Contested migration and settler politics in Cyprus

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School of Politics & International Relations, Rutherford College, University of Kent, Canterbury, Kent CT2 7NX, UK

Abstract

Immigration and settler literatures provide contrasting approaches to the evaluation of conflict between ‘newcomers’ and ‘indigenous’ groups. On the one hand, immigration studies emphasize that newcomers, particularly migrants, almost never fight civil wars; on the other hand, studies on settlers in contested territories expect inherently unstable relations between settlers and native populations affected by colonization projects. While each provides strong evidence to support its argument, neither literature has adequately accounted for hybrid cases where the settler and migrant categories have become almost indistinguishable. The article focuses on Cyprus as a paradigmatic such case. Specifically, it looks at populations transferred from Turkey to the northern part of the island after 1974 described either as settlers or immigrants by rival accounts in the Cypriot conflict. While colonization constitutes a violation of international conventions and a major obstacle to peace, settlers in such places as Cyprus, Tibet or Western Sahara often meet the profile of migrant populations more interested in daily survival issues than in territorial politics. In contrast to other historical or contemporary cases of settler colonialism such as Algeria (France) or West Bank and Gaza (Israel), what is particularly puzzling in Cyprus and elsewhere is the absence of mobilization and politicization among settlers despite perceived discrimination and fear of relocation following a negotiated peace agreement. Addressing this puzzle is essential to bridging the gaps between immigration and settler literatures and in mediating the tensions between conflicting claims over space, land and the political geography of peace settlements in deeply divided societies.

Introduction

In an era of nationalism, settlers and colonization have served as instruments of territorial expansion and control over contested territories. Colonization has often been combined with the ethnic cleansing of indigenous populations, driven by the belief that such demographic engineering will consolidate new and irreversible ‘facts’ on the ground (Lustick, 1993; McGarry & O’Leary, 1993: 10). In recent times, settlers are generally seen as violating international law and, therefore, garner little international sympathy, while in academia, social scientists tend to focus on more vulnerable groups, such as minorities at risk, displaced persons and refugees. Yet settlers in contested territories deserve both sympathy and academic attention, particularly since conflict processes often transform such populations from alleged beneficiaries of colonization to potential victims of discrimination and violence. Moreover, the presence of settlers is a crucial aspect of many conflicts and frequently the main obstacle in peace processes, as manifested recently in Israel/Palestine and in negotiations over the status of Kirkuk in Iraq, the Abyei province in Sudan and Kashmir. More importantly, societies built on a settler/indigenous divide tend to be inherently unstable, as settler expansionism frequently meets indigenous resistance.

However, as this article argues, despite the enormous problems colonization could create for a contested territory, settlers cannot be seen exclusively as a cause of controversy and conflict. To support this argument, the article evaluates two arguably opposing theoretical camps, namely, immigrants vs. settlers, in contested territories, drawing on the one hand, on the seminal works of Laitin (1998, 2009) and Kymlicka (1995), and on the other hand, on Lustick (1985, 1988, 1993). The article situates Cyprus within the broader debate on settlers in contested territories and identifies novel linkages in the intersection of immigration and ethnic conflict literatures. It argues that Turkish settlers in the island exhibit low levels of politicization despite fears of involuntary resettlement primarily because they meet the profile of migrant populations attached to daily survival issues rather than to territorial politics. While the article acknowledges that the resulting fluid categories of settler/migrants are malleable to nationalist framing, it also suggests that those remain amenable to innovative institutional design during peace processes. To make its point, the article analyzes mainstream discourses on settlers and colonization.

* Tel.: +44 01227827457; fax: +44 01227827033. E-mail address: N.Loizides@kent.ac.uk.
in the context of Cyprus and demonstrates how novel institutional arrangements such as asymmetrical citizenship, alternative compensation schemes and reserved territories for natives groups can facilitate peaceful accommodation of settler/native conflicts. It also integrates studies on accommodation mechanisms with broader theories on ethnicity and migration. Despite the growth of policy studies on peace mediation in territorial conflicts, relevant debates have rarely benefited from theoretical insights in the intersection of migration and ethnic conflict literatures. By specifying the conditions for settler/migrant mobilization and politicization, this study fills an important gap in the literature.

Settlers vs. migrants debate

The issue of populations transferred by Turkey to northern Cyprus presents an intriguing contrast between legal approaches to ethnic conflict resolution and sociological approaches focusing on migrants and immigration. Simply stated, the colonization of occupied territories, as in northern Cyprus, is a violation of international law. The Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, of which Turkey is a signatory, explicitly stipulates that ‘the occupying power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it has occupied’ (UNHCR, 1995). The logic behind this clause is the protection of indigenous people against the will of more powerful nations who aim to create new facts on the ground through expulsion and demographic engineering.

