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Journalism Matters: Reporting Peace in Cyprus

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Abstract:	The article investigates journalism in societies that are working towards a peaceful resolution. Focusing on the ongoing peace process in Cyprus, it studies the influences and difficulties journalists experience when they report on the negotiations. The peace process in Cyprus, which has been divided since 1974 following a conflict between Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots, is continuing. Thematic analysis of the interviews conducted with 67 journalists identifies the key issues that affect journalists in Cyprus when they report on the conflict and peace negotiations. The results show that journalists experience tension between professional values and a sense of belonging and move between professional and national/ethnic identities to cope with it. The results also indicate that despite political and ideological pressures, journalists exercise agency, making attempts to challenge and alter them.

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Journalism Matters: Reporting Peace in Cyprus

Journalists, who belong to societies that are in conflict or working towards a peaceful resolution, frequently experience political and market pressures and professional and ethical dilemmas when they report on the conflict and the efforts to resolve it. Various actors, such as politicians, business people, and civil society organisations, compete to get journalists' attention to reflect their reality. At the individual level, journalists tackle tensions between their professional and personal identities (Zandberg and Neiger, 2005). On the one hand, they want to be professional, which requires them to be fair, impartial and detached from the issues they report. On the other hand, their attachment to their national or ethnic communities requires them to side with them. As a result, they frequently negotiate between values that are at odds with each other.

The academic debate concerning peace and journalism is mostly carried out within the context of media's coverage of conflicts, their role in peaceful management and ability to produce changes in attitudes, behaviours and knowledge (Betz, 2011, 2015; Spencer, 2005; Wolfsfeld, 2004; Bratic, 2008; Howard, 2009, 2015; Hoffmann, 2014, 108). Very little scholarly attention has been paid to journalists and their role perceptions in conflict-affected societies (McLaughlin, 2016; Tumber, 2004; Tumber and Prentoulis, 2003). Journalists are active participants in both conflict and its resolution. They can act as a force that either promotes or inhibits a transition from conflict to peace with the editorial decisions that affect public perceptions and knowledge. Despite being constrained by the influences of media ownership, political and economic constraints, as well as legal and regulatory frameworks, journalism acts as an enabling structure for public communication and it is journalists and editors who make decisions about what to report and how to report it. They exercise agency within the appropriate institutional, organisational and societal structures, continually renegotiating their journalistic autonomy (Betz, 2015; Markham, 2011; Voltmer, 2013; Puddephatt, 2006).

Based on this idea, this article explores journalism in peace processes. Focusing on the ongoing peace initiatives in Cyprus, it draws from the experiences and views of the journalists, who have been reporting on the efforts to solve the Cyprus problem, to

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3 understand the influences and challenges journalists experience when they report on peace
4 negotiations. The aim is to find out how journalists impact on peace processes and are
5 affected by it. Cyprus presents a good case study for this research. It has been divided since
6 1974 as a result of an ethno-nationalist conflict between Turkish Cypriot (TC) and Greek
7 Cypriot (GC) communities and the search for a peaceful settlement is still ongoing.
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16 ***Peace Efforts and Journalistic Agency***

