Building Peace on a Mediated Reality?  
Cyprus, Communication and the Resolution of Conflict

By

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Abstract:

This paper draws on frameworks provided by scholars concerned with the possibility of peace-oriented journalism in order to highlight a decidedly conflict-centered approach guiding the production and circulation of information in Cypriot media and underscore the problematic (and often unquestioned) role that Cypriot media play in helping to shape the knowledge environments in which publics and policy makers take their cues and consider their options for intervention and action in the seemingly intractable “Cyprus Problem.” One example through which this dynamic becomes visible is a series of news articles published between November 2005 and February 2006 reporting on the opening of an historic landmark that has divided Nicosia\(^1\), the capital of Cyprus, for over 40 years. These newspaper articles suggest that the Cypriot media embrace a conflict-centered approach to peace efforts by shaping news that contributes to the increased mystification of the conflict and to a retrenching of divisive attitudes, sympathetic to a cementing of division.

Introduction:

This exploration of the role of Cypriot media at that intersection between institutional and private performances comes at an important historical moment in Cypriot political life with the Republic of Cyprus having recently voted overwhelmingly against a plan for the reunification of Cyprus while simultaneously becoming a member of the European Union and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus having voted overwhelmingly for the reunification of the divided island State,\(^2\) while subsequently being deprived of EU membership.

The European Union’s recent granting of accession talks status to Turkey is widely understood to have been a catalyst to these dramatic changes in Cyprus – providing a momentary space for respective Greek and Turkish Cypriot opposition parties and politicians to speak out on previously unpopular issues including the contested meanings of “Cypriotness”, “unification” “demilitarization” and the transformation of both the Turkish Cypriot ‘Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus’ (TRNC) and the Greek Cypriot ‘Republic of Cyprus’ (ROC) to Constituent States within a new Federal Republic of Cyprus. It remains to be seen, however, whether the governments of the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities are actually moving toward such transformations or whether, to the contrary, they are merely adopting ‘languages of
unification’ as techniques for furthering separatist agendas. Likewise, there are question marks around the goal of building an essentially power-sharing state between communities that have to a large extent developed independently and with sparse bi-communal cooperation. Since the referendum on a reunited Cyprus, for many in both the Turkish and Greek Cypriot sectors of Cyprus, the Republic of Cyprus government appears to be pursuing a policy that, far from encouraging cooperation and compromise, threatens to consolidate division between the two communities. For most of us, access to the machinations of the political life of both communities means access to those mediated representations that flow through the various communication channels, either state or privately owned, including television, radio, newspapers, magazines and increasingly, the internet. One major underlying concern for our present study is whether the Cypriot media provide citizens of either or both communities with the necessary framework for active participation in the promotion of peace in Cyprus.

Indeed, for the vast majority of people concerned with the current stalemate in Cyprus politics, to speak of Cyprus is often not to speak of “Cyprus-as-such” but rather to speak of ‘mediated representations of Cyprus’: representations that arise out of the interrelationship between prior knowledge, journalistic performances, media institutions and social, political and economic contextual constraints, each playing a role in shaping the way we ultimately come to think about conflict in Cyprus.

Cypriot media industries are enmeshed in pervasive contemporary political-economic, social and cultural dynamics rooted in idealized or reactionary versions of the past. Historically, the Cypriot media, far from providing the necessary foundations for increased understanding and the promotion of peace, have tended to encourage continued bi-communal conflict, separatism and suspicion or, to the contrary, overly simplistic and shortsighted solutions to the resolution of
conflict and the promotion of peace. The pivot around which this social dynamic finds its moorings, its most common reference point, is famously referred to as ‘The Cyprus Problem’.

Although conflict-oriented journalism, between and within Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot media, is often identified with the outbreak of bi-communal violence in the mid-1950s and again in the mid-1960s, it is important to clarify that antagonistic conflict-centered media production has much earlier, and therefore that much more entrenched, beginnings.

Journalistic tendencies toward conflict reporting in Cyprus are deeply rooted in history. Conflict-centered journalism transcends the bi-communal disturbances of 1950s and 1960s. During that time period, inter-communal fighting only exasperated an already long standing journalistic tradition and helped to align both Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot newspapers and journalists with “national struggles.” (With the advent of radio and television and, later still, the internet, they became “national struggle media”).

The first Cypriot newspaper began publication in the last two decades of the 19th century. From their inception, Greek Cypriot newspapers “persistently and vigorously promoted the demand of the Greeks of Cyprus that the island should be ceded to Greece, thus achieving the vision of their national restoration with their incorporation into the national body” (Sophocleus, 2006, p. 1.).

The Enosis demand of the Greek Cypriots was vigorously opposed by the Turkish Cypriots. The earliest newspaper, Zaman (The Times) of which copies survived, in its first issue, states that one of the purposes for its publication was “to fight against the numerous Greek newspapers which were propagating the Greek view on the Cyprus question and to resist the Enosis movement” (Azgın, 1998, p. 642) Yeni Zaman (The New Times) which was published
one year later on the 22nd of August, 1892, states that its aim was to refute the Greek views of the Greek Cypriot newspaper Phoni Tis Kyrou which was propagating Enosis (Azgin, p. 643).

When we look at contemporary journalistic practices in the Cypriot media, and their deeply conflict-centered and antagonistic form, it is not difficult to recognize the remnants of this late 19th Century historical struggle and see that its contemporary forms also concern struggles over whose vision of a future Cyprus might be realized.

It is understood both from critical political economic and cultural perspectives in communication studies that media knowledge, in general, is never value neutral (Calabrese and Sparks, 2005; Mandelzis, 2003; Morley and Robins, 1995; Mosco and Reddick, 1997; Mosco, 2006; McChesney and Hackett, 2005). Moreover, media representations tend to obscure their own ideological origins to such an extent that one may actually feel that one is reading about an event rather than a media construction of an event. Furthermore, media stories have the capacity for suggesting frameworks for thinking through social conflicts as though they were the only or most likely frameworks within which conflict might be resolved – or left unresolved (Shinar, 2004). Such frameworks are then often taken up by social actors in mundane social practices and social scientists in the analysis of conflict and peace, as though looking at an actual event, rather than at an ideological mediated reconstruction of it.

Media provide ways of thinking about what counts as important as they partially shape the boundaries within which we make sense out of our social world. Thus, when we engage media knowledge, we are exposed to information that has been purposefully constructed from particular points of view and with specific interests in mind. Furthermore, our limited access to direct experience of heightened politicized events often inhibits our capacity for genuine reflection, analysis and critique of media representations (Morley and Robbins, 1995), impressing upon the
majority of readers or listeners a certain “truth value” in as much as the event itself was even
worthy of its status in the hierarchy of the news agenda. Especially with regard to news reports
of social conflict, it is difficult not to take media agendas as foundations for thinking through
solutions to historically difficult problems, or as starting points from which to consider actions
that might lead to peace or, at the least, to the resolution of conflict.

Our decision to follow a particular media event rather than another was premised upon the
historical importance of the Old City of Nicosia for both Turkish and Greek Cypriots and
especially in the divergent account that both have of what the importance is. Otherwise, the
Lokmacı (Lokmah-juh)/Ledra story is one of a myriad of stories whose beginning points and
endings are often obscure and difficult to follow. Indeed, we argue that the life span of such
stories and their sudden and often “unexplained deaths” are indicative of the volatile and unstable
conflict atmosphere among media owners and workers in Cyprus where the value of a story is
more often in the sensational, the unpredictable, and the dramatic, than in providing firm ground
for critical thought or civic action and participation.

The dynamic media environment witnessed between 2003 and 2004 continued, albeit with
much less dynamism, through 2005 with a daily stream of media reports of much needed
“confidence building measures” between the two Cypriot communities. These measures included
the importance of increasing the number of meetings between political parties from both
communities with a view toward resolving disputes over missing persons, property, movement,
and ultimately, what shape the new Federal Republic of Cyprus should take. Also on the daily
media agenda were issues of increased access for the Turkish and Greek Cypriot citizenry to “the
other side’s” media reports, the Turkish Cypriot demand to be rewarded for their “yes vote”,

followed by reports of the Greek Cypriot administrations politically savvy (or, alternatively, unscrupulous) tactics for thwarting all such attempts to satisfy that demand.

For us, revisiting the Lokmacı barricade/Ledra Street story represented the possibility of following a media event from its inception through to its conclusion (although it remains, at the time of writing, unresolved). We realized that it is a near impossibility to follow all stories begun by mass media, being conscious of their beginning points, their twists and turns and then their eventual demise or conclusions. This difficulty also constitutes one of the crucial, although perhaps unintended, dynamics of media power: shaping a political atmosphere by introducing and then dropping particular stories that shape the overall climate without impressing their entry and exit points on media audiences. This is not a question of media having a particular ‘affect’ on audiences but rather of the way the media shape events: constructing and reshaping the boundaries within which we always and actively make sense out of total environments.

