Political cartoons as visual securitization in ethnic conflict environments

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Abstract

This paper explores how visual art and in particular political cartoons develops into a routinized and durable mode of visual securitization. This could occur in protracted ethnic conflicts where this form of art supports, and is supported by, the deeply established perceptions of threats and “enemy-others”, and where cartoons are frequently used to remind the audience who or what is a threat, rather than simply highlight a political development. In such environments, political cartooning may acquire its own securitizing ‘voice’ as it can sustain issues and actors into the realm of existential threats ‘autonomously’, without the use of ‘security grammar’ of written or oral speech acts. Thus, the inclusion of these images as part of an immediate inter-textual context is not necessary for a successful securitizing act. The paper uses the protracted Cyprus conflict as a case study, examining political cartoons from the Greek Cypriot press from the 1950’s onward.

Key Words: visual securitization, ethnic conflicts, Cyprus conflict, political cartoons

Introduction

This paper explores the impact of political cartoons on the processes of securitization and more specifically on how cartoons can acquire a voice of their own and ‘speak’ security in ways and for reasons that differ from mainstream securitizing actors. While this form of visual securitization could be successful under numerous circumstances, it has maximum impact in conditions of protracted conflicts where the perceptions of threats and enemies, as well as the expected responses on how to deal with them, are already established, routinized and internalized by elite and public alike. Subsequently the use of political cartoons as a securitizing mechanism

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deviates from the typical role of ‘speaking security’ in order to acquire access to extraordinary measures, and focuses instead on acting as a constant reminder of the potential threats and subsequently becomes a contributing factor to the intractability of conflicts and the perpetuation of the status quo. By extension it also poses limitations on the actions of any political elite that might be willing to deviate from the established conflict routines. Thus, securitizing acts via political cartoons do not necessarily aim at securitizing a referent object, but rather intent (primarily) at perpetuating the securitized status quo or enhance the threatening view of a specific agent or development.

The first section of the paper provides a brief introduction on the theory of securitization, followed by a brief literature on the under-explored area of securitization through the use of photographs and images. The next part presents the theoretical argument of the paper and more specifically how political cartoons can develop a voice of their own, especially in ethnic conflict environments where the process of securitization of specific referent objects becomes routinized and the threats internalized. The last part of the paper provides empirical support using political cartoons from the Greek Cypriot press over the last six decades.

*Securitization*

Securitization is about processing a threat through a specific security format; hence ‘a discussion of security is a discussion of threat’ (Wæver 2011: 472-3, *emphasis in original*). This view, as well as the concept of widening the security agenda beyond the military sector, was not unopposed. On the contrary, traditionalist security scholars such Stephen Walt argued that the broadening of the security agenda and the introduction of non-military issues undermines the field’s ‘intellectual coherence’, while others highlighted the danger of not being able to differentiate between existential and ordinary risks (Huysmans 1998; 2002). Wæver and the other so-called Copenhagen School scholars have rejected the criticism that within the framework of securitization everything could become an issue of security, arguing that securitization provides a very clear sense ‘of what security is’ (Wæver 1994). Specifically, within the framework threat-arguments justifying the use of extraordinary measures must i) establish that there is indeed a threat, ii) that the threat is potentially existential and iii) establish
the relative advantages of security handling as opposed to non-securitized handling (Wæver
2011: 473). Thus, securitization is the process where issues turn into matters of security through
political intervention; these ‘security matters’ are then taken outside the boundaries of normal
politics and the mainstream ‘rules of the game’ and are subsequently treated as special kinds of
politics or beyond politics, therefore potentially justifying actions that fall out of the ordinary
political procedures (Buzan et al. 1998: 23-4).

At the core of securitization lies the idea that security is a speech act;¹ thus, by labeling
something as a security issue, something is done. In other words, ‘the utterance itself is the act’;
‘the word “security” is the act’ (Wæver 1995: 55, emphasis in original). The actual utterance of
the word security, however, is not a necessary prerequisite for a security speech act, as security
and the need for emergency measures (i.e. appeal for urgency) could be connoted or inferred
with the use of other words or terms (Buzan et al. 1998). For an act to be considered successful
the securitizing actor needs to convince a significant audience – one that would grant the actor
the access and legitimacy it requests. There is in other words negotiation between the actors and
the audiences, thus forming an intersubjective process (ibid). Subsequently, securitization
success lies in the production of a ‘security label’ that will be supported or tolerated by an
audience (Wæver 1995: 50) and not necessarily in the presence of a ‘real’ or actual threat.
Similarly, the presence of a ‘real’ threat is not a guarantee for successful securitizing acts. As
Wæver (2011: 472) notes, many real threats do not come with a ‘label’.