Yet in sociological terms, settlers can occasionally be compared with immigrant populations interested primarily in their personal and family advancement and much less concerned with confrontational politics of the core state. Kymlicka (1995) and more recently Laitin (2009) have argued that international migrants are less likely to mobilize for political reasons and are almost never implicated in civil war violence, even when they face security and cultural threats in their host societies. From this perspective, Turkish settlers in Cyprus could be seen as migrants complicating a peace process but not necessarily signifying its irreversible transformation. More importantly, advocates of settler rights in Cyprus and other contested territories have argued that with the passage of time, individuals cannot be penalized for crimes committed decades earlier by their home states (Carens, 2000; see also Sözen & Özersay, 2007).

Even so, one can make several analytical distinctions. Lustick (1985, 2005), for example, distinguishes between ideologically driven settlers who justify their actions in ideological terms and underprivileged populations who are less interested in territorial politics and have immigrated for economic reasons, especially if they have been promised an easy life and access to ‘empty land’. While the latter category fits roughly within the Kymlicka/Laitin general description of non-violent migrants, the literature of settler colonialism is reluctant to equate settlers with immigrants. To begin, viewing another population’s homeland as ‘empty land’ or attempting to enjoy unlimited economic opportunity in a contested territory has problematic ideological underpinnings about the rights of indigenous populations (Pedersen, 2005). Moreover, migrating into a contested territory with the potential for violence requires a commitment to core state nationalism strong enough to outweigh any individual or family risks this commitment might entail. Immigrants tend to avoid such risks, and as Laitin (2009: 39) acknowledges, they have a relatively cheap alternative to ethnic conflict: namely, exit to their own home country or a third location. Immigrants also tend to be urban and have skills that are transferable elsewhere, unlike less mobile settler populations tied to homes and land claimed by former inhabitants. Furthermore, due to the dynamics of violence and conflict, settler colonialism might have a greater impact on space and political geography than immigration; as a result, core state disengagement and potential relocation could be more difficult and costly for settlers than for immigrants.

Finally, there is a significant analytical distinction between immigrants ‘effectively permitted’ to an undisputed territory and settlers introduced with the explicit aim of gradually transforming ownership of a contested territory. On this point, the article draws its definition of the ‘settler question’ from Carens (2000) relevant study of the Fijian conflict. Carens argues that ‘if we simply accept the claim that the passage of time reduces the moral importance of the origins of a situation, we seem to create an (additional) incentive for those who do not care about morality to ignore it, namely, that over time those who care about morality will feel less inclined, indeed less entitled to try to do anything about the injustice that has been perpetrated’ (Carens, 2000: 217–218). Unlike immigration, colonization projects are closely tied to, even defined by, territorial expansion into contested territories. By transferring populations in large numbers, governments hope that with the passage of time, those who initially oppose the settlements will conclude that it is not morally permissible to uproot the descendants of colonizers. Yet Carens also recognizes that the issue is not simply one of international law and retributive justice as ‘it seems problematic to penalize present generations for what their ancestors have done’ (Carens, 2000). For these reasons, settlers and migrants are viewed differently not only by indigenous people but also by the international community. As Freeman (1995) notes, criticizing progressive immigration policies and restricting migrant rights can lead to charges of racism in liberal democracies, while political programs aiming at restricting settlers or withdrawing settlements can be validated by referring to international law and indigenous peoples’ rights (UNHCR, 1997). Consequently, public discourse on who is a ‘settler’ and the framing of the settler/migrant dichotomy are extremely important. As Andreasson (2010) suggests in the case of South Africa and Zimbabwe, identifying how governments frame the ‘settler problem’ and politicize space in doing so is crucial to an understanding of post-colonial politics.

So too, the framing of ethnic categories and territorial entitlements has implications for mediation in protracted conflicts. Framing in ethnic conflict literature could be defined as a conscious strategic effort to shape shared understandings about an ethnic group, its recent memories and history and spatial environment particularly its perceived territorial entitlements (Benford & Snow, 2000; Kovras & Loizides, 2011). Whether cooperative or adversarial toward ethnic ‘others’, ethno-political frames are strategically important in a group’s narrative because they legitimize subsequent courses of action by combining past—present—future (Kovras & Loizides, 2011). In essence, frames are normative political accounts that blend specific past experiences, often by excluding uncomfortable facts and ‘others’, in an effort to legitimate ingroup goals. With regards to settler/native disputes, they define the boundaries of categorization, differentiating settlers from other potentially overlapping categories, such as legal or illegal migrant frequently determining how such populations redefine their own identities in contested spaces (Laitin, 1998: 265–268; Lakoff, 2002: 187–189; Navarro-Vashin, 2006).