17 Although journalism is regarded as an important actor in conflict and post-conflict societies,
18 its relationship with peace is not as good as it is with conflict. For journalists, while conflicts
19 and wars involve events that can be observed and reported, peace is a process, which is
20 more difficult to define, observe and report (Hawkins, 2011, 2015; Spencer, 2005). Wolfsfeld
21 (2004) explains this lack of interest in terms of an inherent tension between peace
22 processes and news routines: While peace requires patience, a calm environment,
23 understanding of the 'other' side, and is a complex process, the news media demand
24 immediacy, are interested in violence, reinforce ethnocentrism and hostility, and can only
25 deal with simple events. However, for the journalists of the communities that are party to a
26 peace process, developments from negotiation to implementation, are important events.
27 This is no different in Cyprus. The news media on both sides of the island consider national
28 and international developments regarding the conflict as newsworthy. They treat the
29 meetings between the community leaders as media events and give lots of publicity
30 (Avraamidou and Kyriakides, 2015).
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45 Studying the interaction between politics and media can help us better understand the
46 forces that shape journalism's role in peace processes. One group of theories that explain
47 this relationship focuses on the power of the political elite over the news media to set the
48 news agenda and provide them with interpretative frames. According to these theories, the
49 news media mainly conform to the interests of the political elite and cover events from their
50 perspectives. For example, radical approaches such as Edward Herman and Noam
51 Chomsky's propaganda model (1988) focus on the power mechanisms to explain how media
52 serve the dominant elites. The others, such as Bennett's (1990, 2016) indexing theory or
53 Wolfsfeld's (1997) political contest model, are more concerned with the media's role as a
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3 site for a power struggle. They argue that the political process is more likely to have an
4 influence on the news media than vice versa.
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9 The second set of approaches highlight the news media's power to affect political processes.
10 They explain how the news media select and transform political realities into news, set
11 public and policy agendas and frame issues; thus, influence public opinion. Theories such as
12 agenda setting (McCombs and Shaw, 1972) and framing (Entman, 1993; Gamson and
13 Modigliani, 1987) focus on the news media to elaborate on the news coverage of issues and
14 their impact on public and policy debates. They study how the news select, identify and
15 prioritize political issues and explore the links between content and knowledge and
16 behaviour of audiences.
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25 These arguments show that the news media and politics are closely interrelated. Their
26 mutual dependency means shifts in politics would lead to changes in the news media and
27 vice versa. Journalism, although stays within the power of political elites, is not always
28 passive and can criticize or challenge the political elite, which also impacts on political
29 discussions. Journalists are active agents who define and shape the news. They exercise
30 their journalistic agency within the constraints of media structures that are influenced by
31 political, cultural, economic and technological forces. Their judgements, decisions and
32 actions are the key elements in the news production process. Therefore, rather than
33 focusing on structure and agency as two separate entities and questioning the primacy of
34 one over the other, Giddens (1984) proposes 'structuration' theory to stress that structure
35 and agency are interrelated. According to this concept, journalists, while practising their
36 agency within the norms and rules of their institutions, also transform and reproduce the
37 structures that shape and condition their practices (Giddens, 1984; Sjøvaag, 2013).
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53 ***Background: The Cyprus Peace Process***

54 The conflict in Cyprus, which is also known as the Cyprus problem, is an ethno-nationalist
55 conflict between Turkish Cypriot (TC) and Greek Cypriot (GC) communities. It was during the
56 British administration (1878-1960) that two conflicting nationalisms developed on the
57 island. Both communities, rather than getting together in an anti-colonial struggle for
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3 independence from the British rule, demanded *enosis* (unification with Greece)
4 and *taksim* (partition) and struggled to integrate with their so-called motherlands of Greece
5 and Turkey. The establishment of the Republic of Cyprus (RoC) in 1960 failed to reduce the
6 intercommunal tensions. In 1963, TCs withdrew from the legislative and executive posts of
7 the government and later, leaving their properties and jobs, moved into enclaves. In July
8 1974 a coup d'état by the military junta in Greece tried to assassinate Archbishop Makarios,
9 the GC leader, and take control of the government. Turkey intervened with a military
10 operation against GCs on 20 July 1974 in the name of protecting TCs. Following Turkey's
11 military action, a mass exodus took place; GCs were forced to move to the south part of the
12 island and TCs to the north. As a result, the country has been divided and the so-called
13 Green Line became the de facto border between the two communities.
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25 Today, separated by a buffer zone, GCs live in the southern part under the legally recognized
26 Republic of Cyprus (RoC) and TCs live in the northern part under a self-declared but
27 unrecognized administration called the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). The
28 peace process started when, following the increasing tensions between the two
29 communities, the UN became involved in the peace-making on the island. It stationed the
30 UN peacekeeping force (UNFICYP) on the island in 1964 and became a third-party mediator
31 in 1968. Since then, the peace process has included many peace initiatives to settle the
32 disputes between the two communities (Michael, 2015; Michael, 2007). The negotiations to
33 establish a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation have been carried out with the mediation of
34 the UN representative between TC and GC leaders and their teams, which include technical
35 committees that work on various aspects of the conflict such as governance, territory,
36 security, and property. However, so far, the process has been impeded by the contrasting
37 motives and objectives of the two sides as well as the insecurity and mistrust between the
38 communities.
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52 The efforts to solve the Cyprus problem intensified between 2002-2004 when both sides
53 negotiated the then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's 'the Basis for Agreement on a
54 Comprehensive Settlement of the Cyprus Problem', also known as the Annan Plan.
55 However, the plan, which had been revised following numerous negotiations, failed to
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3 resolve the Cyprus dispute as it was rejected by 76% of GCs and accepted by 65 % of TC
4 when it was put to referenda in both north and south Cyprus on 24 April 2004.
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9 After the referenda, the talks between the community leaders restarted in 2008 and since
10 then have continued on and off. The latest peace initiative, which took place between 2015
11 and 2017 between TC leader Mustafa Akıncı and GC leader Nicos Anastasiades, also
12 collapsed in July 2017 following a conference in Crans Montana in Switzerland.
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20 ***Methodology***