Thus, our approach to the collection of the material for this study was to begin with a question concerning the possibility that the Cypriot media might play a legitimate role in the promotion of a framework for thinking through peace-oriented solutions to Cyprus’ intractable political and social problems, while entertaining the possibility that they may, to the contrary, prove culpable in the more generally obvious climate of conflict and that they might reveal an obstinate refusal to provide an empathetic mooring for the exploration of peaceful solutions to the long history of conflict in Cyprus. In other words, do Cypriot media promote peace-oriented or conflict-oriented solutions to conflict? We selected an example of mediated reality that would provide a number of entry points into the broader historical malaise that has thwarted conflict resolution for over 40 years, and followed the media construct from its entry into media discourse through to its ‘untimely’ demise: prior to resolution of the initial problematic.
Measuring Conflict and the way toward Cooperation

In this initial exploration of the Cypriot media’s propensity for peace-oriented or conflict-oriented reporting, we draw upon two contemporary scholarly sources for categorizing the value of media stories in terms of their potential for promoting a space for dialogue and discussion or for their tendency to prematurely close off such avenues and shut down debate. Wolfsfeld (2004) provides criteria for discerning four major editorial values in the production of news stories:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IMMECIACY</th>
<th>News</th>
<th>Not News</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IMMEDIACY</td>
<td>Events</td>
<td>Processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Specific Actions</td>
<td>Long-term policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRAMA</td>
<td>Violence</td>
<td>Calm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Crisis</td>
<td>Lack of Crisis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>Cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extremism</td>
<td>Moderation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dangers</td>
<td>Opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Internal Discord</td>
<td>Internal Consensus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Major Breakthrough</td>
<td>Incremental Progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIMPLICITY</td>
<td>Opinions</td>
<td>Ideology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Images</td>
<td>Texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Major Personalities</td>
<td>Institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Two-sided conflict</td>
<td>Multi-sided Conflicts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ETHNOCENTRISM</td>
<td>Our Beliefs</td>
<td>Their Beliefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Our Suffering</td>
<td>Their Suffering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Their Brutality</td>
<td>Our Brutality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Our Myths/Symbols</td>
<td>Their Myths/Symbols</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: News of peace: the editorial process (Wolfsfeld, 2004, p. 16).

The criteria of immediacy, drama, simplicity and ethnocentrism in the table above speak directly to the overwhelming drive behind the production of media stories in the Cypriot press: there is a tendency to avoid talking about processes that have become stalled, or are not going to be acted upon imminently; a focus on the drama of conflict and difference; an apparent addiction to the “breaking news story” that promises to overcome a previously insurmountable obstacle or resolve all previous conflict-oriented media stories – only to be followed-up quickly by another
conflict-oriented report that undermines the ‘breaking news’; an addiction to the personalities rather than a focus on processes and the institutionalized constraints within which these personalities act; a reduction of complex issues to ‘them or us’ or ‘win-lose’ and an insistence on accentuating what ‘they did’ to ‘us’ and how ‘we’ suffered at ‘their’ hands. Rarely do journalists in the Cypriot media encourage empathy with ‘the other’, accentuate opportunities through dialogue, promote a win-win orientation for progress through a process, reveal the multiple and competing interests at work in every issue, or provide explanatory frames for understanding ‘their myths’ or ‘their beliefs and values’ in relation to ‘our’ own. Whereas we agree with Wolfsfeld that these four criteria for editorial decision-making provide a valuable explanatory framework, not least for the issue currently under consideration, we do not see these criteria as somehow ‘unavoidable’ or as ‘natural’ to journalists or journalism. As we discuss in our conclusion, these criteria have everything to do with the specific ways in which media have developed historically as private elite-centered and highly centralized communication systems and it is precisely this underlying power relation that ‘naturalizes’ values like competition, sensationalism, antagonism, aggression, and the desire to ‘win’ at the expense of others. It is these purposefully structured relations that guide the expectations of both editors and journalists and within which such journalistic routines and practices are normalized.

Johan Galtung’s “peace journalism” model (Lynch and McGoldrick, 2005) provides a second entry point to consider those aspects of Cypriot media reporting on the Lokmacı barricade/Ledra Street issue that accentuate either peace and conflict resolution oriented journalism, or war/violence oriented journalism.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PEACE/CONFLICT JOURNALISM</th>
<th>WAR/VIOLENCE JOURNALISM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>I. PEACE/CONFLICT-ORIENTED</strong></td>
<td><strong>I. WAR/VIOLENCE-ORIENTED</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>explore conflict formation, x parties, y goals, z issues</td>
<td>focus on conflict arena, 2 parties, 1 goal (win), war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>general ‘win, win’ orientation</td>
<td>general zero-sum orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>open space, open time; causes and outcomes anywhere, also in history/culture</td>
<td>closed space, closed time; causes and exits in arena</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>making conflicts transparent</td>
<td>who threw the first stone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>giving voice to all parties; empathy, understanding</td>
<td>making wars opaque/secret</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>see conflict/war as problem, focus on conflict creativity</td>
<td>‘us-them’ journalism, propaganda, voice, for ‘us’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>humanization of all sides; more so the worse the weapon</td>
<td>see ‘them’ as the problem, focus on who prevails in war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>proactive: prevention before any violence/war occurs</td>
<td>dehumanization of ‘them’; more so the worse the weapon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>focus on invisible effects of violence (trauma and glory, damage to structure/culture)</td>
<td>reactive: waiting for violence before reporting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>II. TRUTH-ORIENTED</strong></td>
<td>focus only on visible effect of violence (killed, wounded and material damage)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>expose untruths on all sides/uncover all cover-ups</td>
<td><strong>11. PROPAGANDA-ORIENTED</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>III. PEOPLE-ORIENTED</strong></td>
<td>expose ‘their’ untruths/help ‘our’ cover-ups/lies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>focus on suffering all over; on women, aged, children</td>
<td>focus on ‘our’ suffering; on able-bodied elite males,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>giving voice to voiceless</td>
<td>being their mouth-piece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>give name to all evil-doers</td>
<td>give name of their evil-doers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>focus on people peace-makers</td>
<td>focus on elite peace-makers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IV. SOLUTION-ORIENTED</strong></td>
<td><strong>IV. VICTORY-ORIENTED</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peace = non-violence + creativity</td>
<td>peace = victory + ceasefire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>highlight peace initiatives, also to prevent more war</td>
<td>conceal peace initiatives, before victory is at hand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>focus on structure, culture, and peaceful society</td>
<td>focus on treaty, institution, the controlled society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aftermath: resolution, reconstruction, reconciliation</td>
<td>leaving for another war, return if the old flares up again</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Johan Galtung’s Peace Journalism Model in Lynch and McGoldrick, 2005, p. 6]

The model, adapted by Lynch and McGoldrick (2005) has also been adapted for use in other studies of communities in conflict (Shinar, D. 2004, p. 3). It is important to recognize that the “peace/conflict’ approach in the left column of Galtung’s chart above insists that conflict is not ‘naturally’ resolved through violence. Furthermore, unlike Galtung’s war/violence column,
where conflict is always represented as “them” and “us” in a zero-sum game, conflict for peace oriented journalism is a complex and multi-party process where the emphasis is shifted from ‘them” and “us” and who wins, to a dynamic dialogue between multiple partners who, through creative responses to apparent conflict, rise above the conflict paradigm to an entirely new way of understanding their relations to one another. A major difficulty for journalists who attempt to move from the zero-sum game of war/violence oriented journalism toward a less conflict-driven journalism is posed when the communities in conflict (such as is the case in Cyprus) are represented in an overly simplistic “us and them” frame and where journalists have tended, historically, to play a role in support of their own side against the “Other.” As Blasi (2004) argues, “A process of creating social commitment to victory over the enemy is typical when group conflicts are constructed as competitive processes.” Blasi goes on to point out that journalists who attempt to introduce alternative conflict-resolution techniques into their reporting “are denounced as disloyal” to their “own side”. (p. 9).

While our analysis of Cypriot media benefits primarily from utilizing Wolfsfeld’s conceptualization of major editorial values, it is vital to note that Galtung’s “peace/conflict journalism” column corresponds to Wolfsfeld’s “not news” column while Wolfsfeld’s “news worthy” column corresponds with Galtung’s war/violence column. This is something we return to in our concluding remarks.