Rival accounts of the Cypriot conflict for instance tend to concentrate on the most suitable categories, ignoring either the settler or the migrant dimension in their assessment of post-1974 populations relocated from Turkey. Such frames are equally problematic because they narrowly focus only on one dimension of a complex reality downplaying the ‘hybrid’ nature of contested migration and settler politics. More importantly, adversarial frames portraying newcomers as inherently threatening could inadvertently turn into self-fulfilling prophecies; they instigate actions that transform the external environment and initiate cycles of
confrontation between newcomers and natives, even in situations where conflict could be avoided through win–win mutual compromises. Conversely, pacifist frames emphasize potential solutions and inclusive narratives of shared entitlement to a territory. Such frames recognize not only the distinctions but also the potential overlaps in the settler/migrant categories. Displaying an innovative use of ideas found in both migration and ethnic conflict literatures, pacifist frames aim to satisfy the main concerns of each group through their constructive engagement with a wider repertoire of institutional arrangements.

Research design

To examine the antinomies of the settler/immigrant debate in Cyprus, the article uses a modified version of the 'least likely' case study research design. According to Eckstein (1975), a case could be crucial when it is 'most' or 'least likely' to fulfill a theoretical prediction (see also Gerring, 2007). Crucial cases of settler/immigrant populations are those which evidence low levels of mobilization and politicization despite discrimination, ethnic antipathy and fear of forceful resettlement. Because of these background conditions, such cases would be judged least likely to exhibit contemporary 'peaceful migrant' patterns. Of importance for current debates focusing on Laitin and Kymlicka’s work is the extent to which the evidence confirms the migrant thesis in a 'least likely' case of ethnic conflict in a deeply divided society.

The article relies on primary and available secondary sources to assess the antinomies of ethnic conflict and immigration politics in Cyprus, including legal and other important documents from international and European organizations, including UN Secretary General, European Parliament and Council of Europe reports, as well as decisions by Cypriot, UK and European courts which have created legal and political precedents for other post-conflict societies. It examines available archival material, parliamentary debates, media coverage in both communities and party and NGO documents (declarations and memoranda), drawing attention to the hegemonic discourses of each group in the conflict and the historiography and diversity of accounts on settler/immigrant politics in Cyprus (Lustick, 1996). The article cites a number of surveys conducted by third parties or new surveys completed in consultation with the author. It draws specifically from a 2009 survey conducted by the Cyprus2015 group with the support of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). It draws attention to the merits and critiques of surveys in the study of complex demographic issues, particularly during peace negotiations, and supplements survey results with qualitative interviews held by the author between 2006 and 2011.

The article also relies on qualitative interviews with settlers and their Turkish Cypriot neighbors, as well as the two only remaining Greek Cypriot and Maronite villages (Rizokarpaso and Kormakitis) in the northern part of Cyprus. In both cases, natives maintain regular interactions with settlers, and in Rizokarpaso, the two communities share the same village.

Finally, it turns to extensive interviews with local and international mediators to corroborate what has been established elsewhere and to determine what main actors in negotiations think about the key issues in the settler/immigration debate and the alternative arrangements suggested in this article. Interviewees include key advisors of the two Cypriot leaders in the peace process, UN officials and individuals with privileged access to information, including legal and property issues advisors.

The conflict in Cyprus

Cyprus became independent from British rule in 1960, but power-sharing arrangements between Greek and Turkish Cypriots lasted only three years. Following the 1963–64 bicomunal clashes, Turkish Cypriots were forced to settle in enclaves and to abandon their share in the government (Necatigil, 1989; Patrick, 1976). In 1974, Turkey invaded Cyprus, claiming a right of intervention under the Treaty of Guarantee and de facto dividing Cyprus into Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot sections. As a result, approximately 160,000 Greek Cypriots fled their cities and villages, while around 40,000 Turkish Cypriots living in the South were coerced into or chose to abandon their houses and move to the North (Attalides, 1979; Kliot & Mansfield, 1997; Necatigil, 1989).