21 The research employs a thematic analysis approach, which is used to identify and analyse
22 patterns of themes within data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). As Braun and Clarke (2006, 81)
23 explain thematic analysis is a flexible research method. It can be regarded as an essentialist
24 method which 'reports experiences, meanings and the reality of participants' or a
25 constructionist one that examines 'the ways in which events, realities, meanings,
26 experiences and so on are the effects of a range of discourses operating within society'. This
27 research, accepting that meanings and experiences are socially constructed, aims to locate
28 the journalists' accounts within political and sociocultural contexts in which they construct
29 the meaning of their professional role in society and the peace process.
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40 The research is based on semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with 35 journalists and
41 editors working for the TC media and 32 from the GC media. The interviews were conducted
42 between October 2018 and June 2019 by the authors separately in Turkish with TC
43 journalists and Greek with GC journalists. Interviews lasted around one hour and were
44 digitally recorded. The participants of the study consisted of only professional journalists
45 working for print, broadcast and online media and registered as journalists by the
46 professional associations on each side. The selection of journalists was based mainly on
47 their experience of covering tensions between the two communities and peace efforts in
48 Cyprus but was not limited to them. The interviews inquired about journalists' views on the
49 Cyprus problem and their perception of their role in the peace process as well as the
50 challenges and constraints of reporting on bi-communal tensions in Cyprus.
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3 Initially, the authors worked separately, transcribing and coding the interviews they had
4 conducted and identifying the themes that emerged in the data. Then working together,
5 they reviewed, discussed and defined the themes and produced this report to document the
6 results.
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10 11 12 13 14 ***Accessing Information***

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16 In Cyprus, official and unofficial dialogue between the sides is a key part of the peace efforts
17 and pave the way for the community leaders to engage in negotiations to discuss their
18 positions and expectations from each other to settle the problem (Michael, 2015). Still, it is
19 the negotiations between the community leaders that the news media are most interested
20 in. However, these negotiations are usually conducted by a mediator appointed by the UN
21 and performed behind closed doors with limited media coverage. The closed-door
22 diplomacy (Gilboa, 2000) means that a news blackout is implemented, and the media are
23 briefed on the progress of the negotiations by a spokesperson that both parties agreed on.
24 These meetings take place either at the buffer zone in Cyprus or, when they reach an
25 important stage, are conducted in secluded locations outside Cyprus, where journalists are
26 usually kept away. The dates, places, and identities of the participants of these meetings are
27 known but once the talks start, restricted information about the progress of the talks are
28 given to the media and the public. The reason for this secrecy, like in any other similar
29 negotiation process, is to isolate the participants from the pressures of domestic public
30 opinion, opposition and pressure groups (Gilboa, 2000; Wolfsfeld, 2004; Handelman, 2012).
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45 News blackout means that information given to the media is usually limited to the technical
46 aspects of the process rather than include any substantial issues such as security or
47 territory. While the negotiations are underway, the parties have restricted contact with the
48 media and statements are usually issued by the appointed mediator. Each side's
49 spokesperson also organizes media conferences to give some information about the
50 progress of the meetings and answer journalists' questions within the limits of the agreed
51 news restrictions. In recent years the spokespersons for the negotiating parties have also
52 utilized new media applications, such as Viber and WhatsApp, to update mainly the
53 journalists from their own community about the progress of the talks. According to the
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3 interviews, this form of interaction has been used mainly to keep journalists posted when
4 the leaders' meetings took place in locations where journalists had no access or when the
5 spokespersons could not meet and brief them. It provided a means of communication
6 between journalists and spokespersons.
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12 Closed-door negotiations control the information flow to the media but do not stop leaks.
13 Negrine (1996, 38) states that motivations and effects of leaks of information vary and
14 quotes Graber (1984, 237) to explain it further: 'Leaks may destroy the timing of political
15 negotiations, alienate parties ... cause substantial political harm by disclosing politically
16 sensitive matters ... bring important suppressed issues to needed public attention'. In the
17 case of Cyprus negotiations, this is no different: Parties give off the record information to
18 media for political advantage, to spoil the process and to make journalists aware of an issue
19 discussed at the table so they can bring it to the public's attention without revealing its
20 source. During the interviews, journalists from both communities confirmed that the
21 negotiating parties leaked information to journalists during the negotiations. However, as a
22 GC journalist explained, these leaks were usually from political sources to specific media or
23 journalists while the others are 'kept in darkness' (Personal interview, 2018). Political
24 alliances are important in the selection of the media and journalists who would receive the
25 leaked information. It is to make sure that the information is communicated in a way that
26 would suit the interests of the source.
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42 Journalists in Cyprus understand that the reason for news restrictions is to give the
43 negotiating parties time and space to talk free from media and public pressure. They don't
44 want to jeopardize the process by revealing information that would create unnecessary
45 tension but at the same time, they regard it as their responsibility and professional duty to
46 inform their audiences of the progress made at the talks. They try to find a balance between
47 their national and professional responsibilities. As a GC journalist put it
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51 'a journalist needs to assess everything based on national interest ... National
52 interest demands journalists to be critical to what is happening because they are
53 accountable to the public' (Personal interview, 2018).
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3 Some journalists interviewed for the project are concerned that information blackout can
4 lead to an information vacuum and create an environment suitable for spreading
5 misinformation. Information provided to journalists is usually limited and given in a top-
6 down way, which is difficult to verify. Journalists end up consulting to the parties that are
7 not directly involved in the talks, which can lead to misinformation. Incomplete or distorted
8 information can cause confusion and manipulation of public opinion by the groups that
9 want to spoil the process (Newman and Richmond, 2006, 1). The Cyprus peace process is no
10 stranger to spoiling. As Tocci (2006) explains since the start of the conflict, but more so since
11 the division of the island, the UN's efforts to find a settlement to the problem have been
12 spoiled by different actors at different points in time.
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Journalism in Divided Communities