Combining these two entry points – a consideration of major editorial values and the distinction between peace-oriented versus war/violence-oriented journalistic approaches to the production and circulation of stories about events – provides a useful frame through which to reevaluate the boundaries that Cypriot media provide the general public for thinking through and reacting to an apparent ‘peace building’ activity between the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot
communities. Below we consider the orientation to a potential peace building activity between the two Cypriot communities in Cyprus. First we provide a brief overview of the event and then we consider the media reports of the event that were published throughout the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot newspapers during the four months between November 2005 and February 2006.

**The Lokmacı barricade/Ledra Street Story:**

In November 2005 a story made the headlines across Cyprus reporting that the walls dividing Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots in the center of Cyprus’ capital city of Nicosia (the “last wall of Europe” as it was often referred to) would be demolished and that the major thoroughfare, known as the Lokmacı barricade to Turkish Cypriots and as Ledra Street to Greek Cypriots would be reopened to citizens of both communities. There was an initial excitement among the citizenry of the two communities as the story “broke” in the media in November 2005, reaching its height in December and then all but collapsing over the following two months. In November, as the story surfaced, we recovered 25 articles across the Cypriot press landscape, in December the number reached a dramatic 133, in January the story diminished to 17 articles followed by 12 in February and then abruptly disappeared.

A general survey of the orientation of newspaper stories across the four month period in question, revealed a consistent pattern that accords with the chart of editorial values (p. 7) as we review them below. Rather than interrupting the ‘flow’ of news stories throughout the period in question, we first give an encapsulated overview of the dynamics involved in press reports across the time-line of the media event and then follow-up with a brief analysis of the editorial values inherent in the stories. It becomes clear as the articles unfold, that these editorial values are
rooted in the ‘event’ and ‘specific actions’ column of the ‘immediacy’ category rather than in an interest in processes or long-term policies.

Immediacy is imminent in the following synopsis of four months of news reporting on the possible opening of a passage between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot sectors of the capital city of Nicosia. While we will also highlight the other characteristics of drama, simplicity and ethnocentrism at the conclusion of this overview of the press, immediacy as an initial category focuses attention on the propensity in the Cypriot press to be drawn to actions and events rather than to the processes that lie behind them. Wolfsfeld (2004) argues that this leaves citizens and policy makers with “an extremely narrow and simplistic view of what is happening” in the world around them (p. 17).

**The November Thrill**

As the story of Lokmacı/Ledra was released to the public through the Cypriot press, those early November 2005 reports were filled with undiluted anticipation. The Greek Cypriot *Financial Mirror*\(^{11}\) exclaimed: “The Cypriot government is ready to proceed with the opening of Ledra Street . . .” and “We are ready and the moment we receive the green light we can be ready in four weeks.” The Turkish Cypriot semi-state controlled BRT\(^{12}\) claimed: “The TRNC President has said that the Lokmacı crossing point will be opened soon.” The Greek Cypriot governments Public Information Office (PIO)\(^{13}\) declared that “Turkey to donate money for the opening of the Ledra street crossing point.” The Greek Cypriot *Sunday Mail*\(^{14}\) celebrated: “After 30 years it is finally starting to look like a road again as history was being made yesterday in Nicosia” and “Greek Cypriot soldiers could only look on in amazement . . .” *The Times online*\(^{15}\) carried a story internationally, written by Greek Cypriot journalist Michael Theodoulou in Nicosia with the headline “Cyprus tears down wall for Christmas” and exclaimed that both the
Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot Mayors of the Old City of Nicosia were expecting the opening of the border imminently: “‘The plans are all ready,’ Semavi Aşık (Ashuk) of the Turkish Cypriot authority said . . .” and “Michael Zampellas, the Mayor of the Greek Cypriot half of the capital welcomed the move. ‘We are ready to open too,’ he said.”

There were no revelations as to how this miraculous event had taken place, no discussions concerning the processes that had led up to this supposed ‘agreement’ to open the divided capital of Cyprus, nor any information concerning a long-term policy of the island’s reunification of which this “opening” would play a part.\(^\text{16}\)

Before the month of November had come to a close, and without any attempt to re-define the issue or explain the significant problems that (one assumes) were being thrashed out behind the scenes and within and between political parties and military interests across the island, the media’s focus shifted dramatically. BRT reported on November 26\(^{\text{th}},\) 2005\(^\text{17}\) “President Mehmet Ali Talat has accused the Leader of the Greek Cypriot Administration Tassos Papadopoulos of carrying out a state campaign to maintain the division of the island” and that it was “the Greek Cypriot Administration which had been trying to prevent the opening of the Lokmacı Gate.”

Cyprus Today\(^\text{18}\), the Turkish Cypriot English language weekly claimed that “Mr. Talat said the Lokmacı opening was falling victim to the same Greek Cypriot foot-dragging . . .” and that he said “the Greek Cypriots would place every obstacle in its way because the opening of Lokmacı would sound the death knell for division in Cyprus.”\(^\text{19}\)

**The December Chill**

December 2005 saw a dramatic increase in storytelling around the Lokmacı barricade\(^\text{20}\)/Ledra Street issue with 133 articles being published throughout the month although none went further in explanatory value around the deeper issues involved in the opening of the
street. BRT\textsuperscript{21} on December 8\textsuperscript{th} 2005 claimed the “Greek Cypriot side is trying to prevent the opening” and is “responsible for the deadlock” while the “TRNC government is determined to open the gate on the scheduled date.” On the same day, the then Greek Cypriot government spokesperson Kypros Chrysostomides is quoted in the Greek Cypriot Public Information Office\textsuperscript{22} news release stating that “The [Greek Cypriot] government, despite the difficulties, still wants the checkpoint at Ledra Street to be opened.” Again on the 8\textsuperscript{th} of December, Turkish Cypriot newspaper \textit{Kıbrıs}\textsuperscript{23} published an article by Hasan Hastürer where he claimed: “The truth of the matter is that the Greek Cypriot side doesn’t want to open a new gate and improve crossings before an [overall] solution [to the Cyprus Problem]” while Turkish language weekly \textit{Toplum Postası}\textsuperscript{24} quoted the Greek Ambassador to the United Nations, Adamantios Vasilakis, saying that the “bridge near Ledra Street does not build confidence” and that the “advantage to the Turkish occupation army in the area . . . does not contribute to building confidence between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities.”

Another article in that same issue highlighted a report by the UN Deputy Secretary General Anabi stating that “the bridge is not within the buffer zone” but that “the construction of the bridge does not help build confidence” and that it was a “negative development” because it was designed to “serve patrols by soldiers underneath.” By December 9\textsuperscript{th}, the Greek Cypriot \textit{Cyprus Mail}\textsuperscript{25} was suggesting that the Turkish Cypriot side would “consider talks on demolishing Ledra Bridge”. The whole media orientation of the issue had been transformed from one of opening a street to ease the building of relationships between the two ethnic Cypriot communities, to one of demolishing a bridge that now rested uneasily on that very street. \textit{Cyprus Mail} quoted Turkish Cypriot Deputy Mayor of Lefkoşa (Lefkosha) saying “We are willing to take the first opportunity to sit down and discuss this with the Greek Cypriots . . . but we don’t want to do this
and then find the Greek Cypriots come up with another excuse.” Also on the 9th of December the Turkish Cypriot *Cyprus Observer* quoted the Greek Cypriot President Papadopoulos saying “The case of the Ledra Street will not be a precedent for the occupation forces to claim half of the buffer zone area, something which seems to be their plan throughout Cyprus.” In another article, “Discussions in Cyprus are stuck on a bridge” the newspaper claims that “The efforts made by Turkish Cypriots to open the Lokmacı . . . is being prevented by the Southern President, Tassos Papadopoulos and paraphrased the Turkish Cypriot Prime Minister Ferdi Sabit Soyer asking the United Nations to “point out the ‘reluctant side’ on this issue.”