Current displacement figures in the island are one of the highest in the world taking into consideration, that the population in 2006 included approximately 660,600 Greek Cypriots and 265,100 Turkish Cypriots, including settlers with permanent residency (Republic of Cyprus, 2006; TRNC Prime Ministry, 2007). Unavoidably, since 1974 Turkish and Greek Cypriots developed uneven responses to their refugee experience; generally speaking, Turkish Cypriots aimed to consolidate their presence in the North, expressing no desire to return to the South, while Greek Cypriots retained a strong desire to maintain rights of return to their ancestral villages and towns in the North (Hadjipavlou, 2007; Loizos, 1981; Zetter, 1994; Yesilada & Sozen, 2002).

Successive Turkish governments actively encouraged tens of thousands of mainland Turkish citizens to settle in Cyprus. Exact numbers remain a closely-guarded secret and even members of the Turkish Cypriot negotiating team have acknowledged privately that they do not have accurate figures. Much of the confusion arises from the different types of settlers, including long-term residents naturalized by the Turkish Cypriot authorities, permanent and temporary residents, illegal workers, university students and members of the Turkish military and their families (on relevant survey methods see Akçali, 2007: 13–17). Although there are no reliable census data, Hatay estimates the number of naturalized settlers to have been around 16–18 percent of the Turkish Cypriot electorate in 2005 (Hatay, 2005: viii), while Greek Cypriot estimates suggest that settlers constitute about 50 percent of the population (Palley, 2005: 67). The 2006 census in the northern part of the island found 178,031 TRNC citizens; of these, 42,572 had both parents born in Turkey. The figure for current TRNC citizens with at least one parent born in Cyprus was 132,635 (including those settlers whose ‘non-Cypriot’ parents were born in the island). Data estimates also differ because the same census does not distinguish between settlers and Turkish Cypriots but between people whose parents were born or not born in the island (TRNC Prime Ministry, 2007).

Overall, settler numbers have been used as a tool by politicians on both sides of the divide to foster their agendas, with headcounts serving as ammunition in public debates (Tegzor, 2003). Figures used to support arguments are usually exaggerated; some exceed half a million settlers, with no proper documentation provided (see debates in Charalambidou-Papapavlou, 2008 and YKP, 2009). It is possible that both hardliners and moderates overestimate the number of settlers with the unintended effect of alarming risk-averse Greek Cypriots and making a future settlement more difficult.

In his reports on the aborted 2002–4 Annan Plan, the UN Secretary General divulges some revealing information about the position of the two sides and the number of settlers. During the negotiations, the Turkish Cypriot side tried to assure Greek Cypriots that only 30,000–35,000 settlers had received ‘TRNC citizenship’. Greek Cypriots promised to change their initial position for repatriation of settlers to Turkey and to accept them as citizens provided the Turkish Cypriot side finalized a definite list of names. The latter agreed but failed to submit a list. The Turkish Cypriot leader slowly revised the number upwards to 60,000 but refused to give any
details arguing that awarding citizenship is part of the ‘exercise of [Turkish Cypriot] sovereignty’ (UN, 2003: 22).

Settlers/migrants and native responses

Following the 2004 rejection of the Annan Plan and in light of negotiations since September 2008, the future status of Turkish settlers remains one of the most contentious issues in the Cyprus negotiations. Polls conducted among Greek and Turkish Cypriots in the past few years have indicated convergence in the views of the two communities on many issues — but not on settlers (Lordos, 2009; Lordos, Kaymak, & Tocci, 2009).

Official Greek Cypriot discourses describe the presence of settlers as a violation of international law and the Geneva Convention (Loucaides, 1995; Chrysostomides, 2000: 197–215), a view documented by frequent references to the reports of the Council of Europe (Cuco, 1994; Parliamentary Assembly of CoE, 2003). The presence of settlers is generally described as a threat to the peaceful relations between Greek and Turkish Cypriots and the demographic structure of the country. According to former Minister of Justice of the Republic, Kypros Chrysostomides, the settlers from the Turkish mainland have no rights to the land that they occupy as their settlement in Cyprus was a flagrant violation of international law. ‘Any vacillation by the international community on this point would be taken as setting a most unfortunate precedent’ (2000: 434). Yet uncompromising discourses on settlers have not assumed a dominant hegemonic position in Greek Cypriot politics. For instance, in the 2008–11 negotiations, the Greek Cypriot side offered to accept 50,000 settlers as Cypriot citizens, the largest number ever in bilateral negotiations (Hughes, 2008).