Precisely because securitization is based on speech acts, security becomes a self-referential
practice; it is the securitizing agents that define security, meaning that ‘security is what actors
make of it’ (Buzan and Wæver 2003: 48). Security therefore acquires meaning only within the
securitization framework – i.e. the focus is on the process of turning something into a security
issue. Subsequently, security has a fixed meaning for both the actor as well as the audience,
ignoring the intentions of the actors as well as the context in which the process takes place.
Huysmans (2002) warns us of this limitation pointing out that the theory ignores that security is
entrenched in a symbolic and cultural order, which influences actors and audiences alike in the
way security is practiced. Similarly, Stritzel (2007) points out how the Copenhagen School

¹ For more on speech acts see J.L. Austin (1967)
ignores the relational dynamics of social and political processes that generate meanings for actors and audiences, while Balzacq (2005: 171-72) explains that the context in which actors operate is just as important as the psycho-cultural predispositions of the audience.

The attention given to the securitization process and actors is disproportionately large compared to the analysis regarding the role of the audience (Balzacq 2005; McDonald 2008, Williams 2011). Specifically, there is a gap in the literature regarding the presence, or rather the absence, of ‘multiple audiences’ (Balzacq 2005; Huysmans 2006; Stritzel 2007; Salter 2008; Roe 2008). Roe (2008) suggests that audiences could be split into formal and informal based on the kind of support they can provide the securitizing actor. Similarly, Huysmans (2006) separates the audiences into popular and technocratic, while Salter (2008; 2011) splits it further into elite, technocratic, scientific and popular, arguing that success in one or more setting (e.g. technocratic) does not necessarily mean success in others (e.g. popular). This problem is not unrelated to the aforementioned criticism as different audiences have diverse symbolic and cultural orders and they frequently operate in different social contexts. The social context and historical realities may also lead to the bifurcation of audiences within the same audience category; individuals adopt different historical and ideological identities meaning that that within each kind of audience (e.g. public / popular category) one may find different sets of groups predisposed to different perceptions of threats. Subsequently, even within the same category securitizing acts may be successful only for some sub-groups, but not for the entire category.

The insufficient attention to the role of audiences becomes even more important in areas where securitization is routinized and the objectives of securitizing actors are not necessarily to upgrade an ‘ordinary’ political issue into one that should be treated as existential threat. The theory treats the audience as a group of individuals that need convincing for the presence of a threat. The aforementioned scholars improved the theory by arguing that there is no ‘single’ audience. However, they too took for granted that any audience needs to be convinced. What this paper argues is that in some cases the audience is already convinced of the threats and thus the securitization process differs. In these environments the audience(s) expects that the elite and other securitizing actors will continue to maintain the securitized environment. In these cases the audiences will not necessarily grant access to additional extraordinary measures to these actors if
they continue to securitize certain referent objects, but may ‘punish’ them in the event they fail to do so.

*Visual securitization*

As mentioned the process of securitization is chiefly based on the use of ‘security grammar’ and speech acts. However, over the last decade there is a growing literature in security studies and securitization specifically arguing that images deserve more attention as they can also convey security meanings to specific audiences (see e.g. Williams 2003 and McDonald 2008). Hansen’s seminal work on visual securitization, that is ‘the processes through which images come to have political implications’ (Hansen 2001: 53), presents a series of challenging arguments on the role of images in the theory of securitization. Specifically, Hansen (2011) proposes an intervisual/intertextual model with four components, namely, the visual itself; its immediate intertextual context; the wider policy discourse; and the constitutions of the image. Furthermore she explains how inherent features of visuals, namely immediacy, circulability and ambiguity, allow for different securitization compared to the exclusively linguistic process (ibid).

Unlike text, visual images have an immediate effect in creating emotional response (Hansen 2011: 55, see also Mirzoeff, 2000: 15). This effect is subject to a number of factors including the authenticity of the visual and identification of the ‘subject’ portrayed in the visual, albeit, as Hansen argues, while the presence of the ‘face’ may have a stronger impact, it is not a prerequisite as long as the ‘body’ is there, as was the case with the Abu Ghraib photos (Hansen 2011: 56) or more recently the images with the execution of Iraqi soldiers by ISIS’ insurgents. The circulability of the images serves a more practical function in the securitization process, namely it enhances the speed with which the act and the overall process take place (ibid: 57), while at the same time it challenges the structure of the process as the securitizing actors need not be individuals with enhanced social capital (e.g. political elite) but also individuals who use social media to reach a large audience (see also McDonald 2008: 569). Lastly, images may also have an ambiguity factor, meaning that different audiences may perceive the same images in different ways, with the diverging perceptions or ‘readings’ of the images being the outcome of different degrees of familiarity with the issue and context in which the image is used (Hansen
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2011: 58, see also Mitchell 2005). Moreover, unlike linguistic securitizing acts, with the use of images there is also ambiguity in the sense that there is no ‘demand’ for specific actions to counter the threats.

