

**The Militarization of a Public Debate: A Discourse-Theoretical Analysis of the Construction of War and Peace in Public Debates Surrounding the Books of Three Turkish Military Commanders on the “1974 Cyprus Peace Operation”**

**A militarização de um debate público: Uma análise teórica do discurso da construção da guerra e da paz nos debates públicos em torno dos livros de três oficiais turcos na “Operação de Paz de Chipre de 1974”**

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**Abstract:** This article focuses on a particular type of public debates, namely those that are related to war, and that thus have the potential to disrupt and damage democracy. More specifically, using Laclau and Mouffe’s (1985) discourse theory, we analyse the construction of war and peace in the public debates surrounding the books of three Turkish military commanders who fought in the Cypriot 1974 war, and who wrote books to document their experiences: Muzaffer Sever (2012), Ali İhsan Gürcan (2013) and Haluk Üstügen (2015).

In this article, we first organise an extensive discourse-theoretical re-reading of the literature on war and peace, which supports the construction of a theoretical model of war and peace discourses. While war discourses arguably have five nodal points (Enemy-Self dichotomy; army as war assemblage; destruction and death; legitimations and aims of war; spatially and temporally restricted arena of intensified reality), we distinguish between two types of peace discourses: the photo-negativistic articulation of peace and the autonomous articulation of peace. The former’s nodal points are the inverse of those of the war discourse, while the latter’s

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nodal points are social harmony, economic equity and social justice; and the desire for, and the desirability of, peace.

This theoretical model is then deployed to structure a discourse-theoretical analysis of the public debates surrounding the three books. Here we firstly show the dominance of the war discourse (and its nodal points), which raises questions about the democratic desirability of these types of public debates. Secondly, our analysis also shows two significant nuances to this critical evaluation, as the public debates also provide space for dislocations of the war discourse and contain references to peace discourses (even though these are limited and often qualified).

**Keywords:** Public debates; War discourse; Peace discourse; Discourse theory; Turkey; Cyprus; Military commanders

**Resumo:** Este artigo concentra-se em um tipo específico de debate público, especificamente aquele relacionado com guerra e, portanto, com capacidade de perturbar e prejudicar a democracia. De modo mais específico, usando a teoria do discurso de Laclau e Mouffe (1985), analisamos a construção da guerra e da paz nos debates públicos acerca dos livros de três militares turcos que lutaram na guerra cipriota de 1974 e que documentaram suas experiências em livros: Muzaffer Sever (2012), Ali İhsan Gürçan (2013) e Haluk Üstügen (2015).

Neste artigo, primeiro organizamos uma extensa releitura teórica do discurso da literatura sobre guerra e paz, que embasa a construção de um modelo teórico de discursos de guerra e paz. Embora os discursos de guerra tenham indiscutivelmente cinco pontos nodais (dicotomia Inimigo-Eu; exército como assembleia de guerra; destruição e morte; legitimações e objetivos da guerra; arena espacial e temporalmente restrita da realidade intensificada), fazemos distinção entre dois tipos de discursos de paz: a foto articulação negativista da paz e articulação autônoma da paz. Os pontos nodais dos primeiros são inversos aos do discurso de guerra, enquanto os pontos nodais dos últimos são harmonia social, equidade econômica e justiça social; e o desejo de paz e a sua desejabilidade.

Esse modelo teórico é então implantado para estruturar uma análise teórico-discursiva dos debates públicos em torno dos três livros. Em primeiro lugar, mostramos o domínio do discurso de guerra (e seus pontos nodais), o que levanta questões sobre a desejabilidade democrática desses tipos de debates públicos. Em segundo lugar, nossa análise também mostra duas nuances significativas para essa avaliação crítica, pois os debates públicos também oferecem espaço para deslocamentos do discurso de guerra e contêm referências a discursos de paz (mesmo que limitados e frequentemente qualificados).

**Palavras-chave:** Debates públicos; Discurso de guerra; Discurso de paz; Teoria do discurso; Peru; Chipre; Oficiais militares

## 1. Introduction

(Media) participation, and in particular participation *through* the media (CARPENTIER, 2017, p. 90), is often considered necessarily beneficial and democratic, as it allows for a diversity of voices to enter public spaces and spheres, and to engage in dialogues with each other. Individual voices still struggle to be heard in the tidal waves that public debates often are, and elites frequently dominate them, but these public debates still offer opportunities to a diversity of voices – also originating from non-privileged actors – to interact with each other, and to co-decide<sup>3</sup> on what might become a consensus on a particular issue, even if the level of co-decision making by non-privileged actors often is only minimalist (*ibid.*, p. 90-94)

In Habermasian versions of public sphere theory, this process is seen to have the potential to result in the better arguments prevailing (HABERMAS, 1996), while in more conflict-oriented approaches (see, for instance, MOUFFE, 2005) these interventions are seen as part of discursive struggles, engaged in attempts to establish hegemony. Even if we tend to prefer the more conflict-oriented approaches, and will be using Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) discourse theory, we acknowledge the importance of participation through the media in these public debates, but also want to focus our contribution to this discussion on the more problematic interventions that have the potential to disrupt and damage democracy. In this article, we turn to an area which is deeply problematic from a democratic perspective (at least in its substantive interpretation, see SHAPIRO, 1996, p. 123), which is war.

More specifically, we want to analyse the construction of war and peace in the public debates surrounding three authors and their books. All three authors – Muzaffer Sever (2012), Ali İhsan Gürcan (2013) and Haluk Üstügen (2015) – were soldiers who fought in the Cypriot 1974 war, and who documented their experiences in a book. We used these three books as a starting point for our analysis, as they are – in their own right – interventions in the public debate<sup>4</sup>. At the same time, they are triggers for more interventions, that respond to these books on a variety of media platforms. But whilst analysing these public debates, we discovered that

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<sup>3</sup> In this article, we will use the political studies approach to participation (CARPENTIER, 2017, p. 86-90), which defines participation as the equalization of power relations between privileged and non-privileged actors.

<sup>4</sup> For the extensive analysis of the three books themselves, see KEJANLIOĞLU; CARPENTIER, 2019. The current article is a follow-up study on this earlier 2020 article.

the books were not the starting point of the author's interventions in the public debate, and that they had been involved in the public debate before the publication of the three books, even though the content of many of their early interventions would find its way into the books. Even if the books and their reception remain important, we decided to focus our analysis more on the author's interventions in the public debate, also including these early contributions.

To support our discourse-theoretical analysis of the public debates surrounding the three authors and their books, we first organise an extensive discourse-theoretical re-reading of the literature on war and peace. This re-reading – strengthened by a series of iterations with the empirical part of our study – allows us to identify the main nodal points of the war and peace discourses and to construct a theoretical model of war and peace discourses (first developed and published in Kejanlıoğlu; Carpentier, 2019). This theoretical model will then be used to analyse the public debate interventions, and to show how the war and peace discourses are condensated in these interventions. In turn, this will allow us to evaluate the democratic-participatory nature of these types of interventions, which we will discuss at the end of this article.

## **2. Discourse Theory and the Discursive Construction of War and Peace<sup>5</sup>**

Although the materialist perspectives on war dominate the field of conflict studies, Keen (1986), Jabri (1996), Mansfield (2008) and Demmers (2012) have recognized the importance of the discursive dimension of violence, conflict and war (CARPENTIER, 2017, p. 160-162). These authors have pleaded for taking this discursive dimension seriously, because, as Keen (1986, p. 10) wrote: “In the beginning we create the enemy. Before the weapon comes the image. We think others to death and then invent the battle-axe or the ballistic missiles with which to actually kill them.” Or, as Jabri (1996, p. 23) wrote: “[...] knowledge of human phenomena such as war is, in itself, a constitutive part of the world of meaning and practice.” Of course, the psychological and linguistic dimensions of war have received considerable attention, even in some of the key theoretical conflict models, as is exemplified by Galtung's conflict triangle model (GALTUNG, 2009). But the discursive – used here in the macro-textual and macro-contextual meaning it receives in discourse theory (LACLAU; MOUFFE, 1985, p. 105; CARPENTIER, 2017, p. 16-17) – brings in another dimension, which is located at the epistemological level.

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<sup>5</sup> Part two to six of this article have been published before, in KEJANLIOĞLU; CARPENTIER, 2019.