The debate following this offer reflects two opposing frames of the settler issue among Greek Cypriot elites: one rejecting any compromise unless settlers migrate back to Turkey, and the other favoring a settlement to prevent future demographic shifts in the island (see Charalambidou-Papapavlou, 2008). Those less inclined to compromise react negatively to the prospect of negotiating settler rights, arguing that war crimes and colonization cannot create provisions for human rights. According to Greek Cypriot hardliners, compromises in negotiations under conditions of occupation merely add incentives for new waves of colonization citing the growing numbers of settlers as evidence of Turkish untrustworthiness (Aggelides, 2007: 21; Matsis, 2008). In parliamentary debates, political party representatives have asked the government to make the withdrawal of settlers a precondition for Turkey’s EU accession negotiations (Syllouris, 2005: 22), pointing to the withdrawal of Israeli settlers from Gaza and parts of the West Bank as evidence of the efficacy of international law (Cleanthous, 2005: 46).

Greek Cypriots moderates, meanwhile, have emphasized that a compromise is necessary to align government policies with international norms and practices. For example, the government spokesperson has argued that showing flexibility on humanitarian grounds will make the Greek Cypriot side more credible in the eyes of the international community (Stephanou, 2008). Moderates have also pointed out that colonization will only cease to be an issue when a peace agreement is reached (Stephanou, 2008). Nicos Anastasiades, leader of the main opposition party, Democratic Rally, has argued that each day without settlement intensifies the waves of colonization and brings the occupied territories of Cyprus closer to ‘irreversible partition’. Addressing Parliament, he emphasized that the continuation of the status quo will allow Turkey and the Turkish settlers ‘to dominate the north while Turkish Cypriots will return as partners to the south’ (Anastasiades, 2007: 6).

In short, Greek Cypriot political parties are divided between those who overwhelmingly reject a compromise and those who seek one, not specifically for humanitarian reasons, but to prevent future colonization waves. The fact that the ‘settler issue’ is framed differently within mainstream Greek Cypriot political parties suggests the fluidity of discourses even on politically sensitive issues. Interestingly, this partial adaptation suggests a broader theme in the framing literature highlighting how peace actors adapt hegemonic frames to legitimize difficult compromises. It also demonstrates how settler issues are implicitly tied to security concerns; as Greek Cypriots are divided on how they frame the issue, the naturalization of long-term settlers is possible if credible guarantees against future colonization are introduced in negotiations to swing public opinion in favor of peace.

The Turkish Cypriot community is similarly divided on the issue. For the most part, nationalist parties on the right have historically supported or at least tolerated the arrival of settlers, while pro-unification forces on the left have opposed it, seeing it as threatening the character of the community. Nonetheless, all major Turkish Cypriot political parties have maintained a balance between domestic fears of cultural alienation and the need to attract new settler voters (Lacher & Kaymak, 2005; Vural & Rustemli, 2006; Navaro-Yashin, 2006). In the past decade, the main pro-unification party, Republican Turkish Party (CTP), has played an all-inclusive identity, combining the vision of joining the EU with equal citizenship for all – including settlers (Lacher & Kaymak, 2005: 159). This has included alliances with settler politicians such as Bayram Karaman and Nuri Çevikel, a university lecturer with a mainland Turkish background who founded the now defunct ‘TRNC Migrants’ Association’ to lobby for Turkish settler rights within a unified Cyprus (Hatay, 2005: 56). Çevikel spoke in the Greek Cypriot media proposing the return of Greek Cypriot homes and properties with reciprocal naturalization of the settlers (Saoulli, 2003). Many settlers participated actively in the 2002–4 Turkish Cypriot demonstrations against the anti-deal policies of the Denktaş administration, and according to estimates, 44 percent of the inhabitants of predominantly settler villages voted for reunification (Hatay, 2005: 46). Following the failure of the 2004 peace process, the Turkish Cypriot parties continued to rely on settler votes for their long-term political survival. To this end, in 2009, the CTP administration appointed Dr. Yusuf Suicmez from the Black Sea region of Turkey, as Director of the Religious Affairs Department (Kibris, 2009).