Audiences ‘read’ images, like words and text, within a historical and sociopolitical context (Campbell 2004: 62-63). Similarly, some images may even become part of a community’s visual memory (Brink 2000: 135; Hansen 2011: 55) with a ‘common understanding’ of the images’ connotations, reducing thus any ambiguity on how to perceive them. Visual memory does not necessarily revolve solely around threats and ‘enemy-others’ that may be demonized through the use of images, as it could also focus on the suffering of the ‘self’ - e.g. portrayal of the ‘self’ as a victim. Indeed, and as discussed later, in some cases it is a combination of the two that may have the biggest impact on the audiences.

Ethnic conflicts and routinized securitization

Buzan et al. briefly mention in their work that ‘securitization can be either ad hoc or institutionalized. If a given type of threat is persistent or recurrent, it is no surprise to find that the response and sense of urgency become institutionalized (1998: 27)’. They also acknowledge that issues that are already defined as security issues may not be dramatized or prioritized (ibid: 28). This is essentially as far as the concept of institutionalized securitization has been developed. However, securitization in some cases may not simply evolve beyond an institutionalized sense of urgency. Under some circumstances the entire process of securitization, including the choice of referent objects, sources of threats and security grammar, may evolve into something diachronic, almost permanent, to the extent that it becomes part of the society’s political and social routines. To use a business term, securitization may become a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), where actors and audiences know exactly what to do and how to react. There is in other words a form of routinized securitization where the *ad hoc* part of the process is almost non-existent; it is as if there are specific, albeit unwritten, rules that actors and audience alike follow.
Routinized securitization is more likely to be observed in environments where threats to specific referent objects and the sources of threats are deeply internalized by the public, the media and political elite. Prime examples of such environments are conflict areas, especially protracted conflicts, with well-established perceptions of threats on specific referent objects and of enemy-others that cause those threats. In such areas the political discourses as well as the media coverage regarding the development of the conflict and any relevant security risks are frequently formed and reiterated in a securitization framework that remains relatively unchanged in terms of process, objectives and agents involved. Thus while the security grammar maintains the same structure, the process is different primarily because there no ‘negotiation’ between the actors and the audiences. More specifically, what is argued is the significant possibility of experiencing guaranteed securitization success, as the audiences are already convinced of the existential threat. More importantly however is the possibility that certain political conflict-related discourses must follow the established securitization approach even if that means perpetuating the conflict. Subsequently, the actors’ options of either desecuritizing or not securitizing certain referent objects or potential sources of threats may be limited. Securitizing acts are conscious political choices (see for example Williams 2007), which means that there is the choice to either engage in a securitizing act or not. However, in cases where securitization is institutionalized in the official discourses and routinized in terms of frequency this political choice no longer exists and the option of ‘no-securitization’, (i.e. option not to securitize an issue) may thus not be available to the securitizing actors. In other words, political elite and media agents may engage in a form of involuntary securitization, as the cost of not securitizing an issue is particularly high. At best political elite or media agents who choose to deviate from the established securitizing-supporting discourses may be considered as ‘soft’ against the enemy and at worst as traitors. Similarly, the audiences may also engage in involuntary acceptance of a securitizing act or a constant securitization process simply because it is the norm to accept specific security risks as existential threats from specific sources of threat. Examples from protracted conflicts, violent or non-violent, such as the Arab-Israeli and the one in Cyprus respectively, elucidate the aforementioned argument. For instance, for the Greek Cypriot community - which is the case study of this paper - the source of threat is always Turkey and any referent object associated to the conflict and Turkey, such as the sovereignty of the Republic of Cyprus (RoC) and the physical security of
Greek Cypriots, is automatically (and perhaps obligatorily) securitized by elite and accepted as a threat by the public.