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26 The news media in Cyprus have developed separately. The dissimilarities between the
27 political, cultural and economic conditions of the communities have shaped the news media
28 differently. Yet, when studied, both media systems in Cyprus demonstrate similar
29 characteristics, which are akin to the Mediterranean media model as outlined by Hallin and
30 Mancini (2004): high political parallelism, low professionalism, strong state intervention and
31 elite oriented. However, these characteristics are not fixed. Over the years, different forces
32 such as democratisation, privatisation and commercialisation have produced hybrid
33 patterns of media systems in Cyprus. They demonstrate the characteristics of the Liberal
34 model as well as the Mediterranean and therefore should be placed somewhere in between
35 these two models. Media ownership in both communities has also a similar pattern, which is
36 a combination of state, private and political party. Each one shapes and determines media
37 output according to their political and economic interests.
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51 Journalism in Cyprus has developed in a way that serves only to their communities. There
52 are no shared media. Although some alternative online news sites publish news in three
53 languages, Turkish, Greek and English, their numbers and followers are still in small
54 numbers. Some TC journalists work for GC media and some GC journalists write opinion
55 articles for TC newspapers, but these are not widespread practices. The communities
56 receive the news about each other mainly from their mainstream news media. These media,
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3 which are usually nationalist and ethnocentric, do not provide a balanced picture and are
4 not sensitive to words, frames, and subjects that may upset the other community
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7 (Avraamidou, 2018).
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10 The divisions exist even when journalists are reporting on the leaders' efforts to negotiate a
11 peace deal. When these talks are conducted abroad, journalists follow their own leaders
12 and are in contact with the members of their negotiating teams and have little
13 communication with the other party. This is mainly because the parties are usually reluctant
14 to give information to journalists from the other community. When they organize media
15 briefings, they invite only the journalists from their community or discourage others from
16 attending them by using the community language, Greek or Turkish, at the briefings. Not
17 using English makes it difficult for non-Greek or non-Turkish speakers to follow the
18 meetings. A TC journalist explained that when he had attended one such media briefing
19 organized by the GC side, he was asked to leave by the organisers (Personal interview,
20 2018). Similarly, a GC journalist described how TC leader Mustafa Akıncı was 'unpleasantly
21 surprised' to see her in one of his briefings. Interviews revealed that journalists are
22 displeased with these exclusions as they hinder them from directly learning about the other
23 community's positions and expectations in the negotiations. In a political environment,
24 which does not encourage cooperation between communities, journalists end up relying on
25 the translations of the news from the 'other' media to get information about the 'other'
26 community. Given that there is already very little communication, trust, and tolerance
27 between the two sides, such segregation increases the existing divisions rather than
28 encourage reconciliation and understanding.
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47 Language is one of the reasons for this lack of communication between the sides. Very few
48 journalists have established contact with the journalists and sources across the divide as
49 many cannot speak the other community's language, which is Greek or Turkish. Only
50 English-speaking journalists and few, who knows the other community's language, can
51 access and exchange information with the journalists and members of the public in that
52 community.
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3 The other reason for this low level of communication is that each side has developed its
4 ideological frame and narrative to explain the cause and continuation of the conflict. Both
5 explanations deny the legitimacy of the 'other' and refuse to recognize its administration
6 and representatives. Most of the news media comply with these ideologies. They follow
7 official policies, which is based on not recognizing the legitimacy of the 'other'
8 establishment and use phrases such as 'pseudo-state (rather than the TRNC), 'so-called
9 leader' or 'the Greek-Cypriot administration' (rather than the RoC) to refer to each other.
10 These ideological frames affect how journalists approach the community across the divide.
11 Interviews with GC journalists showed that they are more likely to comply with official
12 policies and are hesitant to talk to TC political figures. Even if they interview a TC
13 government representative, they would not refer to it with its official title as this could
14 mean the recognition of the legitimacy of their administration, which is officially described
15 as 'pseudo' by theirs. On the other hand, TC journalists claim that their attempts to
16 interview the GC political figures are frequently rejected. Over the years TC journalists have
17 developed a more relaxed attitude towards official restrictions. Some journalists recognize
18 the RoC as the official state of Cyprus and use its name in their news, despite knowing that it
19 would be censored. A TC journalist, who studied the Greek language at university so he
20 could become a bi-lingual journalist, thought it was wrong that he had to change the official
21 titles when he translated the news from the GC media: 'Instead of saying the president of
22 the Republic of Cyprus, we say GC Administration Leader. This bothers me. You should
23 translate it as it says but there are some political rules and we have to follow them'
24 (Personal interview, 2019).