The Cypriot media’s focus on the apparent antagonism between the two communities, or at least, between the two Administrations representing the two communities, became heightened in newspaper reports as the issue raged on toward mid-December with BRT paraphrasing the President of the Turkish Cypriot community Mehmet Ali Talat claiming that “it is out of the question for the Turkish Cypriot side to stop work being carried out at Lokmacı” quoting the President saying “we insist on the opening of the barricade and will complete the ongoing work for the opening of the crossing point at Lokmacı.” The Greek Cypriot newspaper *Alithia* published an article on the 16th of December by Greek Cypriot journalist Alekos Konstantinides that reveals internal Greek Cypriot criticism to the official Greek Cypriot Administration’s position. Konstantinides claims that “Papadopoulos and his No team are against a negotiable solution and the opening of gates” due to his “rejectionist ideology”, however the author goes on to explain that it is the *form* of the argument being presented by the Administration and not issues such as ‘occupation” and the overall concept of working toward the elimination of the Turkish Cypriot state that he is objecting to.
As the Cypriot media construction of the Lokmacı/Ledra opening reached its high point in mid-December, Turkish Cypriot newspaper *Yenidüzen (Yeh-nee-doo-zen)* was quoting the Turkish Cypriot President Talat claiming “They expect the Turkish side to say ‘yes sir, your orders, whatever you order we accept it and put it into practice’ while insisting that “We do not have to get permission from anybody for something we do on our side . . . we are not forced to abide by the rules of others.” While the Greek Cypriot *Cyprus Mail* has the Greek Cypriot Government Spokesperson claiming that “in the event that they adopt our proposals, the crossing could be opened in 48 hours.” Turkish Cypriot *Kibris* lent an ear to a relatively under represented issue in Ali Baturay’s article “Why this secrecy at Lokmacı” although rather than exploring why the public was being given information peace-meal and without any solid foundation upon which to consider the issues at stake, focuses upon the irony inherent in the fact that while it was “our” (Turkish Cypriot) side that wanted the gate opened, Turkish Cypriot reporters were forbidden from taking photographs of the ongoing work from “our side” and had to cross into the Greek Cypriot sector in order to shoot images of the new bridge. “It seems that the military is not as willing as the civil authorities to pull down this wall.”

Greek Cypriot *Simerini* newspaper accused the Turkish Cypriot President, Mehmet Ali Talat, of becoming “a slave of the bridge” in an article by Kostakis Antonios on December 15th, 2005. In Antonios’ article, the bridge is likened to a “Trojan horse”, Talat is labeled the “leader of occupation”, and while claiming that even the “Turkish Cypriot citizens are angry with the bridge”, the article warns Talat that he “. . . cannot play tricks with the empty stomachs of Turkish Cypriots any longer.”

Toward the end of December, BRT was reporting that the Turkish Cypriot side was demanding that the Greek Cypriots “first demolish the wall of shame” and complaining that the
international community was not bringing enough pressure on Greek Cypriots to demolish their wall before discussing whether Turkish Cypriots should demolish their bridge while the Greek Cypriot *Cyprus Weekly* was reporting that the Greek Cypriot President Papadopoulos was “standing firm on Ledra Street” against the “illegal Turkish Cypriot regime” and that if they were to remove the “controversial bridge” he could “open Nicosia’s Ledra Street to pedestrian traffic within 48 hours.” As Christmas day arrived in South Cyprus, Turkish Cypriot newspaper *Afrika* was reporting that the Speaker of the Greek Cypriot House (and General Secretary of the Greek Cypriot AKEL), Demitris Hristofias, had declared that Turkish Cypriot “unilateral celebrations” over the completion of their part of the Lokmacı barricade/Ledra Street “are good for nothing” and that “bridges that are built for show and the military use must be pulled down.”

Three days later the newspaper quoted Greek Cypriot daily Filelefteros claiming that the “Turkish Cypriot administration has postponed the opening and the celebrations of Ledra gate to the new year” claiming that “the postponement was due to external pressures” but also claiming that the Turkish Cypriot government’s Secretary had insisted that “The Ledra Bridge will not be pulled down.” As December came to an end, the media’s focus had shifted slightly again with the Greek Cypriot *Cyprus Mail* revealing that the Turkish Cypriots had offered “to dismantle the controversial bridge but had also asked Greek Cypriots to remove “offensive signs.”

Summing up the whole “event”, at the end of a tumultuous month of “media warmongering”, the newspaper quoted the Turkish Cypriot municipality’s Deputy Mayor Semavi Aşık as saying: “Two months ago it seemed necessary to have a bridge there. But over the last two months it has become clear in discussions with all the bodies involved in the project, including government and the military, that it is not imperative. I think we can convince everyone of this.”
What were those discussions about? Who were the “everybody” involved? How did it become clear that it was no longer necessary? Why was it necessary to begin with? Who is left that needs to be “convinced”? None of these issues, these processes or procedures found their way into the light of a single December Cypriot media news day. Clearly, they were not considered to be newsworthy.

**The January Freeze**

Turkish Cypriot *Kıbrıs* treated readers to a ‘summary of the year’ on January 1st 2006 where they traced the root of the Lokmacı barricade/Ledra Street story back to September 27th 2005 when the Turkish Cypriot President Mehmet Ali Talat claimed “Lokmacı will open soon” through to December 2005 when both Greek and Turkish Cypriot shopkeepers and citizens demanded that the walls and the bridge be torn down and access for pedestrians opened. Interestingly, the newspaper quotes a section of the British High Commissioner, Peter Millet’s announcement that the “Lokmacı problem . . . is turned into a daily war of words” which, of course, the media had faithfully, if not over-zealously, kept alight. On January 2nd, the Greek Cypriot *Sunday Mail* led with the headline “Tassos appeals for Turkish Cypriot understanding” and claimed that Papadopoulos “called on the Turkish Cypriots to understand and recognize the justified concerns of the Greek Cypriot side” and that the solution could only come through the “reunification of our country”. Papadopoulos is quoted as calling on ordinary Turkish Cypriots to “work with us so as to bring down the walls of division” and arguing that “the presence of occupation troops cannot lead to rapprochement, contact and communication”. What the Greek Cypriot President ‘means’ by concepts like “reunification” “our country” and “bringing down walls of division” is not contrasted to what those terms mean to the Turkish Cypriots Papadopoulos addresses, although it is undoubtedly clear to Cypriot journalists and Cypriot
media workers in general that there are considerable differences between the two communities’ interpretation of precisely these terms. Another article in the newspaper on the same day put forward a challenge (but a challenge to whom?) to change the rhetoric of the Cyprus problem and the Lokmacı/Ledra issue: “But will the rhetoric finally change? Why does it need to? One, because we can’t take it anymore, the scratched record driving us toward insanity . . . ” however, the Greek Cypriot author of the article, Kosta Pavlowitch, goes on: “. . . but more importantly because . . . we are losing control of events, allowing de facto situations to shape the future of this country.” Whereas the Turkish Cypriots consider there to be two distinct and equally sovereign communities in Cyprus working on the process of negotiating a Federal Cyprus settlement, the author of this article, while challenging the rhetorical practices of those in power in the Greek Cypriot community, speaks from the dominant ideological perspective of the Greek Cypriot administration that recognizes only one Cyprus that is perceived to be slipping gradually from Greek Cypriot hands.

The whole media issue of an opening for citizens of both communities to meet together dissolves into a frozen paradigm of quoted reaction after reaction to a bridge that has been built on the Turkish Cypriot side of the island. On the 4th of January Turkish Cypriot Afrika claims “if that bridge had not been put there, by now Lokmacı would have been opened” and “the bridge has hindered the opening . . . ” while the Greek Cypriot Cyprus Mail argues that the Greek Cypriot government did not want the Ledra Street opened and so “made an issue of the bridge-building and the violation of the buffer zone” in order to stop the process at work in the Turkish Cypriot side. On January 15th, Turkish Cypriot Kibris reported on an interview held by Turkish Cypriot reporter Senem Gök (Gohk) with the Turkish Cypriot leader of pro-solution BDH, Mustafa Akıncı (A-kun-juh), claiming that from the beginning, the “strong disagreement
was not so obvious” although he already thought that it would be an obstacle for the “old and physically challenged and would be difficult for youngsters carrying their bags.” Akınçi is reported as saying “if I were given the choice . . . either open the gate with a bridge or do not open the gate forever, I much prefer the first choice.” Akınçi argued that “We must give preference to the civilian life . . . soldiers must, on both parts, withdraw back . . . demilitarize the whole of the old city within the walls . . . priority to civilians without walls or bridges. This is the right path.” Akınçi’s crucial points are left unchallenged by the journalist, unquestioned within the context of the story, and thus, hanging without a framework within which readers and citizens might think about them. Moreover, where Akınçi is quoted speaking of the possibility of ‘choice’ the newspaper fails to take up issues related to choices, debate, dialogue and who ultimately decides on issues like these. While the portion of Akınçi’s comments that have been selected by the journalist do speak to a reasonable and rational alternative to what the media has already presented as ‘the unacceptable status quo’, readers are never informed why the state of affairs are as they currently are, nor how to get from there to somewhere else. By the end of January all hope, if there had been any at the beginning of the month, of the opening of a passage way between the two communities around Lokmacı barricade/Ledra Street had frozen while the mediated sense of continued underlying currents of conflict and antagonism prevailed.