In such conflict areas the mode and direction of securitization may also deviate from the mainstream elite-driven top-down path. In cases where the threat is internalized and the expected policy responses well-established we might observe ‘horizontal securitization’, which, as the name suggests, takes place on a horizontal level making the process essentially ‘peer securitization’, challenging thus the mainstream top-down approach. This mode of securitization takes place on a micro-level, where the securitizing actors are individuals without any significant social capital and their aim is not to influence the masses (i.e. the wider audience), but rather their immediate periphery (peers, family, colleagues, etc.). The actors on a horizontal level do not necessarily benefit personally and they do not request access to emergency measures. Their aim is rather to transfer their own security perceptions to their peers, especially if the latter are contemplating the possibility of deviating from the established perceptions regarding the threats faced by the community. If these views echo the ones that are articulated by mainstream actors such as political elite, then the horizontal process influences the mainstream top-down securitization process by supporting other actors’ positions and acts. Thus, on a horizontal level, members of audiences that become actors themselves could potentially and inadvertently become ‘ambassadors’ of the mainstream securitization actors.

*Visual securitization within such framework*

The study of securitization through speech acts alone is insufficient, not least because a big part of the political communication is conducted through televisual media and images (Williams 2003). Specifically, the use of images may be particularly important in the dramatization of issues and thus in the process of securitization. As noted, Hansen (2011: 53) builds upon this argument arguing, however, that images alone cannot be solely responsible for policy responses. The image’s political constitution is not independent but rather part of the existing written and spoken discourses (ibid). This paper agrees with Hansen’s view but also argues that visuals, especially in protracted conflicts, have an additional role to play in the process of securitization, namely to act as reminders of the existential threats and limit the acceptable (for the audiences)
policy responses. Thus, images may present something or someone as an existential threat without however requesting major interventions or extraordinary measures to counter that threat; the goal is to act as reminders that those issues are indeed existential threats and any policy reactions should keep these realities in mind. Intertextuality in protracted conflicts may subsequently be different compared to other environments as the images need not be directly related to current political discourses, as long as they remain part of the overall sociocultural context of the conflict and the established perceptions of the ‘self’, enemy-others and the threats. Subsequently visuals may be capable under certain conditions to securitize an issue without the ‘support’ of speech acts, assuming the visual message is lucid enough for audiences and elite.

Furthermore, the ability of images to act as reminders also serves the purpose of maintaining pressure on individuals within the audiences and on elite who might have been contemplating the idea of deviating from the established perceptions vis-à-vis enemies and threats. However, it is peers rather than mainstream securitizing actors such as elite that exert this pressure. By reminding who is to be trusted or feared, images influence some members of the audiences on acceptable and unacceptable policies and in their turn those members are likely to influence their peers. An indicative example is Cyprus during the period circa 2004 when elite and public alike were advocating the advantages and disadvantages of the so-called Annan Plan. This is a period during which inter-peer and intra-family securitization played a significant role in polarizing people that turned them into ‘missionaries’ who had to spread the ‘truth’ to their peers.

This paper focuses on only one form of visuals, namely that of political cartoons and more specifically on cartoons used by the Greek Cypriot press. As Kennedy (2008) notes, cartooning is a form of critical narration as opposed to photography that focuses more on documenting the reality. What makes political cartoons interesting for the case of securitization is their ability to promote feelings, opinions and perceptions which cannot easily be promoted in a written or spoken text by other securitizing actors. For instance arguing that the ‘other’ is brutal while ‘we’ are victims and helpless, or that a foreign state has ulterior motives behind a seemingly positive

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2 The Annan Plan (after the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan) was a UN-sponsored settlement plan for the resolution of the conflict. After several months of negotiations the fifth and final draft of the plan was put on simultaneous referenda on April 24, 2004. The vast majority of Greek Cypriots (76%) who considered the plan problematic and biased rejected the plan, while the Turkish Cypriots (65%) accepted it. Subsequently the Plan was never put in effect.
act are opinions that cannot be easily expressed by elite or media without potential political or financial consequences. Therefore, cartoons have the ability to promote and highlight messages regarding perceived threats and subsequently invoke feelings in ways that mainstream speech or written-based securitization cannot.

Political cartoons, unlike some images, have an additional advantage, namely that they are unambiguous. This is primarily due to two factors. The first is that the target audience is rather narrow (e.g. only the Greek Cypriot community) and has deep knowledge of the sociopolitical culture and the historical context in which the cartoon is portrayed, thus allowing the people to receive a clear message from the cartoon even if they do not follow the current developments in the press. As a result, while a cartoon is inevitably part of a larger intertextual framework, it can also function independently of the developments because of the established perceptions that usually exist in protracted conflicts. Cartoons can maintain a meaning on their own because of the historical and internalized perceptions and there is no need for accompanying text or discourses. Furthermore, the sociocultural and political knowledge of the narrow audience frequently leads to familiarity with the ‘actors’ and messages portrayed in the cartoons, thus eliminating the possibility that different sets of audiences might perceive the same image in more than one ways.