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45 Working within this political environment, it is difficult for journalists to present a balanced
46 report that reflects the views of both communities. The motives of the journalists, who
47 reach out to get information from the 'other' community, are frequently questioned. A TC
48 journalist described how TC political figures are suspicious of journalists, who check
49 information with the GC side or get their comments. She remarked that such journalists are
50 accused of not trusting 'our' politicians or working for the 'other' side (Personal interview,
51 2018). It shows that journalists, who contact the 'other' side for confirmation or
52 information, are treated distrustfully. Such treatment discourages other journalists from
53 doing the same and it results in journalism that provides only one side's perspectives.

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3 Inevitably, it helps political leaders, who compete to control the information communicated
4 to their publics. Checking and including information from the 'other' side means presenting
5 alternative and conflicting information to the public, which could undermine the leaders'
6 efforts to promote their positions and influence public opinion. When a GC journalist
7 reported on the information, she had received from her TC sources, she got condemnation
8 from the GC leader Nicos Anastasiades:
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14 'When I first received the message from the TC colleagues about what had been
15 agreed between the two sides on the map issueⁱ I thought it was a joke because we
16 hadn't been informed about it by the GC officials at all. I crosschecked it and decided
17 that this information should be made public. So, the next morning, while I was
18 reporting live on the progress of the negotiations for a CyBC TV programme I
19 announced it It showed the public that there was a contradiction in the
20 information shared by the two sides' (Personal interview, 2019).
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29 Economic forces also present challenges for journalists. Competition to attract audience and
30 revenue adds extra pressures on them. Journalists are caught between commercial
31 concerns and the requirements of their professional conduct. Keeping the public, who
32 suffers from a Cyprus problem 'fatigue' (Michael, 2015; Anastasiou, 2008), interested in the
33 peace process has become a difficult task for journalists. In their rush to break the news
34 first, journalists disseminate information, sometimes without verifying it, despite knowing
35 that it could have a serious impact on the process: If the information is proved to be
36 incorrect, it could affect the public mood, damage the support for the peace process and
37 reduce the trust in journalists. Some TC journalists admitted that they rushed to announce a
38 breakthrough in the negotiations at Crans Montana. They raised the public's expectations,
39 only to disappoint them when the talks collapsed.
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50 In this competitive media environment, it is not always journalists, who report information
51 without checking that are condemned, but also the ones who do. A TC journalist, who
52 reported on the negotiations between Anastasiadis and Akıncı for the TC state broadcasting
53 corporation, was criticized for not reporting faster:
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58 'Private media were in a rush to produce news frequently. It was to keep the
59 audience. But most of the information they communicated was unverified. During
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3 these times one of the criticisms I received was that I was not reporting as frequently
4 as they did. It didn't mean that I was not doing my job. I refused to report anything
5 without verifying it properly and verification takes time' (Personal interview, 2018).
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10 11 12 ***Journalists as Active Participants*** 13