Discourse theory allows us to argue that we construct knowledge about war and peace through discursive-ideological frameworks, that are not so much located at the individual-interactive level, but at the social level. Discourses of war and peace are frameworks of intelligibility – ways of knowing war and peace – which are available to individual subjects for identification (or disidentification), but that are also inherently contingent and fluid. This does not mean that there is a multitude of ever-changing discourses, with meanings neurotically floating around. It means that there are several, always particular, ways of thinking war (and peace), which are in themselves never perfect copies of the Real, but imperfect representations, bound to always somehow fail. In some cases, this failure to represent – to incorporate events or ideas – can threaten the integrity of discourse, and can, to use a discourse-theoretical term, dislocate it. Moreover, these discourses also engage with each other in struggles, and sometimes become dominant (or hegemonic) and sedimented through these discursive struggles. Hegemonic articulations of war – for instance, the idea that war is considered a legitimate tool for resolving conflict in the last instance – are indeed very rigid, and difficult to change. They have accompanied humankind for centuries and more. Still, no hegemony is total and can necessarily last forever; hegemonic discourses can become politicized again and dragged into a new political-discursive struggle, that might alter or destroy them.

Individual voices and signifying practices do matter in the construction of discourses, although one should be careful not to overestimate the capacity of one individual to create a new discourse, or to change an existing discourse with a simple utterance. Discourses are located at the social level and are created through articulatory iterations. They are – keeping Foucault's (1972, p. 36-37) words in mind – characterized by regularity of dispersion, which often exceeds the capacity of one individual. They originate from a non-directed and finally unpredictable interplay between thousands (if not millions) of signifying practices that produces particular equilibria around which one or more discourses originate. Of course, we do not want to argue in favour of a hyper-spontaneous omnipotent multitude (NEGRI; HARDT, 2004), as we want to simultaneously acknowledge the power positions of authoritative institutions, that can coordinate, synchronize and harmonize signifying practices, validate and authorize them, and then distribute and defend them. In the case of war discourses, we can easily point to the role of the army in policing particularly signifying practices that support the construction of the Self and the Enemy-Other, for instance, by labelling some signifying practices as 'defeatist' or 'treacherous'. But also media play a vital role, by giving visibility to these signifying practices (allowing for what is called participation through the media), and by validating and authorizing

them, sometimes through the evaluation by media professionals, sometimes through the support these signifying practices gain (or not) from other members of the public.

Still, individual signifying practices, originating from privileged or non-privileged actors, in controlled or more participatory settings, do matter. They are the raw material which constitute discourses, they are seeds that can grow, and they are the nutrition that discourses desperately need to ensure their survival. Even more importantly: the social does not consist out of a one-discourse reality, but out of series of competing discourses, with which individuals align themselves, engaging in these discursive struggles through their participation in public spheres and spaces where they can perform their signifying practices. Pacifism and militarism are, for instance, two different discourses that give meaning to war and peace. These two discourses co-exist and are supported by different signifying practices, originating from many different individuals, often being supportive to one, and critical towards the other. As these signifying practices refer to particular discourses, through the logic of identification, they are also the finding place and locus of study for these discourses, as, for instance, the public debate interventions surrounding the books, that are analysed in this article.

The deployment of discourse theory has yet another advantage, as it is built on the negative-relationalist principles of meaning construction, that were originally developed in semiology. This immediately brings us to the signifiatory relationship between war and peace. In particular, peace has proven to be difficult to be conceptualized without reference to war. Biletzki raises this point in the following terms:

“War and Peace” is the ultimate posit which grounds the concept of peace in a dichotomous definition. In the effort to define, explain, explicate, illustrate and finally understand peace it is natural to ask what peace is not. [...] This binary, even exclusionary, use of both terms, ‘war’ and ‘peace’, constitutes their meaning, almost of necessity [...] (BILETZKI, 2007, p. 347).

She continues with the question “Can one talk of peace without talking about war?” (*id.*). A few pages later, Biletzki provides two answers to this question:

For the essentialist philosopher the question would be – what is peace “in itself”? For the Wittgensteinian philosopher, the answer would be a rendition of a specific language-game of peace that attempts to track the uses of the word itself (and seeing if the rules of use obligate us to also and always use ‘war’ in such games) (*ibid.*, p. 353).

Although we sympathize with Biletzki's second answer, and definitely do not want to discredit her quest to construct a language-game of peace without the signifier war, we need to acknowledge that the signifier war is often used in peace discourses (and the other way around).

Basic definitions of war and peace, used in academic literature, often set up these two signifiers in an oppositional relationship, allocating a primary defining role to war. While war is considered as the "armed conflict between organized political groups" (HOWARD, 2001, p. 1), peace does – first and foremost – refer to "the absence of war" (or, of armed conflict) (MATSUO, 2007, p. 16). This negative definition of peace is related to the comprehension of war as "the universal norm in human history" (HOWARD, 2001, p. 1), whereas the concept of peace in an international order is relatively new. Howard (*ibid.*, p. 1-2), for instance, argues that the prominence of the peace discourse dates back to the Enlightenment and has become desirable by political leaders only for the past two centuries.

Even though there have been attempts to map out the origins of the concept of peace in different civilizations such as Ancient Judaism, Greece, Rome, China and India (ISHIDA, 1969, p. 135; MATSUO, 2007, p. 15) and from the late Middle Ages to the nineteenth century modern Europe (KENDE, 1989), even the academic field of peace studies is only about six decades old. In this field of peace studies, ample attention has been spent on developing a more autonomous definition of peace, where, for instance, Galtung (1964; 1969) – one of the founders of this field – uses the concept of structural violence, which includes such conditions as poverty, humiliation, political repression and the denial of self-determination that limits the human potential for self-realization. 'Positive peace' then becomes defined as the transcendence of these conditions to assure non-violence and social justice. The significance of positive peace, which has become predominant in peace studies, should not be underestimated.

However, the importance and the wide reach of the negative definition of peace, as war's opposite, should not be underestimated either. From a discourse-theoretical perspective, we can argue that the signifiers war and peace often feature in both war and peace discourses, as each other's constitutive outsides. Although, at the same time we should acknowledge that war and peace discourses are constituted out of many other signifiers (the Enemy, for instance), that are articulated together into one discourse. And, even if the signifier war often features in peace discourses, and peace in war discourses, this is not, strictly speaking, a necessity, as other signifiers can be used (and suffice) to articulate either discourse. Nevertheless, this logic of mutually constitutive outsides frequently occurs, and, moreover, can also be used in analyses to better understand how war and peace are defined by particular actors, through a photo-

negativistic articulation, where discourse is (partially or largely) constructed through what it is not.

### 3. War Discourses

Taking the literature on the discursive construction of war as a starting point, the signifier of the Enemy is seen to play a crucial role in war discourses. One of the authors of this article, Carpentier (2011; 2015), has extensively argued that in war discourses the identities of the Self and the Enemy are set as a dichotomy based on the key binary opposition of good and evil (see also GALTUNG; VINCENT, 1992), which has many embodied variations: “just/unjust, innocent/guilty, rational/irrational, civilized/barbaric, organized/chaotic, superior to technology/part of technology, human/animal-machine, united/fragmented, heroic/cowardly and determined/insecure.” Not only the identities but also the violent practices of the warring parties are constructed through this Self/Enemy dichotomy, creating another series of pairs: “necessary/unnecessary, last resort/provocative, limited effects/major effects, focused/indiscriminate, purposeful/senseless, unavoidable/avoidable, legitimate/illegitimate, legal/criminal, sophisticated/brutal and professional/undisciplined” (CARPENTIER, 2015, p. 3). In short, war discourses rely on a Self that claims and feels to be good, just and civilized, in an antagonistic relation with an Enemy that is constructed as evil, unjust and uncivilized.

In what Carpentier (2011; 2015) has called the “ideological model of war”, there are also other (discursive) subject positions present. Four are mentioned in this model: the Victim, the Supporter, the Passive Ally, and the Bystander. It is, in particular, the subject position of the Victim that plays an important role in war discourses, as this position strengthens the antagonistic relation between Self and Enemy. The Enemy is constructed as evil because they produce the Victim, and the Self becomes constructed as good (and heroic) as they (aim to) save the Victim. Of course, the subject positions of Self and Victim can, and often do, overlap.

Arguably, the Enemy is not the only key signifier in war discourses, and other – what Laclau and Mouffe (1985, p. 113) call – nodal points of war discourses can be distinguished. Apart from the (1) Enemy/Self dichotomy, with the many affects linked to that dichotomy, we would like to argue that there are four more nodal points (or key signifiers) of war discourses: (2) Present or future activities of a privileged part of the Self, the army, an assemblage of war – or a war machine (PICK, 1993) – that has been delegated the responsibility for waging war, and envelops another set of subject positions (e.g., the Soldier) with their own codes of conduct, rationalities and affects, rules, power relations and symbols, (3) The need for the death and



destruction of the Enemy, in varying degrees, (4) The legitimacy of this destruction of the Enemy, translated in particular aims, and the sacrifices made by the Self to achieve these aims. These legitimations can include a suspension of responsibility of the Self, which is forced to act by the evilness of the Enemy and (5) A spatially and temporally restricted arena of intensified and self-contained reality, or, as Oktay (2014, p. 23) writes: “In a sense, war is a parenthesis between two periods of peace.”