At the grassroots level, some available surveys show significant differences in how settlers and native participants relate to the civic component of identity (Cypriosity). According to a survey by Vural and Rustemli (2006: 344), among settlers, only 4.7 percent gave ‘Cypriosity’ as their most important identity (compared to 35.8 percent for native Turkish Cypriots), whereas 56 percent identified themselves with ‘Turkishness’ (44 percent for native participants) followed by ‘Moslemness’ (35.5 percent; 13.6 percent for Turkish Cypriot participants). The same survey used 522 adult inhabitants from northern Cyprus aged 18 and older sampled from the electoral lists. Of those, 415 were found to be native Turkish Cypriots and 107 were settlers/migrants from Turkey (Vural & Rustemli: 2006). Based on related studies, NGOs have posited that colonization interferes with the democratic representation of Turkish Cypriots and that the settler vote prevents the pro-solution Turkish Cypriot opposition parties from winning elections (Cyprus Action Network, 2003). Hatay (2005) and Akçalı (2007) have questioned this argument, pointing out that settlers usually follow Turkish Cypriots voting patterns, while Vural and Rustemli (2006) and Faiz (2009) have argued that settlers and native Turkish Cypriots differ significantly in their political views.

Settlers and (non)politicization

Interestingly, no recent major episodes have implicated settlers directly with incidents of political violence, and efforts to politicize
settlers during elections have been short-lived and unsuccessful. Although settlers constitute a significant part of the electorate, in previous (as well as current) Turkish Cypriot assemblies, only a maximum of three members among 50 were natives of Turkey (Kibris 2003; KKTC, 2011). In the comparable cases of Israeli settlers (West Bank and Gaza), French settlers (Algeria) and Ulster Protestant settlers (Northern Ireland), there was much political activity and mobilization among settler populations preventing territorial disengagement from the core state (Lustick, 1993). More specifically, settler mobilization obstructed a two-state solution in Israel/Palestine, led to the partition of Ireland and forced massive war crimes in Algeria before French disengagement.

In Cyprus, low levels of politicization are generally attributed to the largely heterogeneous character of the settler population. In a 2008 interview, a settler politician in Rizokarapaso argued that settlers differ not only in terms of ethnic and regional background (e.g. Kurds, Laz and Arab speakers) but also in terms of time and conditions of arrival in Cyprus, degree of assimilation and political affiliation. In addition, the several peace plans in Cyprus have weakened the settlers’ position with respect to Ankara and the Turkish Cypriot authorities and divided the community between long-term residents who will stay after the settlement and those who will not. On this issue, Dr. Çevikel broke the above mentioned alliance with CTP when the latter decided to exclude him from the naturalization lists shared with the UN in April 2004. Since this event, his association has remained defunct, and subsequent attempts to mobilize settler vote even with the support of the AKP government in Turkey, have been unsuccessful.

Low politicization also stems from the nature of the original settlers. According to Lacher and Kaymak, a number of war veterans and fallen soldiers’ families were given land and houses in northern Cyprus after 1974 (2005: 155). However, the overwhelming majority of settlers opted to abandon their villages in Anatolia for economic reasons, not ideological ones (although ideology and nationalism might have played a role in some cases). Ultimately, class and status is probably the most important factor in the lack of mobilization. Elsewhere, in other cases of settler colonialism, settlers were economically privileged, and repatriation to the home state meant the loss of status and relative ease of life. For instance, the pied-noirs in Algeria, although largely heterogeneous in composition, effectively transformed the local Muslim population into serfs (Lustick, 2005). This has not been the case in Cyprus. Another reason for the lack of mobilization is that settlers in Cyprus could gain significantly after a settlement, even if subject to relocation, as they could end up very close to their current homes. They tend, therefore, to be less committed to the ideological tenets of Turkish nationalism for instrumental reasons or simply because they lack the resources for mobilization.

The divisions of Turkish nationalism manifested in northern Cyprus make settler politicization even more difficult. The Turkish army, the embassy in Nicosia and the Turkish Cypriot authorities all control independent budgets through which they maintain spheres of patronage and influence among underprivileged settlers. Certain settler votes are controlled by the island’s Turkish military and its extended network of influence and social support (Faz, 2007; Taçoy, 2007). For the most part, these votes go to anti-deal forces who openly oppose Turkish PM Recep Tayyip Erdogan and the ruling AKP (Justice and Development Party) in Turkey. At the same time, settlers hailing from underprivileged areas in Anatolia support either AKP or pro-Kurdish politicians. Religious settlers who have retained their networks in Anatolia are especially likely to follow AKP which, in the past, supported pro-unification forces in the Turkish Cypriot left (Çakir, 2009). For their part, Kurdish settlers are likely to oppose the Turkish military, particularly since many retain connections with their provinces. To cite one example, in 2008 a settler politician from CTP revealed to the author that his cousin has served as an MP with the pro-Kurdish DTP party in the district of Mardin, Turkey.

