serving as a constant visible reminder of the division, yet here it is packaged as a tourist attraction.

Tripadvisor includes an article on ‘Walking the Green Line.’³³ This user-generated content has been approved by the website and describes the line as ‘the line that Turks and Greek Cypriots fought down to during the war’ with no mention of the UN ceasefire or the British plan of the line drawn in 1964, emphasizing the military role of the line.³⁴ The line in this article becomes a tourist route on which: ‘you can see buildings that were bombed or shot up during the conflict. You pass several Greek Cypriot army posts, still manned by polite young men mostly talking on cell phones. You pass recently abandoned UN buildings and outposts. It's fascinating’.³⁵ The tourist can add first-hand experience of a conflict zone to his or her holiday memories.

Virtual Tourist lists the Green Line as the first of the ‘Things to Do’ in Lefkosia.³⁶ This website consists of user-generated content so travellers can learn from people who have travelled. Walking along the wall is described as highly recommended and one of the things you *must* do when visiting Lefkosia. In the multiple user-generated reviews of the experience of the wall, many of the comments place the word ‘border’ in inverted commas, acknowledging the realness and absurdity of this border that is not a border. Additionally, several reviews make reference to the ‘last divided city’ in Europe or in the world, compelling others to go and see this anomaly – presumably before things change.³⁷ The Cyprus conflict and the dividing line is portrayed as a dying species in a globalising world, not with negative connotations but with reference to the exotic – a tourist can experience an authentic illiberal space, without leaving the comfort of a European holiday resort. In the tourist context the Green Line is positioned as a living museum, a relic of a bygone age that can be consumed along with the Roman, Venetian and Byzantine antiquities on the island. The Ottoman history of the island that is written out of Greek Cypriot tourist sites can then be seen by simply traversing a line no wider than four city blocks. The line is the marker of a political division that happened ‘in our lifetime’ – an exotic Berlin Wall that continues to be an authentic experience for the discerning and sensitive tourist. Once again the line reflects a hybrid identity, allowing for the safest type of conflict tourism. The creation of the line as a

tourist attraction symbolises Cyprus as a tourist resort welcoming millions of European tourists each year. Yet, Cyprus is made exotic by the wall: the tourist remains in Europe but leaves Europeanness and Cypriot identity is produced on the margins of Europe, post/colonial and different.

The circulating symbol of the wall: Ontological security and post/colonial identity

This paper contained two objectives: to contest and problematize the emphasis on linearity in narrative identities, drawing on and interrogating ontological security in international relations, and to offer a reading of the Green Line in Cyprus as an illustration of a circulating symbol of ontological insecurity that makes and remakes identity, in its performance, narration, visibility and its relational capacity.

The theory of ontological security has offered insight into how memory constitutes state identity and offers explanatory potential for state actions, engaging affect and moving beyond conventional security and foreign policy understandings. Yet, narratives of identity are complicated by movement and postcolonial identity narratives problematize the notion of a linear biographical identity and draw attention to the implicit reification of the state in some renderings of ontological security in international relations. Ontological security that understands security as a process offers a deeper understanding of security in lived experience and the potential for a security that moves beyond the state and can be mutually but still diversely experienced. To explore the mutual but diverse experience of ontological security I turned to a symbol rather than a narrative of identity.

I discussed the Green Line in multiple guises. I looked at its significance for Cypriot identity in the diaspora community. I looked at how it circulates on a postage stamp and I examined an artistic rendering, narrating the history of the line in a documentary. I considered the line as it is produced in European official documents and I looked at how the line is produced as a tourist destination. That the line appears in so many different roles illustrates how it circulates as a symbol with shifting and changing meaning but tied to various aspects, understandings and performances of Cypriot identity. As the line shifts and changes, identity shifts and changes. The understanding of the line as it appears in each case relies on its fluidity and hybridity to articulate meaning. The symbol is not bound by the confines of a linear narrative of identity that fixes meaning. The symbol of the line produces meaning in its articulation. As it circulates amongst different communities and in different spaces the meaning changes and reflects the hybridity of the post/colonial Cypriot identity. The Green Line in Cyprus symbolizes the division of the island but can be read in multiple