War discourses may refer to the signifier peace in different ways. For instance, Benjamin’s (1979, p. 120) review of *War and Warrior* critiques the instrumentalist abuse of “pacifism’s clichéd ideal of peace” in the war discourse mobilized by the volume’s editor, Ernst Jünger. This type of instrumentalist use of peace in war discourse is described in the following terms by Biletzki’s (2007, p. 347) statement which refers to a (conscious or unconscious) instrumentalization of peace: “The double-play between war and peace, their obvious opposition, the consensual presupposed preference for peace, and mostly the practical realities of the human race’s need and desire for war have come together in a discourse which pays lip service to peace while advocating war.” Another articulation of peace in war discourse is the peace-as-objective-of-war articulation, illustrated by Aristotle’s sentence in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (340 BC, Book 10, p. 7) when he writes: “And happiness is thought to depend on leisure; for we are busy that we may have leisure, and make war that we may live in peace.” Oktay (2014, p. 23 – our translation) also makes this argument: “The real aim of war is to establish peace. [...] As the main aim of war is to create a peaceful period again, victory is an end to provide peace, not a phase to destruct the enemy, to destroy it altogether.”

Finally, we should not overestimate the stability of war discourses. They too, like any other discourse, can become dislocated, or, in other words, disrupted by material events that the discourse in question is unable to give meaning to and incorporate. For instance, war discourses construct military action as rationally planned and executed, by well-trained soldiers that ‘keep their heads cool’ and fight in equally rational ways, only driven by noble affects, such as camaraderie and love for the nation. Time after time, this rational articulation of war, supported by endless rituals, is dislocated by the unpredictability of combat, and the intervention of affects considered much less noble (e.g., intense fear). This unpredictability is present in many accounts of war written by diverse authors, ranging from Carl von Clausewitz, a Prussian general writing after the Napoleonic Wars, to the anarchist Proudhon (OKTAY, 2014, p. 23, 29).

#### 4. Peace Discourses

As our theoretical introduction already argued, there are two distinct ways of constructing peace discourses: On the one hand, the constitutive outside of war can take a central place in the peace discourse, or, on the other hand, peace discourses can have a more autonomous articulation (without the signifier war necessarily becoming totally disarticulated). In the first, the photo-negativistic structure, peace becomes defined through the absence of war, and (thus) through the absence of the nodal points of the war discourses. This, firstly, implies that these peace discourses are articulated by the absence of the Enemy. It is important to stress that this does not mean that there is no conflict. To echo Webel's (2007, p. 8) words: "The antithesis of peace is not conflict. Conflicts appear historically inevitable and may be socially desirable [...] Conflicts may perhaps paradoxically, promote and increase peace and diminish violence [...]" This also implies that the Other can still be present, but that the Other-Enemy subject position becomes re-articulated into a different Other (with, for instance, the Other-Neighbour, the Other-Adversary, the Other-Friend, the Other-Ally, ...), or (even) as part of the Self, allowing to live with conflict in non-violent manners (McGREGOR, 2014, p. 160-162). One example of this type of re-articulatory practice is Mouffe's work on agonism, a concept that is characterized by a "[...] we/they relation where the conflicting parties, although acknowledging that there is no rational solution to their conflict, nevertheless recognize the legitimacy of their opponents" (MOUFFE, 2005, p. 20). This re-articulation also brings about different affects, that move away from the good/evil dichotomy, where love is only one option. For instance, Žižek (2008, p. 59) (following Freud) labelled the Other-Neighbour "[...] a thing, a traumatic intruder, someone whose different way of life." He continues: "[...] a Neighbour is one who per definition *smells*" (ŽIŽEK, 2008, p. 166 – emphasis in original), but – as we would like to add – a smelly neighbour is still not an Enemy.

A second nodal point of photo-negativistic discourses is the absence of legitimations (and thus aims) of war. War discourses are grounded in rational and affective arguments that call for war, often combined with a war-as-last-resort idea. There is a long tradition of reflecting on the justness of wars, and – what is of particular relevance here – about the nature of the so-called *jus ad bellum* (the right to go to war). The inverse of this war discourse nodal point has two variations, where the first variation allows to see peace as the absence of legitimate reasons to engage in war. Support for this idea can be found in a citation that is accredited to Joaquim Chissano, the second President of Mozambique, who is claimed to have said that "peace isn't

only the absence of war. It's above all the absence of reasons for war.”<sup>6</sup> The second variation is stronger and more active, as it consists out of the de-legitimation of war. This brings us to the (radical-)pacifist discourse, that articulates the use of violence as undesirable, and provides a utopian perspective on a peaceful future, as Victor Hugo's capitalist-pacifist words, spoken during his opening address of the Peace Congress in Paris, on 21 August 1849, exemplify:

A day will come when there will be no battlefields, but markets opening to commerce and minds opening to ideas [...]. A day will come when a cannon will be a museum-piece, as instruments of torture are today. And we will be amazed to think that these things once existed! (HUGO *apud* WODICZKO, 2012, p. 39).

The photo-negativistic articulation of peace also implies the absence of death and destruction. Again, there is a disclaimer to make: This does not imply the absence of violence, as collective violence is only one form of violence, and, for instance, also personal violence exists. However terrible personal violence is, it does not feature as such in the construction of war, even if collective violence frequently has a deeply personal dimension (and impact), and particular forms of personal violence (e.g., rape) have been used as weapon in wars. Here we should keep in mind that the articulation of the elements (and nodal points) of a discourse affects the meaning of a discourse and all its elements (LACLAU; MOUFFE, 1985, p. 105), which means that the nodal point of (the absence of) death and destruction refers to Enemy-destruction, which still incorporates a wide variety of modes of destruction, include the destruction of enemy bodies and minds, enemy properties and landscapes, in the present and in the future (e.g., by health implications and traumas). The articulation of (violent) death in the war discourse, has given prominence to the articulation of life with peace. An example of this articulation is Kristeva's (2007, p. 124) speech-essay, “Can We Make Peace?”, in which she argues for the desire for life to be renewed – life as “a violent desire susceptible to imaginary sublimation”. Starting and ending her speech with a quote from the prophet Jeremiah (8:11) – “For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, / Saying ‘peace, peace!’ / When there is no peace” – Kristeva (*ibid.*, p. 117, 125) calls for the establishment of a discourse of life, while criticizing both the religious (and humanistic) logics of co-existence:

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<sup>6</sup> Available at: <http://www.1maomz.com/2017/07/27/debates-do-balanco-do-meio-termo-poder-de-ideias-ou-ideias-do-poder/>.

Like the prophet Jeremiah, I do not say to you, that it is impossible to make peace. Rather, peace is inaccessible here and now, because it is futile to impose by moral will an imaginary harmony that requires justice for universalism to be realized in the public realm, and requires, just as imperatively, a new discourse on the love of life, *bio* and not *zoea*<sup>7</sup>, for intimacy to regain its serenity. [...] More than the peaceful coexistence of religions, it is *a radical analysis of their logic of life* that can still save us (p. 125-126 – original emphasis).

A fourth nodal point of the photo-negativistic articulation of peace is the non-combatant or non-existent army. An illustrative articulation of this nodal point is the concept of ‘peace tasks’ that are entrusted by an army during ‘peace-time’<sup>8</sup>, but here we should also add the absence of antagonistic signifying practices originating from army representatives. Of course, the absent army is even more a nodal point of the peace discourse, as this strictly limits the capacity of a particular country to engage in war, and frees resources that can be used for other means. Moreover, the absence of an army also contributes to the weakening of (the damaging components of) the affects associated with soldiering, such as the glorification of the soldier-hero-martyr. One small example of this can be found in Webel (2007, p. 13), when he says, “peacemaking is and ought to be heroic. Peace is and must be the heroic quest [...]”

The fifth nodal point is the continuity of space and time, not interrupted by manoeuvring armies and localized frontlines, and not having clearly earmarked time zones of intense conflict. This brings us to the theories of everyday life, which stress the repetitive, the un-purposeful, the unnoticed and the routine-based as the main characteristics of the everyday. One illustration is Felski’s (1999-2000, p. 18) seminal definition of the everyday as: “[...] grounded in three key facets: time, space and modality. The temporality of the everyday [...] is that of repetition, the spatial ordering of the everyday is anchored in a sense of home and the characteristic mode of experiencing the everyday is that of habit.” While war is seen as the exceptional and the noticed, and sometimes as the sublime, peace becomes ordinary and part of the everyday.