Indigenous discourses in the island often focus on the military and colonialist aspects of the settler problem, downplaying other important sociological aspects. A common argument among Greek Cypriots is that living together with settlers will be extremely difficult in the case of a settlement. In the Cyprus2015 survey, when Greek Cypriot displaced persons were asked about their main concerns regarding return under Turkish Cypriot administration, 61.7 percent stated that not wanting to live next to settlers is a major issue. On the contrary, only 21.3 percent of Greek Cypriots cited the same reason when they were asked about living next to native Turkish Cypriots. The survey which was conducted between October 6 and November 6, 2009 included 1000 face-to-face interviews from each community. Among the Greek Cypriot participants more than a third, 346 declared themselves as displaced persons potentially eligible for return in areas currently under Turkish Cypriot control (Cyprus2015, 2009).

To some extent, anti-settler feeling could become an unfortunate joint cause among Greek Cypriot ‘integrationists’ (emphasizing equality among Cypriots) and Turkish Cypriots on the left. On this point, leading exponents of Cypriotism in the island warn against making racist demands of any kind (Durduran, 2009). In addition, it is important to note that integrationist discourses often downplay the memories of conflict between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. Often natives who have been subjected to violence before 1974 might be more prone to nationalism than settlers who immigrated to Cyprus for financial reasons.

The experience of two villages in the North immediately after 1974 illustrates this latter point. The Greek Cypriot inhabitants of Yialousa and Rizokarpaso were among the few to remain under Turkish Cypriot control on the northern tip of the island. Turkish Cypriots from the abandoned village of Erenköy (Kokkina) settled in Yialousa, while nearby Rizokarpaso was colonized by settlers from different parts of Turkey. In both cases, Greek Cypriots suffered harassment, physical violence and discrimination, as documented in numerous international reports and court decisions (ECtHR, 2001). However, contrary to national myths and the expectations documented in current surveys, the relationship between Greek Cypriots and the settlers was less confrontational than between the two Cypriot populations. In Yialousa, Turkish Cypriot refugees forced out Greek Cypriots; in Rizokarpaso, the remaining Greek Cypriots had a difficult relationship with the settlers but allowed them to survive, albeit in relatively small numbers. During the author’s 2006–7 fieldwork in this area, the former said they had taught the settlers their language, work skills and customs. For their part, settlers expressed positive sentiments toward their Greek Cypriot co-villagers.

Lustick describes comparable incidents in Ireland when 17th century Protestant settlers convinced Cromwell’s son to spare Irish Catholics from the vigorous implementation of the originally planned ‘depopulation of Irish lands through execution, transplantation and transportation’ (Lustick, 1985: 30). To explain the surprising settler behavior, Lustick argues that settlers implanted in outlying territories as vehicles for the consolidation of state power develop autonomous interests aiming at the enhancement of their own local and political interests (Lustick, 1985). However, he also suggests that settler activism can move in different directions, often preventing a compromise. This could occur in Cyprus with the passage of time, especially if numbers change dramatically, and socioeconomically advanced settlers begin to dominate the landscape. Some experts warn that this threshold is dangerously close (Faz, 2009). Others indicate the complex power-relationship between settlers and Turkish Cypriots, with
the former already having effective control of the police in the North (Navaro-Yashin, 2006).

Yet for the time being, the situation appears manageable, and interests tend to sustain low levels of politicization and mobilization in the island, suggesting the potential for a creative institutional design of community group rights.

Annan plan and policy alternatives

Previous plans proposed by the UN for Cyprus, such as the aborted 2002–4 Annan Plan for reunification, shed light on how the international community understands settler issues. As mentioned above, UN mediators were confronted with a major discrepancy concerning the actual number of settlers; the Greek Cypriot side suggested a figure of 119,000, while Turkish Cypriots claimed the number was around 60,000 (UN, 2004b: 15; UN 2003: 22). In response, the UN suggested naturalizing 45,000 people, as well as everyone married to a Turkish Cypriot, and maintaining another 5 percent of the Turkish Cypriot constituent state population as immigrants (UN, 2004a: 8–9; UN, 2004b: 15). If the Greek Cypriot numbers were correct, the remaining settlers would have to leave Cyprus within five years of receiving a small compensation package of no less than 10,000 Euro for a household of four (UN, 2004a: 77). For the Greek Cypriots, the plan was ambiguous as to the exact number of settlers to remain in Cyprus; these could easily vary from a low of 45,000, to a high which included all established settlers in the island (around 90,000). For example, the number of settlers married to Turkish Cypriots was unavailable. Additionally, the status of the relatives of the 45,000 settlers to be naturalized in order of priority was unclear. Finally, it was not clear whether the Turkish Cypriot side would opt to exhaust its immigration quota of around 15, 000 people immediately to serve settler needs.