forms – the conventional guise as a symbol of conflict retains importance but is remade through tourism where the sight of UN troops allows for authentic experience of a conflict zone. The line also represents a rupture in Cypriot identity, an amputation of the culture that completes the Cypriot whole and offers insight into the dispersed and problematic Cypriot identity and endurance of the separation. The line represents security and insecurity. Simultaneously the line represents a border as a place of sanctuary for asylum seekers, a zone of vulnerability for EU border enforcement, and a space of contestation that is a border that is not a border. The different articulations of this circulating symbol of ontological insecurity that is produced, reproduced, seen and consumed by different people in different places allows for an identity that shifts and changes, that is hybrid and can be European, liberal and simultaneously Other. Ontological security, as it relies on identity, then resides in the hybridity and fluidity of identity in this case and the Green Line is a symbol of how that identity is made and performed. To consider the symbol allows for an understanding of ontological security that can be compatible with postcolonial, transnational, diasporic, and migrant identities.

¹ This image became prevalent in Cyprus to the extent that it has been satirized even while emotional attachments to the conflict remain important.

² Johnson, Corey, Reece Jones, Anssi Paasi, Louise Amoore, Alison Mountz, Mark Salter, and Chris Rumford. (2011) “Interventions on Rethinking ‘the Border’ in Border Studies.” *Political Geography* 30: 61–69.

³ It should be noted that much work in ontological security in IR goes beyond the state as the subject of security, including, notably Kinnvall, Catarina. 2004. “Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity, and the Search for Ontological Security.” *Political Psychology* 25 (5): 741–67; , Croft, Stuart. 2012. “Constructing Ontological Insecurity: The Insecuritization of British Muslims.” *Contemporary Security Policy* 33 (2): 219–35. Croft, Stuart, and Nick Vaughn-Williams. 2016. “Fit for Purpose? Fitting Ontological Security Studies ‘Into’ the Discipline of International Relations: Towards a Vernacular Turn.” *Cooperation and Conflict* Online First. doi:10.1177/0010836716653159; Agius, Christine. 2016. “Drawing the Discourses of Ontological Security: Immigration and Identity in the Danish and Swedish Cartoon Crises.” *Cooperation and Conflict* Online First. doi:10.1177/0010836716653157. However, rather than rehearse these arguments I seek to make a specifically productive contribution dealing with the potential of understanding and theorising hybrid and postcolonial identities.