This photo-negativistic version of the peace discourse has provoked negative responses. For instance, in war discourses, war “[...] is capable of defining precisely what it is to be human, because it involves giving up the supreme ‘self-interest’, life itself” (PICK, 1993, p. 15). In Van Creveld’s (1991, p. 184) words, war is about distinction and self-realization: “From the time of

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<sup>7</sup> Kristeva (2007: 121) profits from Arendt’s distinction between “zoea” (biological life) and “bio” (recounted life-biography), and the “miracle of natality”, seeing human plurality as the ontological foundation of liberty and love of life.

<sup>8</sup> These tasks are part of what is sometimes called “Military Operations Other Than War”, or MOOTW, which involves humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (see BONN; BAKER, 2000).

Homer on, there has always been a sense in which it is only those who risk their lives willingly, even joyfully, who can be completely themselves, completely human.” Following the photo-negativistic logic, this turns peace into quite an ordinary, and even boring, part of life. Shields (2017, p. 7) captures this discursive process perfectly: “Militaries and soldiers prepare for war knowing armed combat requires strength, courage, valor, and self-sacrifice. If peace is viewed as the inverse of war, it becomes associated with weakness, cowardice, spinelessness, and self-serving behaviour.” A second example of negative responses relates to the temporarily undefined nature of peace, which brings about the articulation of peace as a liminal space, caught in-between wars, which structurally de-validates it, or which risks endlessly postponing peace into the future. As Webel (2007, p. 6) writes: “Like happiness, peace remains so near ... and yet, like enduring love, so far.”

In the more autonomous articulations of peace discourses, which do not place war at the centre of the peace discourse (as constitutive outside), we can first of all return to Galtung’s (1969) notion of the absence of structural violence, and its conditions of possibility, which together form the first nodal point of peace. For Galtung (1969, p. 175) inequality is “the general formula behind structural violence”, although in other parts of his article, Galtung also mentions social injustice as a defining element of structural violence (*ibid.*, p. 171). Peace – or positive peace, as Galtung calls it – then becomes a state of equality and social justice. There are other authors that make a similar argument. Webel (2007, p. 5) describes peace, as “a linchpin of social harmony, economic equity and political justice”, and Ishida’s (1969, p. 135) attempt to go beyond the traditional concepts of peace through cultural comparisons foregrounds similar meanings, with the “will of God, justice”, “prosperity”, “order” and “tranquility of the mind”. While Ishida’s endeavour takes us to the religious and spiritual meanings of peace both at the individual and social levels, Kende’s (1989) later attempt moves from the religious and humanistic conceptions to the political and economic signification of peace at a global level. Kende tracks the traces of peace in Western history, starting from Christian peace in the late middle ages (from Dante) to the peace societies and movements, as well as the workers’ and bourgeois movements of the nineteenth century. The Renaissance, then the Enlightenment and the French Revolution are located at the centre of his narrative, obviously highlighting France, Germany and Great-Britain. For Kende, Kant’s conception of perpetual peace amalgamates the features of the English and French approaches:

[Kant’s] basic concept is a federation of states in which the countries would retain their sovereignty [...], but in which the citizens would also be equal.

This is the idea of world citizenship, as Kant claimed that such a federation can only be established when people were free, the citizens would live in republican states –showing that Kant has accepted the ideas of the French Revolution. Unlike certain French revolutionaries Kant was no dreamer. He argued that it was not the “springs of moral” but of “trading spirit”, the hope for profits that could help to prevent wars – and this proves the effect of the English approach (KENDE, 1989, p. 240).

These more autonomous articulations of peace also have strong affective dimensions, where love plays a crucial role. In fact, Webel (2007, p. 6) refers to spiritual and religious leaders like Buddha and Gandhi who equate peace with love; to Freud who explains our conflicted inner worlds via intermingling of Eros and aggression, love and hate; and to Kant who sees peace as a regulative principle and ethical virtue, thus showing the historical constitutive aspects of peace both as a normative ideal and a psychological need. From there he furthers his dialectical determination of peace, “both an historical ideal and a term whose meaning is in flux” (*id.*), but also foregrounds the affective desire for peace: “Peace is, like all desired and desirable human ideals and needs, always potentially within us, even if difficult to discern and seemingly impossible to accomplish. The quest for peace may seem quixotic, but that is part of its allure” (*ibid.*, p, 13). Arguably, this desire for peace, and the desirability of peace, constitutes the second nodal point of the peace discourse (in its more autonomous articulation).

An overview of all nodal points (of war and peace discourses) can be found in Table 1, which will be used to structure the analysis of our Cypriot/Turkish case study.

**Table 1** – An overview of the war and peace discourse nodal points

War discourses	Peace discourses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Enemy-Self dichotomy</li> <li>- The army as war assemblage</li> <li>- Destruction and death (of the Enemy)</li> <li>- Legitimations and aims of war</li> <li>- A spatially and temporally restricted arena of intensified reality</li> </ul>	<u>The photo-negativistic articulation of peace</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The absence of the Enemy</li> <li>- The non-combatant or non-existent army</li> <li>- The absence of death and destruction, with the emphasis on life</li> <li>- The absence of legitimations (and aims) of war</li> <li>- Continuity of space and time, as everyday life</li> </ul>
	<u>The more autonomous articulation of peace</u>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Social harmony, economic equity and social justice</li> <li>- Desire for, and the desirability of, peace</li> </ul>
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## 5. A Brief Historical Account of the “Cyprus Problem”

Before turning to the three books and their receptions, we need to provide, at least briefly, some of the historical context of the Cyprus Problem. Cyprus is an island in the Eastern Mediterranean, with a strategic position, and a troubled past of military conflicts. The first settlers on Cyprus arrived from Anatolia and the Levant, later from the Aegean, and the island went through many hands before becoming part of the Ottoman Empire in 1571. This brought more Ottoman settlers to Cyprus, that, by then, had a large Orthodox Christian population (CARPENTIER, 2017, p. 203-4). Later, in 1878, Cyprus changed hands again, and became controlled by Great-Britain. Annexed at the start of the First World War, Cyprus became a British crown colony in 1925.

The early nineteenth century was crucial in the change of currents for Cyprus. The Greek war of independence, which started in 1821, resulted in the creation of the Kingdom of Greece in 1832, gaining its independence from the Ottoman Empire. Already during the Greek war of independence, a contingent of Greek Cypriots fought with the Greeks, and the intellectual-cultural exchanges between Greek Cypriots and Greeks, grounded in a shared language and religion, drove the desire for *enosis*, or the unification of Cyprus with Greece. The Greek nationalism on Cyprus was further strengthened by the Greek “Megali Idea”, first articulated in the mid-1800s, which consisted out of a programme for the integration of all territories inhabited by historically ethnic Greeks, into the Greek state (KIZILYÜREK, 2002, p. 49-53).

Turkish nationalism was more complex and appeared later, complicated by the transformation of the Ottoman Empire into its (partial) successor-state, Turkey. Turkish nationalism could be found, in the early twentieth century, in the writings of Yusuf Akçura and Ziya Gökalp, and with the Young Turks, it moved – articulated as Pan-Turkism – onto the political scene, especially after the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913 (KIZILYÜREK 2002: 154-7). After the establishment of Turkey in 1923, by Mustafa Kemal, Pan-Turkism was not taken as the state doctrine. Instead, a top-down policy aimed at producing a secular, modern Turkey was set in motion, supported by, among other reforms, the writing of a new Turkish history and the adoption of the Latin alphabet for the Turkish language (*ibid.*, p. 170-1, 176).

In Cyprus, the first inter-communal clashes erupted in 1912; later, in 1931, the “October riots” took place, aimed against British rule and supportive of *enosis* with Greece. The riots brought about a severe response from the British side, with the imprisonment and deportation of those implicated, bans on several organizations, including the Communist Party, media censorship, etc. This only further strengthened the Greek Cypriot desire for *enosis*. Similarly, nationalism was on rise in the Turkish Cypriot community in the late 1920s and 1930s, both because of their admiration of the developments in Turkey and as a reaction to the Greek community’s demand for *enosis* (*ibid.*, p. 221-2).