The second reason that political cartoons send a rather unambiguous message has to do with familiarity again, albeit specifically to the repetition of the same ‘actors’ in the cartoons. The ‘others’ as well as the ‘self’ remain constant over time allowing thus for the internalization of any connotations that those images may have. Subsequently, there is no question of identification; there is no need to have either a body or face in the image. In the Greek Cypriot case for instance Cyprus is usually portrayed as a young girl - that is inevitably helpless - while Turkey is portrayed as grown man with violent intentions.

Images, especially those depicting death or atrocities, may also be used for purposes of immediacy, that is, to ‘evoke immediate emotive response[s] that exceed that of the text’ - (Hansen 2011: 55-6). Similarly, they can have an emotional impact on the viewer (Brink 2000: 138), which is greater than that of oral or written text. Cartoons on the other hand do not
necessarily aim for immediacy, as they do not necessarily request an immediate policy change, while they also do not necessarily seek to have significant emotional consequences. The impact of a cartoon could revolve around the perpetuation of an issue or an agent in a state of deep and routinized securitization, reducing thus the possibility of desecuritization, even if the political developments could allow this possibility. Political cartoons are thus frequently used to securitize any desecuritizing efforts. In other words, any desecuritizing attempts are portrayed as a threat, meaning that the expected policy response should be to maintain the securitized environment. Political elite and mainstream securitizing actors cannot easily oppose desecuritizing efforts, such as bi-communal activities in an ethnic conflict region, or present them as threats, not least because that would have a political cost for the side they represent - e.g. the UN could perceive their side as the intransigent one. Political cartoonists on the other hand do not have such limitations and could easily securitize such attempts or any other similar developments, aiming not at extraordinary measures but rather at reminding the public of the potential dangers, hindering thus the efforts of desecuritization.

Case of Cyprus

The so-called Cyprus Problem is one of the most contemporary protracted ethnic conflicts. There is abundant literature on the subject with conflicting views on what has caused it, on who is to be blamed for its perpetuation and on the structure of the ‘final settlement’. The conflict is viewed as ethno-national (Papadakis, Peristianis and Welz 2006), with disputes between Greek and Turkish Cypriots, as an issue of incompatible subject positions (Diez 2002), as the outcome of regional and superpower interests and interferences (Hitchens 1984), or as a combination of any of the above. In Cyprus there exists a double minority environment where both Greek and Turkish Cypriots feel, and could be, considered a minority. The Turkish Cypriots constitute approximately 20% of island’s population and they are, therefore, a minority in Cyprus. However, if the two motherlands, Greece and Turkey, are taken into account then Greek Cypriots are the minority. The close ties and partial dependence of the two communities with their respective motherlands - especially between Turkish Cypriots and Turkey - coupled with the historical and frequently violent inter-communal and inter-state relations have rendered
Cyprus vulnerable to external influences (Richmond 2002) and contributed to the development of a climate of sustainable securitized relations between the two sides.

One of the most challenging areas of contention is that of sovereignty, with question over the degree of local regime power and whether sovereignty should be full or constricted, single or divided, de facto or de jure (Constantinou, 2008). Greek Cypriots, which also enjoy the international recognition of the Republic of Cyprus, argue for a right for full sovereignty over the entire island, including the northern part, which, since 1974 is not under the control of the government. Thus, Greek Cypriots view the problem as one of invasion and occupation as the territorial and political integrity of the island was violated by force in 1974 with the Turkish invasion (Stavrinides 1999). Turkish Cypriots on the other hand argue for sovereignty through the secession of the areas north of the Green Line and view the conflict as a domestic problem of persistent ethnic persecution and subsequently argue for a settlement that would take into account the realities of the post 1974 period (Constantinou and Papadakis 2002). Currently the conflict could be characterized as a ‘comfortable conflict’ without any violence - with minor exceptions since 1974 - albeit it is also in a state of illiberal peace (Adamides and Constantinou 2012).

The next section focuses on Greek Cypriot perceptions, how they are portrayed through political cartoons and how the latter contribute to the perpetuation of the deeply securitized environment. As mentioned above, for Greek Cypriots the threat is stemming primarily from Turkey, even though there is significant distrust towards great powers, especially the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US) as it is usually assumed that the two are pursuing their own and Turkish interests at the expense of Cypriots. The focus on the British is not surprising as Cyprus was a British colony from 1878 until 1959 and since the RoC independence in 1960 it maintains two sovereign bases on the island.