**February Flutters**

Following a cold January around the Cypriot media’s Lokmacı/Ledra ‘event’, Turkish Cypriot *Afrika* declared “Lokmacı on agenda again” although the number of articles retrieved had dropped from a December high of 133 to just 12 articles in February. The newspaper reported that the Mayor of Turkish Cypriot Lefkoşa had announced to the Greek Cypriot newspaper *Politis* that the “stalemate for the last month” was “due to the attitude and tactics
followed by the Greek Cypriots” while on the 10th of February, it reported Greek Cypriot AKEL’s General Secretary Demitris Hristofias arguing that “The present situation at Ledra Street did not help the rapprochement of the two communities.” On the 13th of February, Turkish Cypriot Kibris 44 added a new twist to the old story by revealing that the Turkish Cypriot Mayor of Lefkoşa had proposed that “Pedestrians may use the road whereas the bridge may stay there as a monument symbolizing the unity of the people.” While mockery was made out of this suggestion by both the Turkish and Greek Cypriot press, the Mayor was back in the media limelight two days later with BRT 45 claiming that “The Mayor of Lefkoşa Kutlay Erk offers unconditional talks for opening new crossing at Lokmacı” while the article explains that “The Greek Cypriot side’s stance prevented the opening of a crossing point at Lokmacı.” On the same day, the Greek Cypriot newspaper Cyprus Mail 46 reported the story from a slightly different angle saying that the Turkish Cypriot Mayor “has again signaled the Turkish Cypriot side might be willing to remove the bridge it built” while pointing out that the Mayor had “fallen victim to ridicule as several Turkish Cypriot papers joked at comments he made concerning pedestrians ignoring the bridge but keeping it as a monument to the unity of the two Cypriot peoples.” The paper reported “diplomatic sources” as saying “no bi-communal discussions on the crossing were taking place at present” and the Greek Cypriot Mayor Michalakis Zampellas as “refusing to comment” on the Turkish Cypriot Mayor’s comments to the newspaper but rather “only responding once he had received ‘official information’ on the Turkish Cypriot side’s views.”

On the 19th of February 2006, the Turkish Cypriot newspaper Afrika 47 seemed to close this chapter of the media story with the headline “No hope for Lokmacı” where it was reported that the Turkish Cypriot Mayor of Lefkoşa, Kutlay Erk stated that “any movement made by the
Greek Cypriot side before their general elections will be nothing more than image building” and that the “Greek Cypriot side is hiding behind the excuse of demolishing the bridge.” Symptomatic of the whole mediated episode, the reporter claims that when asked what the Greek Cypriot side was doing that might be perceived as ‘image building’ the Mayor “insists not to declare his stance even on the Cyprus question.” This brought the three month media debate to an end without either a resolution to the conflict between different parties or a deeper understanding among the interested publics about what the conflict was actually about.

**Major Editorial News Values**

When we examine the list of concepts in the column “not news” of the “major editorial values” (see p. 7), we can find no correlation between this list and the orientation of the articles themselves. None of the articles we have reviewed have dealt with processes, considered long-term policy issues, promoted or reported on calm, highlighted times when there were moments when crisis subdued, periods of cooperation, moods of moderation, accentuated opportunities over drawbacks, highlighted internal consensus or underlined the possibility of incremental progress throughout the period in question. Neither have the articles explored underlying ideological similarities or differences upon which the apparent oppositional positions stand. The appearance of conflict is never presented as multi-sided, neither are the beliefs or pain of the ‘Other’ ever considered. There is, in the synopsis of the media reporting on the Lokmacı /Ledra ‘event’ above, no moment of reflection on the possibility of compromise or hope, perhaps because, as the editorial values chart suggests, this is “not news”.

What we do find instead, is that the news stories concerning the possibility of building community and the opening of avenues for cooperation and understanding consistently
undermine the very possibility of hope and bi-communal dialogue – falling squarely into the category considered “newsworthy”.

**Immediacy**

Immediacy refers to the media’s focus on actions and events and specifically to examples of where reporting lacks the contextual materials that would allow for reflection and critique. This category is especially important with regard to the Lokmacı/Ledra story because not only is the story itself an event, each twist and turn in the development of the story is also an event or an action: that is, the story is never told as a process in as much as even internally, the developing story never refers back on itself to explore or explain its development – how it came to be where it currently is. Our argument is that journalists and editors are often driven ‘by’ events, perhaps due to the news value of immediacy, even while they (perhaps unwittingly at times) play a crucial role in creating the negative media environment within which audiences are encouraged to think or feel about important social, cultural and political issues.

As the story (which had reached a peak in December of 2005 and plummeted to a measly 17 stories by January of 2006), dissipated without having either provided a clear explanatory framework for thinking about the issue or proffered a reasonable set of explanations for how a ‘process’ or ‘procedure’ or ‘dialogue’ between the communities had come ‘undone’, we decided to ask editors and columnists of those newspapers why they had dropped the story. Rather than use this category to rehearse examples from newspaper articles already fleshed out above, the comments of editors and journalists concerning the embrace and then sudden rejection of this dynamic story provide additional food for thought. We asked why the story had been dropped so suddenly and without resolution. Below we have cited some of the comments that we received:
The Chief Editor of Turkish Cypriot Afrika newspaper, Şener (Shener) Levent: “I am sick and tired writing about the bridge . . . presumably we’ll return to the subject if something new happens.”

Loucas Haralambous, commentator for Greek Cypriot Politis and the Sunday Mail replied: “I haven’t noticed. It seems that it doesn’t sell anymore. We have the ‘Straw’ problem at the moment and that keeps us busy.”

Loucas Haralambous wrote in his column in the Greek Cypriot Cyprus Mail concerning a conversation he had with one of the authors of this article concerning the reason for the disappearance of the story from the Cyprus media: “I was at a loss for words when Bekir Azgin, a close friend of mine who is a professor at the Eastern Mediterranean University in Famagusta, recently asked me: ‘Have you noticed that suddenly everyone’s forgotten about the opening of Ledra Street?’ Why do you think that is? I must confess I had a hard time coming up with a satisfactory answer.”

Başaran Düzgün (Basharan Düzgün), the Chief Editor for Turkish Cypriot Kıbrıs newspaper replied: “It’s typical journalistic forgetfulness. When other, more urgent themes became popular, the bridge was forgotten. To be honest, as a person in this business, I was not even aware that we had forgotten until you asked me.”

Cenk Mutluyakalı, Chief Editor for the Turkish Cypriot Yenidüzen newspaper commented: “Three reasons come to mind: more than enough was written about the bridge during a certain period. Both the journalists and the readers got bored with it, the long holiday period may have interfered with it, or the bridge itself was out of bounds to the public and journalists were not able to visit it. Mind you, it is not only our newspaper that dropped the story: you don’t see anything on the subject in any of the newspapers. That is most interesting. I wonder why? I shall ask one of our journalists to write a story about the bridge. It is a very expensive bridge so we must not forget it.”

Akay Cemal, Chief Editor of Turkish Cypriot Halkın Sesi: “It became obvious that the parties cannot and will not agree on the matter and people have lost hope of opening the gate. The visit of Shaw became the subject matter and the Lokmacı gate was dropped. It is the result of hopelessness.

In each of the replies above we have underlined the issue of ‘immediacy’ as related to the category of “events” and “specific actions” where the news value is ‘novelty’ and ‘animation’ rather than the long drawn-out and complex dynamics of process and policy. Editors and journalists alike express surprise and even confusion concerning how and why the story no longer seems to matter or when it might become important again. It is useful to note that while some of the respondents found it difficult to explain why they had dropped the story, they did acknowledge that something else (something new and immediate) had replaced it. Furthermore, they concede that should a new ‘event’ take place again around the issue they will probably pick it up again.

Drama

Drama refers to the juxtapositioning of conceptual frameworks for thinking through responsibilities as a journalist or media industry toward publics whom one (theoretically) serves. Rather than perceiving this category as a purposeful choice on the part of media workers, it can
be seen as an environment within which particular choices appear to be more ‘reasonable’: that is, in environments where the value is toward “being first”, “being fast”, “beating the competition” and “attracting and sustaining the largest audience”, one might “reasonably” prefer violent news headlines over calm ones; crisis over cooperation, discord over consensus.

The story of Lokmacı barricade/Ledra Street could be (and as we have seen, the newspapers took this route briefly in November 2005) about a “peace breakthrough” and an unusual consensus forming around a bi-communal understanding. However, it is soon necessary to provide explanations for the complexities emerging between the two communities and the multiple points of view that might be at work behind the scenes. At this point, the Cypriot media chose to emphasize conflict rather than the road map toward cooperation and to highlight the extremes that existed within each community rather than those areas where common ground was shared. Furthermore, newspapers presented each small step (or retracing of a step), that might have yielded more explanatory value had it been analyzed in the context of previous or possible steps, as a major breakthrough or breaking story on its own. The conflict-orientation increased the tendency in the media to accentuate dangers associated with what might happen to “us” while ignoring completely how “they” perceive dangers associated with what might happen to “them”.