Only after the Second World War, the conflict fully erupted. In a plebiscite organized by the Orthodox Church, the great majority of Greek Cypriots voted for integration with Greece, which led to demands for Greece to raise the issue in the UN General Assembly in 1954. In the very same year, Turkey also changed its detached attitude and became involved in Cyprus, even directly in setting up the “Cyprus is Turkish Committee”. The early 1950s also witnessed the foundation of the Greek-nationalist and right-wing EOKA, by the Greek army officer Grivas – supported by archbishop Makarios (the later first president of the Republic of Cyprus). EOKA started, in April 1955, an armed struggle against the British rule, for self-determination and *enosis*. As EOKA not only targeted the British, but also left-wing Greek Cypriots, and Turkish Cypriots (CARPENTIER, 2017, p. 209-211; KIZILYÜREK, 2002, p. 96-102, 234-241; STELYA, 2013), the internal conflict quickly escalated. For instance, in 1957, the newly established Turkish Resistance Organization (TMT) started its counter-attacks, driven by the demand for *taksim*, or partition of the island.

With the Zurich and London agreements of 1959, Cyprus became an independent state in 1960, with Greece, Turkey and the United Kingdom as the guarantors of the Republic of Cyprus. Violence between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots erupted again at the end of 1963, and continued throughout the rest of the 1960s, forcing the Turkish Cypriots to withdraw into a series of militarily protected enclaves. When, on 15 July 1974, the Greek junta, supported by right-wing Greek Cypriots, organized a coup against the Greek Cypriot president Makarios, Turkey intervened and invaded the island, as this coup generated a new and severe security threat for the Turkish Cypriots.

The “Cyprus Peace Operation” (*Kıbrıs Barış Harekâtı*), “Operation Peace” (*Barış Harekâtı*) or “Cyprus Operation” (*Kıbrıs Harekâtı*) as it was/is called in Turkey, was launched on 20 July 1974. In a first stage, the Turkish army landed near the northern Cypriot city of



Kyrenia/Girne<sup>9</sup>, and established a corridor, linking this bridgehead with the large Turkish Cypriot enclave of North Nicosia and gaining control of about three percent of the island's territory. A ceasefire was established on 22 July 1974, but in a second stage of the invasion, initiated on 14 August 1974 and concluded two days later, Turkey gained control of more than a third of the island. The new ceasefire line became consolidated in the Buffer Zone, guarded by UN troops, and dividing the entire island. Large numbers of Cypriots became displaced in the process, abandoning their houses and fleeing to "their" part of Cyprus, resulting in two largely homogeneous parts of Cyprus. This divide, despite many attempts for a negotiated peace, continues to exist until today. Only in 2003, the first crossings through the Buffer Zone opened up, right before the Republic of Cyprus joined the European Union. Before, in 1983, the Turkish Cypriots had established the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), which exercises the de facto control in the north, but which is only recognized by Turkey.

## 6. Method

Our analysis focuses on the public debates surrounding three books written in Turkish, by Turkish soldiers, all of whom fought in the 1974 Cyprus war, albeit in different capacities. The first book, *The 20<sup>th</sup> July 1974 Cyprus. The Unending Night*, is written by lieutenant-colonel Muzaffer Sever (2012). He was an intelligence officer with the staff of the 6<sup>th</sup> Corps during the 1974 war. In 1970-1971, for 18 months, he was in Cyprus working in TMT. In particular, in 1971, he was involved in preparing the operational plans for 1974. He also visited Cyprus after the war. The second book, *The 1<sup>st</sup> Commando Battalion, 1974 Cyprus: Break-Out in Beşparmak/Kyrenia Mountains*, is written by Haluk Üstügen (2015), who was a first lieutenant and a commando squadron commander during the 1974 war. His name was given to a hill after the battles for St. Hilarion, a battle which was crucial for the Turkish army to gain access to north Nicosia, during the first stage of the war (see Figure 1). Finally, *The Cyprus Peace Operation and Beyond* is written by Ali İhsan Gürcan (2013), who was a second lieutenant in the 1<sup>st</sup> parachute battalion during the 1974 war. Gürcan's book focuses mostly on the situation after the 1974 war, defending his battalion against different allegations and demanding to be honoured (with medals).

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<sup>9</sup> In this article, the Cypriot place names are indicated, when possible, by their Greek name in Latin spelling, and their Turkish name. One exception is Nicosia, where we only use the English name of the city.

**Figure 1** – Haluk Üstügen Hill sign

In order to locate the public debates related to these three books and their authors, we used a combination of the Google search engine with the Wayback Machine, in order to look for the author names and their book titles. We collected all the material that appeared in the Turkish and Turkish Cypriot mainstream media, in Turkish local media, on three social media (Twitter, Facebook and YouTube), on bookseller websites, on Turkish-language blogs, discussion forums and other websites, and in non-Turkish media (see Table 2). Also material featuring the book's authors, before the publication of these books was included, for instance, the news items on Üstügen's meeting with a former Greek captive of 1974 war in 2005. This story was also included in his 2015 book and was also discussed after the book's publication. The overview of all material is in Table 2.

**Table 2** – Media materials on/by the three authors and their books (until July 2019)

Media/Authors	Gürcan	Sever	Üstügen
Turkish mainstream media	5	6	6
Turkish Cypriot mainstream media	5	3	5
Turkish local media	2	4	2

Social media (Facebook, Twitter and YouTube)	4 YouTube videos	1 Tweet (& 4 replies); 1 FB reference	Own Twitter account with 4 Tweets; Own FB account; 1 YouTube video
Turkish booksellers' web sites	5	3	6
Turkish language blogs/forums/websites	4	2 (including an entry in Ekşi Sözlük)	3
Non-Turkish language blogs/forums/websites	1	1	2

Although we collected a reasonable amount of texts, we should still keep in mind that many of them are short, and they are often duplicates. Even then, they are still meaningful to see how and where war and peace discourses circulate. Gürcan's book was not very present in the Turkish mainstream media, except for one article on the Culture-Art pages of the haberler.com news portal on 31 May 2013, where Gürcan voiced his demand for recognition for 1974 war veterans. He appeared more in Turkish Cypriot media, with three similar interviews aired by three Turkish Cypriot TV channels in 2016, and uploaded on YouTube. Their reach was limited, though, with only 3, 89 and 286 views in July 2019. His book did not get many votes on the booksellers' websites that featured his book (*Kitapyurdu*, *Eren Kitap*, *1000 Kitap* and *Rakuten Kobo*<sup>10</sup>) either, and when it did, the average scores were not high. Sever's book, on the other hand, got higher scores and received positive comments on the booksellers' websites (*Kitapyurdu*, *Kidega* and *1000 Kitap*). Sever regularly appeared in mainstream media as an expert on Cyprus and the 1974 war. His death on 7 February 2018 directed the attention to his key role as a military officer in Cyprus, particularly on social media. Üstügen is the only of the three authors that is himself active on Facebook, where he posted his book cover on 8 June 2017, receiving 156 likes, 35 shares, 22 comments; another Facebook posting with retail information, posted on 9 June 2017, received 56 likes, 6 shares, 4 comments. His book got high ratings and several comments on the booksellers' websites (*Kitapyurdu*, *1000 Kitap*, *Kidega*, *Hepsiburada*, *Sözcü Kitabevi* and *Idefix*). He is also one of the soldiers who were interviewed during the 1974 war; a video<sup>11</sup> including his interview was uploaded to

<sup>10</sup> The fifth website, of the *Kıbrıs Türk Kültür Derneği* (Turkish Cypriot Cultural Association) has not voting options.

<sup>11</sup> Available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N\\_BdmDh1F5o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N_BdmDh1F5o).

YouTube in 2018. It had 218.426 views, 84 shares, and 879 comments in July 2019. Turkish and Turkish Cypriot media not only covered his meeting with a former captive in 2005 but also covered his book in 2014, 2016 and 2017. Moreover, Üstügen's book had an international reception, albeit limited, with the critique "Live Your Myth in Occupied Cyprus," written by the Greek veteran Savvas Vlassis, and published in 2014 by Vasilis Chronopoulos on Sofrep.com, a military online publication.

The public debates surrounding the three books and their authors are analysed using discourse-theoretical analysis (DTA – see CARPENTIER, 2017). As a method, DTA relies on the core principles of qualitative analysis. This firstly implies a strong emphasis on the cyclical-iterative nature of research, with the development of the theoretical framework and the analysis cross-fertilizing each other, even if the reporting often uses more linear forms of communication. Secondly, DTA's embeddedness in a qualitative methodology also implies a strong presence of so-called sensitizing concepts, theoretical concepts which guide the analysis, without foreclosing it. What makes DTA specific is that *discourse*, as a theoretical concept grounded in discourse theory, functions as the main sensitizing concept, strengthened by other discourse-theoretical concepts as secondary sensitizing concepts. In addition, theoretical concepts from outside discourse theory serve as additional ("tertiary") sensitizing concepts, through a re-reading practice that integrates them more into a discourse-theoretical framework. Finally, also coding, as a (qualitative) method to extract meaning from data, through the creation of thematic hierarchies and core concepts (SALDAÑA, 2015), is used in DTA.