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3 For more on Greek Cypriot perceptions regarding foreign actors see Adamides (2014).
Political cartoons as visual securitization within the Greek Cypriot community

The turbulent decades: 1950's-1970's

Shortly before the Cypriot 1960 independence Greek Cypriots’ main source of threat were the British colonial rulers. However, the British threat did not revolve primarily from a potential perpetuation of the colonization period but rather from the prospect that the UK would promote the Turkish and Turkish Cypriot interests at the expense of the Greek Cypriot community. Greek Cypriots wanted Enosis (union) with Greece whereas the Turkish Cypriots’ goal was Taksim (division). The two positions were mutually exclusive and both sides felt that the other’s position constituted an existential threat for them. The Greek Cypriots’ view regarding the British interests was one that supported the Turkish Cypriot position and subsequently would oppose the will of the Greek Cypriot community for Enosis, while at the same time it would help Turkey acquire more control in the island thus posing an existential threat for the former.

Figure 1 depicts the newly appointed British Governor John Harding sending the British commandos for training into a Turkish-run school. The sign says: ‘Tutorial School: Wiping out Greeks, slaughters, prosecutions, vandalisms. Headmaster: A. Menterez [former Turkish Prime Minister]’. This cartoon highlights the Greek Cypriot threat perceptions of the time, namely that the British were aligning themselves with Turkey. More importantly it emphasized other internalized threats namely that the Turks would ‘wipe out, slaughter and persecute Greeks’ (as the school sign suggests); threats that elite and public figures in general cannot easily articulate and support. During the anticolonial struggle, the goal of such depictions was not to request immediate or extraordinary measures; they did not even aim at
upgrading an ordinary issue into one that is of utmost security (as that threat was already internalized). They rather aimed at emphasizing an existing existential threat and act as reminder to the population that the British and the Turks are part of the same problem for Greek Cypriots and this specific alliance could be detrimental for the community. In addition it underlined the greatest possible existential threat, that of slaughtering and ethnic persecution.

Figure 2 indicates a more political aspect of the Greek Cypriots fears, namely that of loss of sovereignty and permanent secession of the island. In this cartoon, Harold McMillan, the former British Prime Minister is splitting Cyprus in two, saying ‘Don’t act like this, woman. It is…temporary!’, connoting again that Britain served Turkey’s interests, namely to dichotomize the island into Greek and Turkish parts (*taksim*). It is also interesting that the connotation is that UK is depicted as pursuing these goals all the way from London, indicating that its presence on the island is not a prerequisite.

It is interesting to note that Cyprus in the Greek Cypriot political cartoons discourse is always presented as a young woman or a little girl, connoting its helpless nature that is always ‘violated’ by the much stronger enemies, be it Turkey, the UK or the US.

Even after decolonization struggle the Greek Cypriots maintained the same negative perceptions towards the British and the Americans. In Figure 3, British Prime Minister Heum and US President Johnson are ‘helping’ the 18% (Turkish Cypriot population) to have a ‘heavier’ presence and power vis-à-vis the 82% the Greek Cypriots. It is worth noting that the period 1963-1968 was particularly volatile with inter-communal struggles. With the Cypriot independence in 1960 *Enosis* was no longer an option. However, the imposed constitution and
the mandatory co-existence was not working out either and the by 1963 the first inter-communal problems emerged. Turkish Cypriots were forced to, or chose to withdraw (depending on which side of the Green Line one stands), into enclaves arguing that this was the only way to face the Greek Cypriot threat. Greek Cypriots called this move ‘Turkish mutiny’ arguing that Turkey and Turkish Cypriots aimed to divide the island. The former blamed the external powers for promoting the Turkish positions and that asked for disproportionate rights for Turkish Cypriots given the size of their population in the island.

The 1970’s were once again a turbulent decade for Cyprus. In the summer of 1974 there was a Greek Junta-led coup aiming at overthrowing the elected President of Cyprus, followed by a Turkish invasion, which led to the de facto division of the island ever since. Once again, the same foreign actors were presented as existential threats, along with the more contemporary ones, namely the Greek Junta. Figures 4 and 5 refer to the American involvement in the Greek Junta military coup that led to what Greek Cypriots call ‘the national tragedy’, namely the 1974
Turkish invasion and subsequent division of the island. Figure 4 depicts Kissinger, the former US Secretary of State along with Demetrios Ioannides, the Greek dictator, and Bülent Ecevit the former Turkish Prime Minister cooperating to hurt Cyprus. Figure 5 is once again Ioannides who is presented as Emperor Nero who facilitated the destruction (burning) of Cyprus, albeit his actions were manipulated by the CIA – the connotation is that Ioannides was CIA’s ‘toy’.