- ⁴ Rebecca Bryant, *The Past in Pieces: Belonging in the New Cyprus*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010.
- ⁵ Bryant, *Past in Pieces*
- ⁶ Bryant, *Past in Pieces*
- ⁷ Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*. Translated by Lewis A Coser. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press; Jenny Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992
- ⁸ Edkins, *Trauma and*, p.54
- ⁹ Edkins, *Trauma and*, p.16; Brent E Sasley, “Remembering and Forgetting in Turkish Identity and Policymaking.” In *Memory and Trauma in International Relations: Theories, Cases, Debates*. London: Routledge, 2013.
- ¹⁰ Brent J Steele, *Ontological Security in International Relations*. London: Routledge, 2008.
- ¹¹ Catarina Kinnvall, “Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity, and the Search for Ontological Security.” *Political Psychology* 25 (5): 741–67, 2004. ; Jennifer Mitzen, Jennifer “Anchoring Europe’s Civilizing Identity: Habits, Capabilities and Ontological Security.” *Journal of European Public Policy* 13 (2): 270–85, 2006; Ayse Zarakol, “Ontological (In)Security and State Denial of Historical Crimes: Turkey and Japan.” *International Relations* 24 (3): 3–23, 2010.
- ¹² Steele, *Ontological Security*; Alexandria J Innes and Brent J Steele, “Memory, Trauma and Ontological Security.” In *Memory and Trauma in International Relations*, edited by Erica Resende and Dovile Budryte. London: Routledge, 2013.
- ¹³ Douglas J Becker, “Memory and Trauma as Elements of Identity in Foreign Policy Making.” In *Memory and Trauma in International Relations: Theories, Cases, Debates*. London: Routledge, 2013.
- ¹⁴ Renata B Ferreira, “Healing and Reconciliation in Contemporary Post-Conflict Scenarios: Securitization Movement of War Trauma in Perspective.” In *Memory and Trauma in International Relations: Theories, Cases, Debates*. London: Routledge, 2013; Maria Joao Ferreira, “Trauma as a Technology of Power: Memory, Aid and Rule in Contemporary Haiti.” In *Memory and Trauma in International Relations: Theories, Cases, Debates*. London: Routledge, 2013.
- ¹⁵ Edkins, *Trauma and*
- ¹⁶ I use the term ‘hostland’ to refer to the state in which a diaspora resides.
- ¹⁷ Zarakol *Ontological (In)Security*; Caterina Kinnvall, “European Trauma: Governance and the Psychological Moment.” *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 37 (3): 266–81, 2010.
- ¹⁸ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove Press, 1967, p.116-117
- ¹⁹ Leonardo Figueroa Helland and Stefan Borg, “The Lure of State Failure: A Critique of State Failure in World Politics.” *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 16 (6): 877–97, 2014.
- ²⁰ Helland and Borg *Lure of State Failure*
- ²¹ In cases of state ontological security, the necessary fixity of identity is linked to the state’s ability to trust in the international sphere, and the extent to which the state experiences anxiety (see Mitzen *Anchoring Europe’s Civilizing Identity*; Steele *Ontological Security*)
- ²² Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Exploration in Memory*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995.
- ²³ National Federation of Cypriots in the UK, <http://www.cypriotfederation.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=63&Itemid=27> accessed 2014)
- ²⁴ Bryant *Past in Pieces*
- ²⁵ *Our Wall*, directed by Panikos Chrissanthou, script by Panikos Chrissanthou and Niyazi Kizilyürek, available with open access on YouTube, May 3, 2012: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2n9CJJDuocU>>
- ²⁶ European Union Regulation No 866/2004, Article 2
- ²⁷ Annual Report on (EC) 866/2004 available at <http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/turkish_cypriot_community/20070921_third_annual_report_green_line_report_en.pdf> (2006)
- ²⁸ Annual Report on (EC) 866/2004 available at <[http://aei.pitt.edu/51405/1/COM_\(2007\)_553_final.pdf](http://aei.pitt.edu/51405/1/COM_(2007)_553_final.pdf)> (2007)
- ²⁹ Annual Report on (EC) 866/2004 available at <<http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/1/2010/EN/1-2010-499-EN-F2-1.Pdf>> (2010)
- ³⁰ *Rough Guide* <<http://www.roughguides.com/destinations/europe/cyprus/>>
- ³¹ *Rough Guide* available at <<http://www.roughguides.com/destinations/europe/cyprus/lefkosia-south-nicosia/ledra-street-around/shacolas-tower-observatory/>>, accessed September 2016
- ³² Ibid
- ³³ *Trip Advisor* ‘Nicosia: Walking the Green Line’ available at <<https://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Travel-g190383-c119280/Nicosia:Cyprus:Walking.The.Green.Line.html>>, accessed September 2016
- ³⁴ *Trip Advisor* “Walking the Green Line”

³⁵ *Trip Advisor* “Walking the Green Line”

³⁶ *Virtual Tourist* available at <https://www.virtualtourist.com/travel/Europe/Cyprus/Nicosia_District/Nicosia-394344/Things_To_Do-Nicosia-TG-C-1.html>, accessed September 2016

³⁷ *Virtual Tourist* available at <https://www.virtualtourist.com/travel/Europe/Cyprus/Nicosia_District/Nicosia-394344/Things_To_Do-Nicosia-Green_line-BR-1.html>, accessed September 2016.