Concretely, in the case of this research project, DTA is used, which means that the above-outlined combination of DTA supported by the basic principles of qualitative methodology, is deployed here as well. Even if this article – in the way that it is written – first outlines a theoretical framework, both the theoretical framework and the empirical analysis have strongly influenced each other and were developed in conjuncture. The first main bridge between theory and analysis, the sensitizing concepts, played a vital role in this process, with discourse (as defined in discourse theory) as primary sensitizing concept. This was combined with articulation, nodal point and dislocation (among others) as secondary sensitizing concepts and with a re-reading of theories from the field(s) of war and peace studies as tertiary sensitizing concepts (external to discourse theory). These sensitizing concepts then activated the second bridge between theory and analysis, namely the practice of coding. In this project, the data listed in Figure 3 were first coded using open coding, followed by a series of iterations of axial coding (SALDAÑA, 2015), eventually resulting in the core articulations of the war and peace discourses, and their dislocations, as described in the following sections of this article.

## 7. The Public Debates Surrounding the Three Books

### 7.1 War Discourses

In the public debates that surround the three books, the Self-Enemy dichotomy is the first and very present nodal point. The Self is constituted out of the nation of the Turkish people, represented by the then-prime minister, Bülent Ecevit. For instance, in his *Yeni Bakış* interview (18 July 2017), Gürcan is quoted saying: “Ecevit came to the island” when referring to the military operation, and thus equating the nation with its leadership. Another example here is the following statement from Gürcan, who connects Turkey with the Ottoman Empire – that conquered Cyprus in 1571 – and then integrates himself into the Turkish/Ottoman nation: “In 1571, Cyprus was taken with 70,000 martyrs, then in 1963, 1856 more martyrs and in 1974, 498 Turkish soldiers, 70 *mücahit* [Turkish Cypriot fighters] and 270 civilians were killed. We took it here, we fought it.” (*Kıbrıs Postası*, 6 January 2017). Turkish Cypriots are integrated into this identity of the Self, albeit imperfectly, as they are sometimes more represented as Helpers, and as Victims that need to be saved. One of the many examples can be found in a long interview with Sever, where he says: “Turkish Cypriots, [...] until the end of the second operation [...] embraced us, gave us bread and water. Any Turkish soldier, even for a woman there, is a commander who will be respected in their eyes” (*Belgesel Tarih*, 20 July 2018 – published first on [turksolu.com.tr](http://turksolu.com.tr), 1 August 2017).

The Greek and the Greek Cypriot are, in contrast, constructed as the Enemy. They too are often grouped together in one identity, and constructed as evil. Sever, when being consulted about Panicos Neocleous’ book about the 1974 Cyprus War – called *Ignored 1974* – uses this construction, in combination with the (historically incorrect) claim that the Self does not engage in cruelties, when he says: “But I don’t think you can kill someone with his hands tied up. But the Greeks did this a lot. In the 1950s until the 1970s, they did so to unguarded and vulnerable people many times. It is their skill, it does not happen with us.” (*iha.com*, 4 August 2009; *mynet*, 4 August 2009). This identity is sometimes complicated through the articulation of the enemy with its Allies (in particular the USA), and through the disarticulation of the Greek Cypriots from the Greeks. An instance of the latter occurs when Gürcan mentions, during his interview for *Yeni Bakış* (18 July 2017), that “Ecevit came to the island to save both Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots. Ecevit took the step thinking that the Greeks also needed to be rescued [from the Greek junta and the radical-nationalist Greek Cypriots that organized the coup in 1974].”

The army as war assemblage nodal point plays a central role in the public debates, with a strong emphasis on military strategies and tactics. The authors – in particular Sever (2012) and Üstügen (2015), but also Gürcan (2013) – are defined as military experts, which legitimates their public interventions on matters related to the army. For instance, Sever's name features in news items on the publication of the above-mentioned book on Cyprus (*iha.com*, 4 August 2009; *mynet*, 4 August 2009), or the opening of the command centre as a museum (*haberler.com*, 27 July 2012). From this expert position, combined with their position as eyewitnesses and participants, they are sometimes invited to narrate the functioning of the war assemblage. In a long interview with Sever, he talks mostly about the details of the 1974 military operation, for instance, when he describes this encounter with a Turkish Cypriot fighter:

When I walked from there [from where the Turkish army landed] to the command centre, I was constantly under fire. There were gunshots, mortars, antiaircraft shots. Someone came to guide us. I haven't forgotten: he was in black pants, a dirty, torn, black t-shirt, a rubber shoe half on his foot, one of these rickety rifles in his hands. He had no place to put the bullets, so he made a bundle out of his handkerchief to put the bullets inside. The *Mücahit* were like this (SEVER, *Belgesel Tarih*, 20 July 2018 – published first on *Türksolu Gazetesi*, 1 August 2017).

The short comments by readers, on the booksellers' websites also assess Sever's book in terms of his technical knowledge about the army assemblage. One reader, named Nihan Kutlu, writes that "men who have military knowledge can understand better, but the narration of Turkish Cypriots and the mistakes made during the operation [become visible] for everybody." (*kitapyurdu.com*, 19 April 2017) Their detailed signifying practices on the army assemblages often becomes articulated with realism. Murat Peçenek (22 September 2014), writing in *Bolu Takip*, a local media outlet, used the following headline for a brief review about Üstügen's book: "for facing the truths". An opinion piece, written by Hüseyin Yeğin, after Sever's death (*Sislioda*, 6 February 2018), emphasizes the book's realism and distance, saying that Sever "opposed the Cyprus Peace Operation being treated with subtle emotions" and that "In his work, he tries to tell what he experienced, what he saw and what he thought." This emphasis on the "reality of war" also appears in an interview with Gürcan, who is presented as someone who "literally described the battles as he lived them" (*Yeni Bakış*, 18 July 2017). Also the readers' comments on Üstügen's book, on the booksellers' websites make similar references to reality, with, for instance, statements like "Telling us about a real war and those that were

experienced [during war] makes us shudder” (“EŞSİZ BİR ESER – A UNIQUE WORK”, *Idefix*<sup>12</sup> 22 October 2014) and “An awesome book. I felt like I had joined the operation officially.” (ömer reis, *kitapyurdu.com*, 4 January 2019) Other comments contain similar sentiments:

The author’s narrative is so beautiful that one could feel like s/he were with first lieutenant Üstügen in the battlefield. Moreover, if you are interested in the topics of war, strategy and tactics, you can find short information on these, in this book (pomak 86, *kitapyurdu.com*, 16 April 2017).

You can join the Cyprus Peace operation with the first lieutenant Haluk Üstügen, [you] can feel the breath of death, the pride of victory. The commander narrated what he experienced so sincere and informative that he took his reader to Doğruyol Hill or to Çamlık (realraul, *kitapyurdu.com*, 17 May 2015).

Often, the affects that are part of the army assemblage are highlighted. In *Tünaydın*, an Istanbul-based e-periodical, Cengiz Baysu (16 November 2017), who is also a retired military officer, writes about how he met with Üstügen, who gave him a copy of his book in a motel at night. Baysu mentions that Üstügen’s phone kept ringing, with the soldiers that went to war under his command calling him. This anecdote illustrates the significant role of the affect of camaraderie. Most of the Facebook comments on Üstügen’s postings, promoting his book, emphasize his courage and heroism. For instance, people write: “I am proud of my friends whose heroism in Cyprus I know closely” (Burhan Zeki Yurdakul, [facebook.com/haluk.ustugen](https://facebook.com/haluk.ustugen), 8 June 2017) and “I feverishly suggest everyone to read a real heroic tale that my dear friend took part” (Ersan Oksuz, [facebook.com/haluk.ustugen](https://facebook.com/haluk.ustugen), 8 June 2017). One such comment comes from a Turkish Cypriot, who also stresses the friendship between Turks and Turkish Cypriots in the 1974 war: “My invaluable friend Üstügen, I met you during the 74 peace operation, we fought together, I saw your warriorhood/heroism [“*cengaverlik*”]. How happy are we that we spent those days together and how happy am I that I had an opportunity to fight with MEHMETÇİK shoulder-to-shoulder” (M Erden Ozerden, [facebook.com/haluk.ustugen](https://facebook.com/haluk.ustugen), 8 June 2017). Üstügen’s replies to such comments stress his affective relationship with the army assemblage: “Life goes on with pride for just having performed our duty” (Haluk Ustugen, [facebook.com/haluk.ustugen](https://facebook.com/haluk.ustugen), 8 June 2017).