Similarly, the US was perceived as the responsible agent for backing up Turkey (not just the Junta) in the subsequent military intervention and for supporting the latter’s interests, namely the dichotomization of the island. Figures 6 and 7 depict the US, either in the form of Henry Kissinger or as the statue of liberty violently splitting up Cyprus.

What these cartoons in the 1950’s, 1960’s and 1970’s show is a perpetuation of the same perceptions regarding the source of threats, but also what was at stake for Greek Cypriots. Clearly these images did not need any accompanying text given that they were also part of the overall discourse of the period. Thus, this period is a prime example of intertextuality where text and visuals complement each other. That said, unlike text, these cartoons present a much more vivid and barbaric image of the agents and of their involvement. They present an image – e.g. of a violent butcher – that is more likely to create a lasting impact on the Greek Cypriot public; an impact that, unlike the one generated only by text, cannot be altered even if the conditions and the discourse changes. Subsequently, such cartoons contribute to the internalization and long-term securitization of the threats (e.g. loss of sovereignty) as well as of the agents causing them (e.g. Turkey, US, UK).
The ‘negotiation decades’: 1977 - ongoing

Following the turbulent conflict periods of the 1950’s to 1970’s is the ongoing negotiations era commencing with the first high-level meetings between President Makarios and the Turkish Cypriot leader Denktas in 1977 and is still ongoing. Local and international actors have unsuccessfully tried numerous conflict resolution approaches ranging from close proximity talks, to mediation, to arbitration. More interestingly is the fact that despite the absence of violence and a significant (positive) change in the relations between the RoC and major international actors such as the UK and the US, there is still profound distrust towards them and any attempts on their behalf for settlement are still being securitized.

The 1950’s - 1970’s period was a prime example of intertextuality, where political cartoons were completely imbedded in the political discourses of that time. This was not the case however in the subsequent decades were the RoC improved its relations with both the UK as well as the US. Indeed the Greek Cypriot political elite highlight the status of friendly diplomatic relations with the UK and the US and are asking for their more active involvement; however, the latter’s attempts are almost never perceived positively by the press or the political elite that are not part of the governing body handling the negotiations. In other words, any external intervention by these foreign actors is treated as a potential threat and is incorporated within an institutionalized securitization process by all local agents except the governing political elite. This mode of institutionalized securitization enjoys the presence of an established set of discourses and arguments that are almost instantaneously brought to the surface when needed by the media, political elite and the public alike. In terms of visual securitization, we observe a mismatch between the official political discourses of the governing parties and the messages conveyed by the political cartoons. As discussed in detail below, the messages conveyed by the political cartoons have remained unchanged since the previous decades emphasizing issues of distrust and potential threats, thus maintaining the same securitized image of enemies and sources of threats.

4 Greek Cypriot are asking for external involvement in the form of pressure towards Turkey so that the latter will make (what Greek Cypriots perceive as) the necessary concessions to reach a viable settlement.
In the process of securitization, political cartoons have certain advantages relative to other forms of visuals such as photographs, the most important of which is the fact that they do not need to act as ‘witness’ to a specific incident (e.g. massacre of Iraqi soldiers by ISIS insurgents) in order to securitize a referent object or a development. Instead cartoons can securitize an actor, and subsequently his/her overall incentives without any reference to a specific event and without necessarily identifying the actors involved; thus, political cartoons do not ‘report’ a specific event, but rather remind the audience that any initiative or action from specific actors are potential threats. This is especially the case in protracted conflicts like the one in Cyprus where referent objects and threats are part of routinized securitization processes.

Figure 8 depicts the early negotiations efforts with President Makarios and the Turkish Cypriot leader Denktash playing chess (i.e. negotiating the settlement of the conflict); yet neither one of them is actually in control of their choices and actions. It is external agents that determine the available options for Cypriots. What is particularly interesting in this form of cartoons is the identification of two actors (Makarios and Denktash) but not the other two that are ‘calling the shots’. Yet, there is no need. In environments where threats are internalized there is no need to have either an identifiable face or even a body. The message is still clearly portrayed.