14 Journalism is not just shaped by national contexts and organisational structures but also by
15 professional and individual values. Journalists in Cyprus tackle with professional and
16 personal values that are at odds with each other when they report on the Cyprus problem:
17 while professional values demand their detachment and impartiality, their personal views
18 and experience of the conflict does not make it easy for them. Having lived with the Cyprus
19 problem and experienced its impact on their personal and professional lives, it is difficult for
20 journalists to stay detached when reporting on it. For GC journalists, the trauma their
21 community experienced during the conflict and lack of justice for their loss and suffering
22 contribute to their professional attitudes. While covering the issues on the Cyprus problem
23 their patriotic sentiments sometimes overshadow their professionalism. TC journalists, on
24 the other hand, have been living with economic and political restrictions due to the
25 internationally non-recognised status of their state and are keen to play an active role in the
26 resolution of the problem. It does not mean that they all support the existing peace process,
27 which is based on the idea of a bi-communal and bi-zonal federation, but that they want the
28 problem to be resolved. Some journalists say that they try not to let their personal views
29 affect their reports on the Cyprus issue but many stresses that their professionalism is
30 shaped by their personal views and experiences of the conflict. A TC journalist asserted that
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32 'We are journalists, but we have lived with the Cyprus problem all our lives.
33 Inevitably, it affected many aspects of our lives. As journalists, we try to be objective,
34 but our personal views and experiences regarding the Cyprus problem influence our
35 journalism' (Personal interview, 2018).
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54 Similarly, an editor-of-chief of a TC daily, also commented that it was difficult to separate his
55 professional and personal identities as they were interlinked and influenced by the Cyprus
56 problem. He remarked that the conflict had shaped his journalism so much that he
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3 wondered whether he would perform journalism the same way if he did not live in a
4 conflict-affected society (Personal interview, 2018).
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9 The dilemmas journalists experience between professional and personal values persist when
10 they cover the peace talks. Patriotism puts pressure on them to side with their community
11 and to report the issues from their own community's perspective. They feel the force of
12 patriotic sentiments and manifestations, regardless whether they share these sentiments or
13 not. For example, they can receive flak for criticising the leader, who is at the negotiating
14 table on behalf of their community and be accused of 'weakening the hand of the leader at
15 the negotiating table' or 'damaging the image of national unity'. The editor-in-chief of a
16 Turkish language online news site recalled how they had been reproached by the TC
17 negotiating team for undermining TC leader Mustafa Akıncı's position with their critical
18 reporting during one of the leaders' meetings. Another time when they published a story,
19 they had received from a GC source, they were accused of serving to the GC interests even
20 though they were simply doing their job (Personal interview, 2018).
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33 As research shows journalists in conflict and post-conflict societies adopt broader
34 responsibilities, such as watchdog role, civic or educational role, agents of social change and
35 activist of peace than their counterparts in democratic countries (Andresen et.al., 2017;
36 Lohner, et.al., 2016). Journalists in such societies, like the ones in Cyprus, combining
37 traditional journalism values with their countries' specific conditions play different roles at
38 different times depending on the circumstances. One such role is endorsing peace. When
39 asked whether journalists should promote peace, nearly all the TC and GC journalists
40 interviewed for this project answered 'yes'. This is because for these journalists promoting
41 peace is not activism but a professional duty because they believe the resolution of the
42 problem is in the interest of their communities.
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53 Although journalists are constrained by structures, they also have the power to maintain or
54 change the conditions in which they work. Exercising their agency within the national and
55 organizational framework, journalists not only reproduce these structures but also modify
56 them. They negotiate certain independence from the restrictions of socio-political
57 influences and organizational restrictions and discursively reconstruct the meaning and role
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3 of journalism (Hanitzsch and Vos, 2017; Reich and Hanitzsch, 2013; Lauk and Harro-Loit,
4 2016). Therefore, despite the political elite having a certain amount of control over the
5 news media, journalists' role in the peace efforts in Cyprus is not passive, but active. The
6 period, during which the Annan Plan was negotiated, provides good examples for the role
7 they could play and the challenges they experience during peace processes. The Annan Plan
8 was a comprehensive plan initiated by the UN General Secretary Kofi Annan to settle the
9 Cyprus problem, which was negotiated for two years and then put forward for the approval
10 of the communities in April 2004. During the negotiations, on both sides of the island, the
11 news media became platforms for the public deliberations of the plan. They reflected elites'
12 debates on the plan and took stances either in favour or against it. GC media mainly
13 opposed to the plan, while TC media supported it. Most of the GC media, following the
14 government, which rejected the plan, was biased against it (Christophorou et. al, 2010; Taki,
15 2009). These media gave more coverage to the opponents of the Annan plan than the ones
16 who supported it (Taki, 2009; Alexandrou, 2006). In contrast, most TC news media, like most
17 of the TC public, regarded the plan as a way of settling the conflict, end their isolation and
18 bring democracy and economic prosperity to their community. Therefore, as well as
19 supporting the plan, they were actively involved in the campaigning for it and were one of
20 the key actors in driving social and political change. Some regarded this role as a
21 responsibility given to them by the public to communicate their demands for a settlement
22 to the world (Düzgün, cited in Grigoriadis and Felek, 2019, 116).