The newsworthiness of conflict as a category for reporting had implications for both Greek and Turkish Cypriot newspapers when, for the Greek Cypriot newspapers, the opening of a pathway between the two communities was transformed suddenly into a question of “them” encroaching on “our” territory and the potential threat that this would bring to “us”, while the Turkish Cypriot media presented the Greek Cypriot attitude toward the opening of the pathway as a dangerous precedent for “our side.” The transformation from a cooperative enterprise between two yielding Cypriot communities in early November had gone through a
metamorphosis. For the Greek Cypriots, media represented the impending threat of a Turkish invasion: “Turkish military is encroaching” . . . “Turkish Cypriot administration is the puppet of Ankara” . . . “Turkish Cypriot military advantage at Ledra” and “The bridge is built on orders from the Turkish army.” At the same moment, the Turkish Cypriot media is flooded with representations of Greek Cypriots as power hungry and uncompromising: “Greek Cypriots want to make us a minority” . . . “Greek Cypriot administration preventing a solution” . . . “Greek Cypriot reaction is negative” and “The party not cooperating on Lokmacı is the Greek Cypriots.”

While brief, this list of drama/crisis oriented reporting on Lokmacı barricade/Ledra Street is nevertheless a concise representation of the majority of Turkish and Greek Cypriot news stories concerning the probable opening of a path toward more peaceful relations between the two Cypriot communities between November 2005 and February 2006. While there appears to have been a general public consensus among shopkeepers and citizen/consumers in both the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities that the opening of a pathway in the center of Cyprus’ capital city would have been extremely helpful toward both economic and social/cultural cooperation, the media reflect instead the antagonisms, the conflict and the possible dangers associated with political shenanigans at the level of elite party politics without any attempt to explain, criticize or critique the underlying causes of the apparent animosity.

Simplicity

The editorial value of ‘simplicity’, focusing on the paired oppositions of opinion/ideology, image/text, major personalities/institutions, and two-sided conflict/multi-sided conflict, proves instructive and highly enlightening to this present study. Moreover, as we explore the choices consistently made by media workers and media institutions across the island, we notice that these choices also make the possibility of a journalism that can promote peaceful coexistence between
the Greek and Turkish Cypriots extremely unlikely at this time. As Ottosen (2004), shows in a study concerning the role of media in providing citizens with the contextualized information necessary for a fuller understanding of a conflict and the possibilities for peace, the media consistently fail to explore the deeper ideological underpinnings of conflict or the “hidden agendas” (p. 13) that may promote a clearer appreciation of the processes at work in an ongoing conflict.

With a primary, indeed addictive compulsion, toward opinion, the image, personalities and the representation of conflict as a two-sided coin (heads wins, tails loses), the media unavoidably heighten conflict, encourage tension and sow discord among readers. The primary tactic of both Turkish and Greek Cypriot journalists appears to be to heighten each community’s awareness of the differences between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders in, what amounts to, a zero-sum game, where winning for one necessarily means loosing for the other. The media also represent the complex and contradictory positions between multiple actors by reducing them to a game being played out by only two sides, one who is always ‘right’ and the other who is always ‘wrong’: “The problem lies with the Greek Cypriot leader Papadopoulos” or “The Turkish Cypriot leader Talat is pursuing the opening of the checkpoint on his own terms” or again, “Talat says Papadopoulos is the problem.”

While we do not intend to critique the ideological underpinnings of journalists or media industries in Cyprus in this paper it is important to point out that the Cypriot media, both Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot have long been acclimatized to the practice of ‘self-censorship’ and the avoidance of speaking directly to the ideological construction of the official state positions with regard to the production and circulation of information within the respective communities.
on the island. This is a decisive issue and one that should take a central place in future analysis.

As Wolfsfeld (2004) makes clear with regard to the concept of “simplicity”:

“Journalists unwilling to deal with ideologies are especially problematic for it severely limits citizens’ ability to fully understand debates over a peace process . . . . Instead of focusing on the complex political and historical underpinnings of an event, the standard professional routine is to ask leaders and citizens to relate to what has just happened. Political arguments that go beyond the specific incidents are normally left on the editor’s floor.” (p. 21).

**Ethnocentrism**

Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot media have a long history of demonizing each other’s communities and while the demonization process around the Lokmacı barricade/Ledra Street event does not take the extreme form that it has taken in the past or may take around other issues or in particular circles, it ‘makes sense’ against a backdrop of over 45 years of inter-communal, followed by bi-communal “national struggles” where the administrations of each community, supported by their various state controlled and/or ‘private’ media institutions waged psychological “wars of words” against each other and sometimes internally against groups with alternative paradigms. In the case of Lokmacı barricade/Ledra Street, the demonization process began as soon as the first obstacle in opening the street appeared in mid-November: “Talat cannot cheat the international community forever” . . . Greek Cypriots want to punish us and take our sovereignty” . . . “Turkish Cypriots are handling the issue in an arrogant way” . . . “The attitude of the Greeks is full of lies” . . . and one that while it came from the Greek Cypriot side could summarize the overall attitude of both communities: “Our violations are not to be seen as equal with their violations.“ The central point here is that: “When a peace process breaks down, the news media of both sides emphasize their own righteousness and the other’s evilness. We are always the victims, they are always the aggressors” (Wolfsfeld, p. 23).
We also agree with Wolfsfeld that “It is difficult to exaggerate the overall impact of this constant flow of ethnocentric information on public perceptions of the enemy. The news media are extremely powerful and omnipresent mechanisms for intensifying and solidifying hate between peoples.” (p. 23).

Reflections on ‘Peace Journalism’:

We have drawn out a general framework within which to reflect upon media stories concerning the Lokmacı barricade/Ledra Street event and have shown that the stories have consistently fallen into Wolfsfeld’s criteria for “newsworthy” reporting within contemporary configurations of Cypriot media. With this in mind, it is important to consider the possibility for what Galtung (see page 9) calls “peace journalism” in the context of the pervasive editorial values of news media examined above.

Galtung assumes that “peace journalism” will explore conflict from multiple perspectives, make conflicts transparent, give voice to all concerned parties, see ‘conflict’ as the problem while focusing on creative methods for transforming it, humanize all sides and promote ways of thinking among general publics that will encourage the prevention of violence (or the end of dialogue) before the process reaches a climax. Furthermore, Galtung anticipates that “peace journalism” will expose untruths from all sides, focus on the suffering of marginalized groups, give access to the voiceless in the society, and accentuate the role of ordinary people in the peace-making process rather than the ‘elites’ who tend to be highlighted in contemporary media stories. Finally, Galtung expects “peace journalism” to lend weight to peace initiatives by focusing on the possibilities of a peaceful society and by following through peace initiatives with a focus on resolution, reconstruction and reconciliation. It happens that all of these expectations are firmly rooted in Wolfsfeld’s ‘not news’ category (p. 7). A few examples will make this
point: First, where our analysis reveals the fixation of the Cypriot media on two parties struggling in a zero-sum game to be representative of Wolfsfeld’s “simplicity” category for what constitutes “newsworthiness”, Galtung sees this as “war/violence journalism” and juxtaposes it to the “peace/conflict journalism” where there are many parties, alternative possibilities and issues, and the possibility for all players to benefit by transcending the initial perception of conflict. Second, as we uncovered the tendency of the Cypriot media toward ethnocentrism with an emphasis on “their” brutality and “our” suffering in Wolfsfeld’s “newsworthy” category, Galtung emphasizes this as a symptom of “war/violence journalism” and calls for an alternative orientation that accentuates the suffering perpetrated upon and the crime originating from all parties to conflict. Finally, as exampled in our interviews with Editors of Cypriot newspapers, there is a tendency on the part of news industries to drop a story when it is overly complex and time consuming and then return to it when another dramatic event ensues. Most often this is because another event has superseded the primary event and captured the imagination of the news editors. While the propensity for drama (see p. 7 ‘Major Breakthroughs’) fits concisely with Wolfsfeld’s category of “newsworthy”, it finds its place within the “victory-oriented” (see p. 9 ‘leaving for another war, returning if the old flares up again’) subcategory of “war/violence journalism” in Galtung’s model. Galtung stresses the need to move from this victory-oriented approach to what he calls “solution-oriented” where journalists follow-through with a story in order to promote the possibility of resolution and reconciliation. Thus, Galtung has essentially challenged the dominant editorial values that constitute contemporary media news industries.