Figure 9 is an example of how diachronic and resilient specific sources of threats can become once they become part of the routinized securitization processes. In this specific cartoon Cyprus – that is the Greek Cypriot run RoC – is portrayed as a
young girl, connoting lack of any inherent strength to defend itself, carrying on its back the British who say: “I respect you... I love you... I appreciate you... Why don’t you believe I am your friend?” In the background is the Turkish flag on the mountain in the northern part of Cyprus, connoting that the discussion of trust is in relation to the conflict. This cartoon does not describe any specific event, but rather reminds the audience that the British cannot be trusted regardless of what they say. This cartoon and its message would be applicable at any given time during the forty years of negotiations.

![Fig. 10 – UN’s role questioned](source)

Fig. 11 – UN’s role questioned

![Fig. 11 – UN’s role questioned](source)

The next two figures (above) present the argument that the UN either neglects to observe the Turkish side’s wrongdoings (Fig. 11) or it fails to fulfill one of its roles, namely to reunify the island, and ignores the developments that are heading towards a permanent division of the island. Once again, the blame is on foreign actors who are either pursuing their interests at the expense of Greek Cypriots (cases above) or they fail to defend the Greek Cypriot interests (Figures 10 and 11). Similar to the cartoons above, Figure 12 shows again the UN in relation to the

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5 In the northern part of the island on the mountain range of Pentadaktylos (Beşparmak Dağları) the Turkish Cypriot authorities painted a gigantic flag of the so-called Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus – TRNC – (the self-proclaimed state which is internationally unrecognized with the sole exception of Turkey). At night the flag lights up forming both the TRNC and the Turkish flag. What is interesting is that the flag was painted in that position specifically so that it would be visible by Greek Cypriots in the southern parts of Cyprus.
permanent division of the island, albeit this time the source of the division is the US which applies the necessary force through the UN which is used as ‘tool’ to divide the island. Noteworthy is the fact that in these cases the Turkish interests are not directly depicted in the cartoons. However, Greek Cypriots consider a permanent secession as the overall Turkish goal.

Figure 13 is similar to Fig. 9 above, which questions the US identity trustworthiness, connoting that behind the US interests lie the Turkish ones. Figure 14 connotes that the US is pursuing the Turkish interests vis-à-vis the latter’s EU accession at the expense of Cyprus. As above Turkey is portrayed as a grown man whereas Cyprus is depicted as a small helpless girl and the one that suffers from Turkish and American interests.

![Fig. 12. US and UN involvement in the division](image)

**Fig. 12. US and UN involvement in the division**

Source: [www.philenews.com](http://www.philenews.com) 22/5/2014

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![Fig. 13: US’ Turkish hidden interests](image)

**Fig. 13: US’ Turkish hidden interests**

![Fig. 14: US Helping Turkey enter the EU](image)

**Fig. 14: US Helping Turkey enter the EU**

Source (2006):

Source (2008):
Figure 15 relates to a very contemporary development, namely the discovery of natural gas in the Cypriot Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ). What is interesting in this cartoon is that there are no identifiable agents, yet there is a clear and identifiable threat. The image connotes the presence of foreign agents (i.e. spies) and military personnel eyeing the Cypriot natural wealth. Thus any foreign, especially American or British, interest on this issue or any link between the natural gas and the resolution of the conflict is portrayed as suspicious and devious and subsequently as a threat.

All of the examples noted above do not follow the security grammar of securitization and they do not request access to extraordinary measures. However they do contribute to the continuation of the existing deeply securitized views regarding specific actors and subsequently contribute to the development and enhancement of conflict-perpetuating routines. Inevitably they also apply pressure and limit the options of political elite who have the responsibility to deal with the developments, subsequently acquiring a ‘voice’ of their own. Political cartoonist, that inevitably and perhaps occasionally inadvertently, become securitizing actors themselves. However, they have different objectives than policy makers that seek access to measures in order to counter the proposed threat. The impact of their acts is to perpetuate an already securitized environment and limit the prospects of desecuritization by ‘saying’ things that mainstream securitization actors cannot. They ‘help’ remind people of what is a threat subsequently what is acceptable or unacceptable behavior and what policy recommendations they (public) should accept or reject. Concurrently they apply pressure to the ruling elite who at best have to simply acknowledge the public’s negative perceptions towards these actors and the public’s distrust towards any foreign involvement in Cypriot politics, and at worse they have to actually securitize any foreign involvement to accommodate the public’s fears (even if they do not wish to do so). In the latter case elite may actually have to involuntarily securitize an issue as the alternative may have significant political costs for them.
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