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42 It was during this time that journalists experienced a tension between their professional and
43 personal values and questioned their role in the process. A TC journalist explained the
44 dilemma they were faced with:

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47 'What attitude should we adopt during this period? Should we keep our distance, be
48 detached and objective and practice journalism like Reuters or the BBC does, or
49 should we take part in the process actively? We are the journalists of this community
50 and this was an important period in TC history' (Personal interview, 2019).

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56 During this period many TC journalists adopted an activist role and promoted the plan. They
57 collaborated with political parties and civil society organisations that campaigned for a
58 change in the status quo and presented the issues from a perspective that facilitated and
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3 supported these changes. TC journalists saw it as their responsibility to educate people
4 about the pros and cons of the plan and mobilised them to participate in the ongoing
5 political debate about the proposed plan.
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10 In Cyprus, political views of media ownership regarding the settlement of the conflict are
11 influential in the construction of the news. Journalists, regardless of their personal and
12 professional views on the peace process, are required to frame the issues in line with the
13 media organisation's political position. However, during the period in which the Annan plan
14 was negotiated, some journalists opposed to their organisation's stance regarding the plan
15 rather than comply with it. In the TC community, a group of journalists working
16 for *Kıbrıs* Media Group threatened its owner with resignation unless he supported the plan.
17 Until then the media group had been critical of the plan. As one of these journalists
18 explained 'the owner realized that he would lose us. Continuing to oppose to the plan would
19 also mean going against the public opinion. Going against people's will is the worst position
20 for a newspaper' (Personal interview, 2019). Consequently, *Kıbrıs* Media Group gave its
21 support to the plan. Similarly, some GC journalists, whose views on the plan clashed with
22 their media organisation's resigned and moved to other media. Some journalists, who were
23 critical of the plan, left pro-plan *Politis* newspaper and moved to *Fileleftheros*, a daily that
24 opposed it. One of these journalists explained that although they were not under direct
25 pressure, they felt that they should either adopt the organisation's line or leave (Personal
26 interview, 2019). Some journalists decided to leave partly because they disagreed with the
27 paper's position and partly to get away from the pressures to maintain their journalistic
28 autonomy.
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47 Challenging media owners' positions is not always possible. Many journalists are working for
48 organisations whose Cyprus politics they disagree with. Yet, they continue to practice their
49 journalism in those newsrooms, as a TC journalist described, by demonstrating their
50 'professionalism' (Personal interview, 2019). Professionalism here means that when there is
51 a conflict between professional and personal views of journalists and the news media they
52 work for, journalists produce and frame their news according to the guidelines of the latter.
53 However, journalism they perform in those newsrooms does not necessarily reflect their
54 professional values and they challenge the politics of the newsrooms whenever they can.
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7 In recent years, TC and GC journalists have acknowledged the role they could play in conflict
8 resolution and have taken steps to improve communication and cooperation between them.
9 Some journalists have established communication with their counterparts across the divide,
10 whom they can contact to verify or exchange information. Although the number of these
11 journalists is still small, it is a move to overcome the obstacles of the division. Some TC
12 journalists utilized these contacts when they were reporting on the leaders' talks to get
13 information about the other community's perspective. However, these connections are not
14 just used for the conflict-related issues but are consulted for a broader range of topics that
15 involve the community on the other side of the buffer zone. It was again with the efforts of
16 TC and GC journalists' unions and journalistic communities that journalists produced a
17 glossary of terms, which can be used instead of politically charged terms that are found
18 unacceptable by the other community. Although the glossary received a mixed reaction
19 from journalists, mainly from GC ones, it was another attempt of journalists to contribute to
20 the conflict resolution efforts on the island.
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36 ***Discussion and Conclusion***