Galtung’s call is for nothing less than a revolution in media structures and journalists’ performances. Kempf (2003) also highlights the necessity of radical changes in media institutions before journalistic performances change when he argues that for journalists to take
on the role of promoting the resolution of conflict and the recognition of alternatives to war, they will have to be emancipated from “. . . the institutional constraints that result from the criteria for news selection, editorial procedures and expectations, the economics of the media, the connections between the media and the politicians and the military” (p.10).

**Concluding Remarks:**

The preparing of a clear agenda for the promotion of more engaged and socially conscious knowledge workers is crucial for the future of any possible participatory democracy given the principle role media play in the production and dissemination of information in advanced technological societies. As Wolfsfeld (2004) argues:

> The news media have become the central arena for political debate in western countries and those who hope to promote their ideas to the public have few alternative channels. It is the news media that determine who gets to speak and what is considered an appropriate form of argument.” (p. 12)

Naveh (2002) in a study focused on the role of media in the formation of foreign policy also claims a significant role for the media in influencing decision makers, arguing that “the media serve as a source, part of the input environment of the decision-making process, supplying leaders with information and data” (p. 10) that is then taken up as part of the decision making process. First and Avraham (2003), in their study of the role of media in the coverage of conflict, find that the media “. . . help us consolidate our interpretation of political, social, and economic conflicts” while playing “a similar role in describing the “Others” of our world.” (p. 2)

Mowlana, working on the assumption that the media play a powerful role in shaping media environments and thus contribute to our understanding of and acting in the world, asks “If international media have repeatedly and successfully pursued war-mongering and thereby increased tensions, could they not also do the opposite?” (1986, p. 20).
That media stand as a gauge against which to measure the state of a particular issue or topic, evaluate the likely implementation of a proposal, and position oneself as a citizen who is hopeful of a process or disheartened by it, is a prominent characteristic of news reporting. Thus the media play an active role in providing a context for how we think about the political climate surrounding conflict, violence, war and, importantly, initiatives intended to move us toward peace.

The key point here is that as political decision-making becomes more distant from the citizenry, the influence of the media increases. Wolfsfeld’s argument echoes similar concerns from communication scholars. Morley and Robins (1995), for example, suggest that “... the further the ‘event’ from our own direct experience, the more we depend on media images for the totality of our knowledge” (p. 133).

Our concern has been to explore the public media debate on the Cyprus conflict through a frame provided by a synthesis of both peace and critical communication oriented scholarship – drawing from contemporary examples of Cypriot media representations, some sense of how institutionally situated journalists are currently engaging in conflict-oriented rather than conflict-resolving journalistic practices. This is all the more necessary because scholars and students of such fields as political science, international relations and communication studies – and indeed the citizenry in general – invariably turn to this readily accessible stream of press releases and media channels in the form of the world wide web, newspapers, television programs, magazines and radio stations, and extract from these reports, parameters within which to think about and offer possible solutions to the “Cyprus Problem.”

Clarifying the role that Cypriot media play in the construction of stories that help to shape our general understanding of the current situation in Cyprus accentuates the fact that reports
about statements or comments made by either one’s own or ‘the others’” political representatives or processes, are not the statements or processes themselves but rather media representations that have been shaped for public consumption by the media industries. Rather than being witnesses to the “Cyprus conflict” itself, we are rather witnessing carefully orchestrated ‘media wars’ where media highlight and re-present social, cultural, political and economic dynamics in and between the two Cypriot communities in selective and ideological forms: as “win-lose” or “conflict driven”.

Having recognized the tendency toward conflict-oriented media constructs in the Cypriot media, the challenge now is to begin a process of identifying the necessary ground upon which to develop an alternative journalism\textsuperscript{56} that, contrary to contemporary Cypriot editorial policy, represents social and political life in terms of how it might promote social justice, reconciliation, and the resolution of conflict through creative and peaceful means.
References:


The capital city of Cyprus is referred to by Turkish Cypriots as Lefkoşa and Greek Cypriots as Lefkosia. We will use these two terms respectively when referring to arguments emanating from their communities and we will use the English language term “Nicosia” when making our own comments in the text.

The Republic of Cyprus was established in 1960 under the guarantorship of Britain, Greece and Turkey. In 1963 intercommunal fighting brought an end to the partnership state and until 1974 the Republic of Cyprus government was under the control of the Greek Cypriot community. In 1974, following an attempted Greek coup on the island, Turkey invaded Cyprus and took one third of the island under its control. Massive population movement immediately ensued with Greek Cypriots moving into the two-thirds of the island under the control of the Greek Cypriot ‘Republic of Cyprus’ and Turkish Cypriots moving into the one-third area under the control of Turkey. In 1985 the Turkish controlled are declared itself an independent state under the title “Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus”. Since 1986 this self-declared state has been recognized only by Turkey. In 2002 the Turkish Cypriot population voted in favor of a United Nations plan for reunification of the Turkish Cypriot community with the Greek Cypriot Republic of Cyprus in the form of a bi-zonal, bi-communal, Federation. Unfortunately the Greek Cypriot Republic of Cyprus, while gaining accession to EU membership, voted against the plan claiming that it would only legalize partition and prevent the ultimate reunification of Cyprus. Currently the island people await another initiative from the Greek and Turkish Cypriot administrations that might resolve the disparity between the two communities. As of the beginning of 2006 no new initiative has been forthcoming.

This refers to the recent debates over the future shape of Cyprus. The Greek Cypriot administration argues for the maintenance of the Republic of Cyprus and the Turkish Cypriot administration voted in favor of a new bi-zonal, bi-communal federated structure. This new structure, envisaged by the UN plan necessitates the diminution of the present Republic of Cyprus to “constituent state” status within a new Federal Republic of Cyprus. This most recent attempt at building a “partnership Republic” finds its roots in the 1950s struggle of the Greek Cypriot community for ENOSIS (union with Greece) which was transformed significantly, after an attempted Greek Coup in 1974, into a celebration of an independent Greek Cypriot State with a recognized Turkish Cypriot minority. In parallel with the movement for ENOSIS, the Turkish Cypriot community argued for TAKSIM (the creation of two separate sovereign states – one Greek, the other Turkish). The Turkish Cypriots rejected the TAKSIM “solution” in the UN sponsored referendum when they voted in favor of new United Federal Republic of Cyprus with two constituent states while the Greek Cypriots overwhelmingly rejected the UN plan.

The prominent G/C newspapers published in the last two decades of the 19th century: Kypros (Cyprus), Neon Kytion (New Citium), Keravnos (Thunderbolt), Ethnos (The Nation) published in Larnaka; Alithia (The Truth), Salpinx (The Trumpet), Anayenensis (Renaissance) published in Limassol; Phoni Tis Kyprou (The Voice of Cyprus), Symea Tis Kyprou (The Flag of Cyprus), Empros (Forward), Elephteria (Freedom), Patris (The Motherland) published in Nicosia; Salamis, Ammohostos (Famagusta), Aghon (The Struggle), Eon (The Age) published in Paphos. (Andreas Sophocleus, 1993, Ta Mesa Mazikis Enimerosis Stin Kyprou, Nicosia. pp. 11-13).

The newspapers published in Turkish at the same period: Ümid (Hope) published in Larnaka; Sa’ed (The Scope) published in Limassol; Zaman (The Times), Yeni Zaman (The New Times), Kbirs (Cyprus), Mirat-i Zaman (The Mirror of the Time) published in Nicosia. (Azgun, 1988, 641-643).

At that time, of course, the issue was between Greek Cypriots arguing for union of Cyprus with Greece and Turkish Cypriots claiming that Cyprus legally belonged to the Ottoman state and that, should Britain decide to vacate the island, it should be handed back to its legal owner.

The term Lokmacı “gate” or “barricade” was most often used by the Turkish Cypriot media while the term “Ledra Street” was most often used by the Greek Cypriot media in reference to the same geographical location in the heart of the walled city in the capital Nicosia. Further, Ledra Street, in Greek is “Makridhromos” and in Turkish is “Uzun Yol” with both meaning “the long road”. The Lokmacı barricade was demolished by the Turkish Cypriot administration with a view to reuniting the two sides of Nicosia in November 2006, however the Greek Cypriots objected to the building of a bridge where the Lokmacı barricade had been on the Turkish Cypriot side and refused to demolish the wall on their side of Ledra Street until the bridge was removed.