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<sup>12</sup> The *Idefix* website does not feature the names of the commenters – instead we are using the title of the postings.

The emphasis on the “realistic” representations of war also produces a strong visibility of the death and destruction nodal point, combined with the spatial and temporal specificity of war. In the signifying practices of/on the authors, there is a strong focus on the losses related to the Self, who are consistently referred to as “martyrs”. For instance, in the opinion piece, written by Hüseyin Yeğin about Sever (*Sislioda*, 6 February 2018), Yeğin re-narrates Sever’s words in the following terms: “He also tells about a *Mücahit* company during the first night. The company has 40 people and did not have proper weapons. They are facing at least 250 Greek forces ... with mortars, guns, machine guns. [...] And all of them were martyred there ...” In some cases, the names of Turkish soldiers whose deaths stood out, and have been memorialized, receive particular attention, for instance when in the *Yeni Bakış* interview with Gürcan (18 July 2017), he says: “On the night of the landing, Colonel Halil İbrahim Karaoğlanoğlu and [Major] Fehmi Ercan, who gave his name to Ercan [the main airport in north Cyprus], were martyred.” The next sentence in this interview also refers to the destruction that characterizes war: “On the night of July 20, all of Cyprus was burning, explosions were happening everywhere. No-one was sleeping...” (*Yeni Bakış*, 18 July 2017). Moreover, the Greek (Cypriot) casualties are mentioned in the public debates, as Sever’s words illustrate: “A Greek prisoner came to us. That Greek prisoner said that everyone died, including the commander of the Greek battalion.” (*iha.com*, 4 August 2009).

The legitimization and aims nodal point is sometimes articulated in more narrow versions. For instance, there is the following reference to the “need” for the second stage of the military operation in August 1974: “However, our troops seized the Kyrenia/Girne-Nicosia region, but found themselves very much trapped in a narrow space. A serious Greek attack would make things difficult for us” (Emin Çölaşan, *Sözcü*, 17 July 2014). But still, the legitimization and aims nodal point is mainly centred around the predicament of the Turkish Cypriots, supported by their articulation as Victims. As Emin Çölaşan, a well-known columnist in Turkey, while reviewing Üstügen’s book, mentions: “The Turkish minority moans down and down under the persecution of the Greek Cypriot majority” (*Sözcü*, 17 July 2014). Also in some of the comments on the booksellers’ websites (on Sever’s book) we find similar signifying practices, with references to “our brothers who suffered pain” (KARAKANUN, *kitapyurdu.com*, 16 July 2013) and the “misery that was imposed upon Turkish Cypriots for years” (mashadov, *kitapyurdu.com*, 17 February 2016). It is this predicament that “forces” Turkey into military action, even though, as Gürcan’s quote illustrates, Turkey is still represented as being committed to peace: “Ecevit, once more, issued a call for peace to the Ministries of External



Affairs and Prime Ministers of Greece and Cyprus but they did not approve it” (*Yeni Bakış*, 18 July 2017).

The military intervention then becomes articulated as salvation, sometimes quite literal, as in the following comments on the booksellers’ websites (also of Üstügen’s book): “Our author told us, with the taste of a novel, with what difficulties Cypriot citizens were saved” (“Savaşı Yaşayacaksınız – You will experience the war”, *Idefix*, 11 April 2015) and “Salvation of babyland – in a testimony of a first lieutenant of the commandos, who had a crucial task during the Cyprus operation” (Ömer Çınar, *kitapyurdu.com*, 26 January 2018). Turkish Cypriot authors add to this articulation of salvation, by referring to the potential impact the (absence of the) intervention could have had. Gökhan Altiner, for instance, writes: “Finally, if patriotic soldiers like Colonel Ali [Gürcan] had not fought bravely, we probably would not have even written this article today” (*Kıbrıs Postası*, 6 January 2017). And Gürcan provides additional support for this legitimization, by saying “We were so right in the 74 operation that our rightfulness was also recorded by court decision” (*Yeni Bakış*, 18 July 2017).

## 7.2 Dislocations of the War Discourses

The public debates are not a univocal celebration of war, and there are several different types of dislocations that can be found. One dislocation is the disruption of the Self/Enemy dichotomy by the display of professional solidarity between soldiers. For instance, Emin Çölaşan cites General Bedrettin Demirel in the *Sözcü* article (17 July 2014), saying: “We had a Greek-Greek army fighting very well. They fought bravely.” A second dislocation relates to the military mistakes that were made, undermining the articulation of the army assemblage as rational and efficient. A reader’s comment about Üstügen’s book, on a bookseller website, illustrates this:

A book which describes the operations of commando units during the Cyprus war at first hand. Although commandos undertook the tasks of infantry, company commander Haluk Üstügen’s detailed narrative is enough to display the negative aspects of war. Commandos received friendly fire from 3 sides because of a wireless disconnection,... they were almost besieged by Greek units.

It is in particular the accidental sinking of the Turkish destroyer D354 Kocatepe by the Turkish air force, that illustrates the failure of the army assemblage. One comment about

Sever's book, published in *kitapyurdu.com*, not only mentions this incident, but also uses it to critique the lack of factuality and accuracy of the book:

... neither 'ayşe tatile çıktı' [<sup>13</sup>] nor the wife of a commander that became a martyr in a bath tub, nor the shooting of our own ship was narrated. And how many martyrs we had, how many Greeks lost their lives, the book does not tell this. I had to learn this from Google (AHMET AYDINARSLAN, *kitapyurdu.com*, 22 November 2012).

This critique on the lack of factuality and accuracy can also be found in Savvas Vlassis's text, published on a website that was originally called *thenewsrep.com*, but has now become *sofrep.com* (13 September 2014). Vlassis writes that "the story of Mr. Haluk Üstügen struck me from the first moment because of the distortion of the truth he gives to his readers about the 1974 military operations." Even if the critique is not very elaborately formulated, it is centred around the question about the number of Greek troops that attacked the Turkish positions in one particular raid: "He [Üstügen] estimates that Kotzakaya was defended by about 700 Greeks! In reality, the rather thin ranks of the Greek units didn't allow more than 80 men to take part in the raid."<sup>14</sup>

The final dislocation focusses on the relevance of the military operation, and undermines the legitimization of the war through the salvation idea. One opinion piece expresses nostalgia for the better living standards before 1974, and uses two books written about the 1974 Cyprus War by Turkish commanders – one of which is Üstügen – to give examples of what is more difficult to come by: domestic appliances, shampoos, talk powders, perfumes, soaps, toothpastes and even pet food. Sever, in response to an interview question – "Did they [Cypriots] treat you as saviours?" – also reflects on how the relationships between Turks and Turkish Cypriots have evolved:

Yes, they were, in the earlier days ... until the end of the second operation. [...] However, after the second operation, because of the difficult integration of people sent there from Eastern and South-eastern Turkey some unpleasantness with Cypriots happened. ... If people from the Mediterranean and Aegean regions, who are culturally and geographically closer to Cypriots, had been sent, it would have been better. For this reason, there were tensions from time to time. A strategic mistake was made. A generation that took a

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<sup>13</sup> "Ayşe tatile çıktı" was the code to start the second wave of the Turkish military operation in August 1974.

<sup>14</sup> Available at: <https://sofrep.com/news/live-myth-occupied-cyprus/>.

dislike to Turkey was created. (*Belgesel Tarih*, 20 July 2018 – published first on *Türksolu Gazetesi*, 1 August 2017).

In yet another example, the absurdity of the present situation for Turkish Cypriots is argued. This example relates to a short debate between news readers about how, for a couple of months in 2017, the Turkish and Turkish Cypriot flags were not flying on a (symbolically important) mountain between Kyrenia/Girne and Nicosia. This issue was first raised by the Cyprus correspondent of the Turkish mainstream newspaper *Milliyet*, and then presented on the Cypriot *kibrispostasi.com*. One reader, Sedat from Nicosia, commented, saying “I wish this were our only problem... all we do is playing on heartstrings all the time.” (*Kıbrıs Postası*, 23 September 2017) Ten months later, Metin Aktan, another reader from Antalya, Turkey, in his reply to this comment (*Kıbrıs Postası*, 26 July 2018), told the first poster that he should be ashamed. Three books, including Üstügen’s, were suggested as literature. After reading these three books, Sedat is invited to “write another comment here. Let’s see whether your thoughts change. Ok?” Then, Bora, a reader from Nicosia produced a rhyme with “flag” (“flag flag, at last we became a dry leaf” or “bayrak bayrak sonunda olduk kuru bir yaprak”) and added: “this issue being discussed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is an example of minds that remained in the 20th century” (*Kıbrıs Postası*, 26 July 2018). This comment then received a response from Metin Aktan, who had already commented before. This time, Metin Aktan wrote:

If the developments in the 20<sup>th</sup> century had not happened, there would have been no 21<sup>st</sup> century. If the 1974 [war] had not happened, perhaps you would not have existed at the moment, [you] would have been destroyed or been assimilated, and speaking Greek. Please also take this into consideration (*Kıbrıs Postası*, 26 July 2018).