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38 In times of conflict, the political elite has power over the news media to set the news
39 agenda and influence the news frames (Robinson et.al., 2009). The media adopt official
40 justifications for war, rely heavily on official sources for information, and thus supports elite
41 perspectives (Ginosar and Konolov, 2015; Robinson et.al., 2009). This study shows that there
42 is a similar relation between political power and the news media during a peace process.
43 The way peace negotiations are conducted usually advantages the political elite. In Cyprus,
44 it is the political elite that leads the peace process, conducts the negotiations and shapes
45 the discourses on the ongoing conflict and peace efforts. The closed-door diplomacy also
46 allows them to control what information to disseminate, when and how, strengthening their
47 power over the news media. It is an unbalanced relationship as journalists rely on political
48 elite for information.
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3 However, this study also showed that journalists do not always conform to the demands
4 and pressures of political power. They interpret and report events based on their personal
5 and professional values and routines. They know that the way they cover the negotiations
6 could affect the political atmosphere and the expectations of the public. During the Annan
7 plan journalists showed strong journalistic agency: they challenged the political elite and
8 media ownership that supported the status quo and interfered with their autonomy and
9 adopted an activist role to educate and influence the public. The agency they showed and
10 the roles they performed was not in contradiction with the views of the political elite and
11 the level of support the public showed to the plan. They reflected the dominant political and
12 public sentiments in their communities: the TC media favoured the plan while the GC media
13 rejected it. It showed that politics and news media are not separate but interrelated,
14 affecting each other.
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28 Research shows that in conflict-affected societies many structural obstacles limit journalists'
29 autonomy and influence their performances (Andresen et.al., 2017; Lohner, et.al., 2016; el
30 Issawi and Cammaerts, 2016; Pragers and Hameleers, 2018; Milojevic and Krstić, 2018). Of
31 the main obstacles for journalists working in communities that have been separated by
32 conflict and thus, developed little communication, trust and tolerance towards each other,
33 is the difficulty of accessing to the other community. Journalists in Cyprus, despite
34 relaxation of crossings, still encounter hindrances in their communication with their
35 counterparts across the divide. However, there are efforts among some journalists, who
36 want to transform this situation. They challenge official discourses, establish links with
37 journalists from the other side and reach out to political and social sources in the other
38 community for information. These may seem like small steps, but they show how some
39 journalists are making attempts to challenge and alter structural boundaries that restrain
40 them.
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53 At the individual level, journalists in conflict-affected societies frequently find themselves in
54 a situation where they must balance their personal views, professional values and the
55 expectations of their society, political elite and ownership (Nygren et. al., 2018; Zandberg
56 and Neiger, 2005). Journalists in Cyprus also experience this tension and thus, frequently
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3 renegotiate their roles and responsibilities in society. The biggest source of their tension,
4 especially between their professional and personal identities, is the Cyprus conflict. Many
5 feel the impact of the conflict directly or indirectly on their personal and professional lives
6 and acknowledge the difficulty of being detached and impartial when they report on the
7 Cyprus problem. Yet, they manage these tensions by moving between professional and
8 national/ethnic identities depending on the forces that affect their work. Their adaptability
9 shows that journalists do not have a fixed identity, but a flexible one. They could alter their
10 professional norms and practices according to the situation they are in: They follow
11 professional norms and resist the political pressures if they think it is in their community's
12 interest or they can move from professional to patriotic approach when they believe there
13 is a threat to their community.
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25 The study also confirmed that journalist in conflict societies have a broader range of roles
26 (see Andresen et.al., 2017). In the case of Cyprus, journalists have also adopted the role of
27 promoting a resolution to the conflict as they believe it is in the interest of their
28 communities. This professional value is part of the journalism cultures in Cyprus and
29 demonstrates that journalists are partial towards a settlement in Cyprus. It also highlights
30 that it is not enough to analyse political, economic and media environments to understand
31 journalism culture in conflict societies. Journalists' professional role perceptions and views
32 on the conflict and its resolution also need to be considered.
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43 The article mainly highlighted the similarities of journalisms practised in both communities.
44 This was not to ignore the differences between them but to understand the general
45 characteristics of journalism during a peace process. Since the separation, political, cultural,
46 economic and media contexts of each community have developed differently shaping its
47 journalism accordingly. Although both communities want a settlement on the island, there
48 are differences in their attitudes: While TCs are more willing to see a change in the status
49 quo and keen to get involved in the process, GCs are concerned about the changes a
50 solution might bring to them. Inevitably, these attitudes are reflected in their journalisms,
51 their professional norms and practices. Despite differences, studying them together showed
52 that journalists in Cyprus experience similar challenges and tensions and on both sides of
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3 the island, journalists, through their professional practices, make attempts to modify the
4 structural obstacles that affect their work.
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9 This article focused on the views and experiences of journalists in Cyprus to understand the
10 challenges they face when they cover peace negotiations. However, the dynamics of the
11 conflict in Cyprus is different. Unlike many, the conflict there is not a violent one but feels
12 like a 'comfortable' conflict 'that can easily pass off as peace' (Adamides and Constantinou,
13 2011, 6). Although to a large extent the findings of this study are compatible with research
14 in this area, it is important to extend and test the ideas presented in this article in other
15 societies that have similar or different types of conflict (such as democratisation conflicts) to
16 get a better understanding of journalism's influence in conflict resolution efforts.
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49 ⁱ Maps refer to what both sides think should be the new boundaries of the new states and discussed as part of
50 the negotiations.