Continuous, extensive and often passionate coverage of the opening of the borders between the two Cypriot communities, the election of the CTP/DP coalition government in North Cyprus, the election of Mehmet Ali Talat to the Presidency of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, the election of Papadopoulos and Akel to power in south Cyprus, the simultaneous referendums on the UN-sponsored “Anan Plan” with Greek Cypriots voting against it and Turkish Cypriots voting for it and the subsequent entry of Greek Cypriot Republic of Cyprus into the European Union in May 2004.
1949 Following the developing story on the Lokmaci barricade/Ledra Street issue places us at the center of the historical separation of the two communities during periods that have become important to both: the 1950s and 1960s for the Turkish Cypriots who were protecting themselves from Greek Cypriot machinations toward ENOSIS during that time; and 1974 for Greek Cypriots who consider the invasion of Cyprus by one of their Guarantor States, Turkey, as the beginning point of inter-communal conflict. Also, following media representations of the potential opening of this border between the two communities in the capital city of Nicosia after 40 years of separation, offers a glimpse into the more general complexities of opening the island cultures to a truly bi-communal, bi-zonal Federation and the role that the Cypriot media might reasonably be expected to play (in its present form) in promoting such a peace or inculcating and heightening conflict.

The Lokmaci barricade was a wall that closed off access to Ledra Street until recently when the Turkish Cypriots demolished it with a view to reuniting the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot sides of the Capital city of Nicosia. There is also a wall on the Greek Cypriot side of Lefkosia that must be demolished if the two sides of the street are to be reunited. At the time of this writing, that wall is still standing.

Meanwhile the Greek Cypriot Cyprus Mail declared that “Greek side raises concerns over Ledra crossing” and claimed that the Greek Cypriot government was concerned that the opening might “give the Turkish side . . . military or political advantage.” Citing an unidentified “source” the news story charged the Turkish Cypriots with “trying to encroach on the Green Line” and reported that the Turkish Cypriot Prime Minister was accusing “the Greek Cypriot side of dragging its feet so that the crossing would not open.” The semi-state controlled BRTK cited the Prime Minister of the Turkish Cypriot community on the 28th of November as demanding that “the Greek Cypriot administration demolish the wall in front of the Lokmaci Gate immediately” and accusing “the Greek Cypriot side of trying to maintain the division on the island.” On the same day, the (previously hopeful and optimistic media image of the) Turkish Cypriot Mayor of Lefkoşa was quoted as accusing “the Greek Cypriot Administration of wasting time with regard to the Lokmaci Gate” and charging that it “once again proved that it does not want the opening of new crossing points.” The next day, on November 29th, one story in BRTK claimed that the “Greek Cypriot Administration has announced that it will not accept the opening of the Lokmaci Gate” while the Greek Cypriot Cyprus Mail described “Turkish Cypriot officials” as “vehemently” denying “accusations by the [Greek] Cypriot government that preparations for a new crossing at Ledra Street were merely an attempt to score political points and to extend Turkish military presence in the area.” Throughout these media reports concerning what appeared previously to be a unanimous agreement on the opening of the Lokmaci barricade/Ledra Street, no attempt was made to discuss any process that had actually arrived at this apparent loggerhead. On that same day the Cyprus Mail reported that “The [Greek] Cypriot government yesterday waived its consent to opening the Ledra Street crossing, claiming that the Turkish Cypriot side had encroached into the buffer zone” The newspaper quoted the then Government Spokesperson Kypros Chrysostomides as charging “Turkish occupying forces” with “schemes” with UN Spokesperson Brian Kelly quoted as saying “It’s apparent there is a serious disagreement about how to proceed between the two parties.” Although we learn nothing of what those “serious”
disagreements might be. On November 30th, BRT reinforces the Turkish Cypriot stance saying that “Prime Minister Soyer says the Turkish Cypriot side will continue to work with good will and determination to open a gate at Lokmaci” and denying “Greek Cypriot Administration claims that the Turkish Cypriot side violated the buffer zone” while “Accusing the Greek Cypriot side of creating unreasonable obstacles to prevent the opening of a gate at the Lokmaci.” BRT also quoted the Turkish Cypriot Minister of the Interior Özkan Murat as insisting that “the Lokmaci barricade will certainly be opened in spite of the Greek Cypriot side’s unwillingness on the issue.” On the same day, the Greek Cypriot *Cyprus Mail* ran two distinctly contradictory headlines without attempting to compare, contrast or resolve the contradiction. In the first that ran with the headline “We did the right thing over Ledra Street” the Greek Cypriot Defense Minister is referred to as claiming “Turkish forces had encroached into the buffer zone to usurp land” and quoted him saying “I have the feeling that the decision of the government was very correct not to allow the opening of the crossing since the occupying army appears to be encroaching into the buffer zone.” While in the second article with the lead “UN: Ledra construction is ‘outside buffer zone’” quotes the United Nations as insisting that the work done by the Turkish Cypriots had not encroached on the buffer zone. As was later revealed, the work was indeed outside of the ceasefire line or buffer zone and solely within the borders of the Turkish Cypriot administration at which point the argument would turn from “incursions” and “appropriation of land” to a denunciation of the Turkish Cypriots acting “unilaterally” rather than in unity with the Greek Cypriot administration.

20 By this time the “Lokmaci barricade” had become a “bridge” as the Turkish Cypriot authorities had demolished the wall and replaced it with a bridge that would serve both to allow military personnel to pass beneath it and Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot civilians to pass over it. The Greek Cypriot administration was protesting the bridge and calling for its removal from the street while the Turkish Cypriot administration claimed that the Greek Cypriot administration was only using the bridge as an excuse for not demolishing their own wall at the far side of Ledra Street.

21 www.brt.gov.nc.tr Archived 8/12/2005
23 Kibris (Cyprus) Newspaper, December 8th 2005. Article by Hasan Hastürer “It seems that nobody will pass the Lokmaci Exam.”
24 www.toplumpostasi.net/?newsid=6565
25 www.cyprus-mail.com Archived Article on Friday, December 9th 2005
26 www.observercyprus.com/politics.htm 9th through 15th December, 2005
27 www.brtk.gov.nc.tr Archived on December 12th 2005
28 Alithia (The Truth), December 16th, 2005 Article by Alekos Konstantinides.
29 Yenidüzen (The New Order), December 14th, 2005
30 www.cyprus-mail.com Archived Article from Saturday, December 10th, 2005
33 www.brt.gov.nc.tr Archived in December 19th, 2005
35 Afrika (Africa), December 25th 2005
36 www.cyprus-mail.com Archived on Friday, December 30th 2005
37 Greek Cypriots had placed depictions at Ledra Palace crossing point from the Dherinia incident where two Greek Cypriots had been killed. The Turkish Cypriot administration called for their removal.
38 Kibris, January 1st, 2006 “Summary of the Year.”
39 Sunday Mail, Archive Story in January 1st, 2006
41 www.cyprus-mail.com “Meritocracy goes mad” Archived in “Tales from the Coffee Shop” January 8th 2006
42 Kibris, January 15th 2006 pp. 4-5
43 Afrika, February 2nd 2006 “Lokmaci on agenda again” p. 3
44 Kibris, February 13th, 2006, p. 4. “Erk: Pedestrians can use the road and the bridge may stay as a monument.”
46 www.cyprus-mail.com Archived on Wednesday, February 15th, 2006. “Erk: No red lines on Ledra Street”
47 Afrika, February 19th, 2006, p. 2. “No hope for Lokmaci”
48 Personal interview on January 14th 2006
49 Personal interview on January 17th 2006
Britain’s Foreign Secretary Jack Straw’s upcoming January 26th visit to the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus had taken priority over the Lokmacı barricade/Ledra Street story as the Greek and Turkish Cypriot media’s latest ‘event’ in January 2006. Straw had agreed to meet the Turkish Cypriot President Mehmet Ali Talat at his presidential offices in the Turkish part of Lefkoşa to the distain of the Greek Cypriot administration as they argued it was tantamount to “recognizing” the Turkish Cypriot leader. Greek Cypriot media carried stories of angry confrontations between Straw and Greek Cypriots who demanded he refuse to meet with Talat although he ultimately did.

Cyprus Mail, March 30th 2006

Telephone interview on January 18th 2006

Telephone conversation on January 18th 2006

Personal interview on January 18th 2006


A key point here and one that needs to be engaged and explored in depth is that – as Manoff (1998) argues: “. . . journalism is a specific social practice that has a history, and . . . this history is one of unending social invention. In other words, in discussing ‘media and conflict’ issues, it is important not to fall prey to an a-historical essentialism that presumes that today’s form of journalism is, or ought to be, tomorrow’s” (p. 37) Freeing ourselves from the assumption that contemporary configurations of media industries and journalistic practices are somehow “natural outcomes” of the development of technological and institutional structures is crucial to a more flexible approach in rethinking the potential role of the journalist toward conflict resolution and peace building.