### 7.3 Peace Discourses

Both the photo-negativistic articulation of peace and its more autonomous articulation are present in the public debates surrounding the three books, often interlaced with each other. But at the same time, many of the articulations of the peace discourse encounter structural limitations. Violence may have ceased, but the lack of trust leads to the construction of the (Cypriot) Greeks as potential future enemies. There is indeed an absence of death and destruction, but the current situation still is deeply problematic and characterized by structural violence – as Gürcan’s *Kıbrıs Postası* interviewer, Gökhan Altiner, writes, using a Turkish Cypriot perspective: “The current situation is not sustainable either. With an unrecognized and

isolated state, tomorrow will always be dark.” (*Kıbrıs Postası*, 6 January 2017) And the decade-long continuation of the cease-fire creates a liminal space and time zone, that is different from the spatially and temporally restricted arena of war, but also different from the normalcy of peaceful everyday live.

After the 1974 war, enmity has thus not entirely subsided. On the one hand, this is articulated through the “impossible” demands of “the Greeks” in the peace negotiations – “We want peace but the demands of Greeks are not acceptable” (Gürcan, *Kıbrıs Postası*, 6 January 2017) – and on the other hand through the emphasis on Greek (Cypriot) malevolence and lack of trustworthiness. Gürcan says that “the mentality of Greeks (both Rum and Yunan<sup>15</sup>) has not changed.” He continues: “The plan of the Greeks is always the same; their only aim is to destroy the Turkish Cypriot economy, to weaken the Turkish Cypriot part and to put *Enosis* into practice” (*Kıbrıs Postası*, 6 January 2017). This again activates the war discourse, even more so when Gürcan says: “we got this place by war and can give it back only through war” (*Kıbrıs Postası*, 6 January 2017).

On other occasions, Gürcan’s is a bit more careful with his formulations, but he still refers to (the absence of) trust: “We say that of course the Turkish army will withdraw from the island one day. But when will this happen? That day is not today. When the Turkish Cypriots feel secure on the island, then it is possible. It is only possible on the day that no-one threatens the security of the Turkish Cypriots.” (*Kıbrıs Postası*, 6 January 2017) Apart from security, also (social) justice, one of the nodal points of the autonomous articulation of the peace discourse is present, but often articulated in a qualified way, which focuses on the repair of the injustices suffered by the Self, and the violations perpetrated by the Other. Also the desire for peace – another nodal point of the autonomous articulation of the peace discourse – is present, for instance, in the desire for a solution of the Cyprus Problem, but also this articulation is often qualified, for instance, in the concluding statements of Gökhan Altiner, in his interview with Gürcan (*Kıbrıs Postası*, 6 January 2017): “Many of us wholeheartedly want a solution in Cyprus. There must be a fair solution for a permanent solution.” Another example is the statement of a poster called Tunch Khan on the *civfanatics.com* discussion forum: “Real people who have witnessed the tragedies are ready and willing to work together to solve their problems in order to live together once more in peace.” But this is then immediately qualified by a strong critique on another participant (called Greek Stud), who is excluded from the “Real people”

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<sup>15</sup> In Turkish, *Rum* refers to Greeks living in Turkey and Cyprus, while *Yunan* refers to Greeks living in the Greek State (our footnote).

signifier, because “Your post clearly indicates that you are either a sympathizer or perhaps even a member of the organisation that brought terror, genocide and promotes hate even today” (*civfanatics.com*, 29 September 2005).

One key event that allows for the performance of the peace discourse, and the transcension of enmity, is the 2005 meeting of Üstügen with the Greek Cypriot former Sergeant Hristo Konstantiris who Üstügen took prisoner in the 1974 war<sup>16</sup>. During this visit, Üstügen returned the “military identity card, 2 family photographs, a beret and a backpack” (*ForumTR*, 29 October 2005), that he had taken from Konstantiris. Not only does this render the limits of enemy destruction visible, when Üstügen recounts the fear of the soldiers when they were captured – because they “were raised with [the idea of] Turkish hostility and were fearfully waiting for death after they were taken captive” while “we have carried out all the procedures of the Geneva Convention and have been very good to them” (interview with Üstügen, *Gazete Vatan*, 1 October 2005). But we also see the representation of friendship, which transcends enmity. For instance, on one of the forums Konstantiris is quoted saying “My house is open to the Turkish officer and his family” (*ForumTR*, 29 September 2005). In *Gazete Vatan*, we can find the following description of the encounter, narrated by Üstügen:

We met in Geçitkale. I was waiting when Hristo got out of the car. Both of us were incredibly emotional, our eyes filled with tears... After he got out of the car, we hugged and kissed each other... I gave him Hacıbekir [Turkish] delight, and he brought me a handmade vase with baklava. While Hristo said that this meeting was very important for him and that he owed his life to me, I just stated that I was doing my duty as a Turkish soldier” (ÜSTÜGEN, *Gazete Vatan*, 1 October 2005).

Some of the comments acknowledge this performance of the peace discourse, and construct it as an example for the political system. For instance, on the *ForumTR* forum, one poster, murgan, responds to the summary of Üstügen’s visit with the following words: “How beautiful our world would become if politicians could do what [these] people did” (*ForumTR*, 29 September 2005). But in other cases, enmity resurfaces, for instance, when *Hürriyet*, one of the main Turkish newspapers, places the headline “Peace lesson to the Greek” on top of its article, in which Üstügen is quoted saying: “I’ve done this to teach the Greek Cypriots and contribute to peace” (*Hürriyet*, 30 September 2005).

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<sup>16</sup> *Bolu Gündem*, a local Turkish publication, mentioned the name of a second captive, Sotiris Savva, but provides no further detail (3 October 2005).

## 8. Conclusion

In this article, we were not so much concerned with how the history of the 1974 war in Cyprus was constructed, or how historically accurate these online signifying practices are. We mostly wanted to understand how these public interventions contain particular constructions of war and peace. Whenever people talk about a particular war, they also invoke the concepts of war and peace. Through this process, these concepts are articulated in evenly particular ways, and through their repetition and legitimation, the strength of these discourses is increased.

Even if ordinary people always had opportunities to produce signifying practices, and to have them circulate, online media have opened up a multitude of opportunities. But this also raises novel questions: If participation is inherently ethical – as one of us has recently argued (CARPENTIER *et al.*, 2019) – then how to handle instances where signifying practices *strengthen* war discourses, which – at least potentially – can weaken democracy and thus participation? The argument here is that participatory communication, defined as decentralized communicative power, can have troubling consequences. Even if this does not render participation itself inherently “bad”, these consequences can be deeply problematic. Signifying practices that align themselves with war discourses have the potential to damage democratic culture, strengthen non-democratic regimes, which would, in turn, harm the people’s capacity to participate. In this sense, the participation of these authors and the people that talk with/about them – most of whom are strengthening war discourses – actually works against the democratic principle of participation, which is one of the traditional and unsolvable contradictions of democracy.

In the case of the public debates surrounding the three books, we do – not surprisingly – find a strong presence of war discourses, while peace discourses only have a weak presence. This produces ample reasons for concern. An integrated part of the contradiction of democracy is that banning these signifying practices, in order to protect democracy and peace, would be disproportionately undemocratic, even if some more care and reticence with providing public forums for soldiers’ voices remain (arguably) necessary. Obviously, there is a need to demonstrate (and teach) how damaging these war discourses can be, and how necessary the permanent production of peaceful counter-voices is. In the public debates that we analysed, some (gentle) articulations of peace discourses were present, allowing us to think peace, and to desire for it, even if peace discourses were often limited to their photo-negativistic articulations, and to qualified versions of the autonomous articulation. Still, more voices aligning themselves with peace discourse, also making use of the participatory opportunities, would definitely help.

At the same time, we should also acknowledge that these public debates, with their strong presence of war discourses, incorporate the seeds of the latter's dislocations. As our analysis shows, we see how soldiers themselves, through their professional identities that bring them to honour other soldiers, whatever side they are on, contradict the Self/Enemy dichotomy. We see that their signifying practices repeatedly demonstrate that war is characterized by structural irrationality, and we can sometimes see traces of their beliefs in a peaceful world, often after the hostilities have ceased. This self-dislocatory capacity of war discourses needs to be acknowledged and welcomed, and might eventually provide some solace in these discussions.

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