Those who opposed the settlement chose to emphasize worst-case scenarios for their own side. During the negotiations, Greek Cypriot mediators reiterated the danger that relevant provisions posed for the quality of life of Greek Cypriots (Loizides & Cypriot mediators reiterated the danger that relevant provisions case scenarios for their own side. During the negotiations, Greek Cypriots remained unclear.

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Asymmetrical citizenship

Asymmetrical citizenship mitigates many of the problems listed above. Differentiated asymmetrical citizenship implies different rights and obligations for citizens based on their ethnic origins. For instance, various compromises proposed for Cyprus suggest differentiated citizenship for Greek and Turkish Cypriots but not for settlers who are included in the Turkish Cypriot community. An alternative arrangement would be to provide settlers/migrants with permanent residency including equal social and economic rights, as is currently the case for immigrants in Canada and countries in Western Europe, or an asymmetrical citizenship status which offers educational, medical and other employment benefits to non-citizens, as in the Hungarian status law for individuals of ethnic Hungarian background (Deeds & Stroschein, 2005). Immigration and citizenship studies apply the term ‘denizen’ for those alien residents granted social and civil rights but not full political participation with the exception of voting in municipal elections (Hammar, 1990; Shearing & Wood, 2003). In the case of Cyprus, this arrangement could apply to recent settlers, restricting their participation in power-sharing mechanisms and maintaining a delicate compromise between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities.

While immigration literature has criticized such arrangements for creating second-class citizens (Shearing & Wood, 2003), in settler/migrant situations, asymmetrical citizenship might be justifiable, particularly if compared to the alternative option of expelling involuntarily a segment of the settler population in order to rectify a previous injustice to natives. Admittedly, similar arrangements have been used with only relative success in the Indian part of Kashmir (and in tribal areas in northeast India), restricting internal migrants from purchasing land, and in Nigeria, denying local voting rights to non-indigenous internal migrants (Baruah, 2003; Harnischfeger, 2004). Although these arrangements have helped decrease tensions with native populations, they have increased social and economic marginalization among migrants (Harnischfeger, 2004). To avoid such unintended effects, permanent residents should enjoy full economic and social rights and be naturalized, at the latest within a generation. Moreover, as Caren argues, descendants of settlers should receive full citizenship at birth (2000).

The gradual naturalization of settlers could be a better alternative than the immediate and unconditional naturalization proposed in previous peace plans in Cyprus, particularly if such naturalizations are tied to comparable concessions for other vulnerable groups, such as Greek Cypriot returnees. The contribution of settlers to the peace process will help Greek Cypriots see settlers in a more positive light, building a more sustainable relationship in the long term. This approach gives more flexibility, allowing Turkish Cypriots to integrate newcomers more steadily. In short, collective contribution to peace, integration into the Turkish Cypriot culture and the passage of time could be alternative paths to integration in a new homeland.

Linkages and reserved lands

An alternative for the management of settler conflicts involves the use of linkage strategies for issues of major concern for natives,
such as territory and refugee rights. Linkage arrangements create win–win incentives for both communities to endorse a settlement. In Cyprus, mediators have entertained the author’s earlier formula of preparing a flexible map across the federal border with final territorial re-adjustment to be determined on the basis of population movements among refugees and settlers (Loizides & Antoniades, 2009). In this scenario, the more settlers Greek Cypriots accept, the more land they will receive in the final adjustment of the border (see Loizides & Antoniades, 2009; Lordos et al., 2009).

Such territorial arrangements could be made by redrawing the federal border further north than in the current post-1974 state of affairs or the Annan Plan presented in Figs. 1 and 2 respectively below.

Expanding the options for negotiation, especially on issues of citizenship, may require reconfiguring linkages even among seemingly unrelated issues. This can be done by de-linking issues assumed to be interconnected in an attempt to break a complex problem into smaller components, for instance distinguishing citizenship from permanent residency, as described above. Alternatively, negotiators could draw win–win linkages and tie together issues that are not apparently related in any functional sense (Raiffa, 1982; Lohmann, 1997). As demonstrated above, a potential linkage strategy could take the form of naturalizing more settlers in exchange for better territorial arrangements for Greek Cypriot returnees. Mutually beneficial win–win sets might lie in these and other delinkage or linkage packages.

Besides redrawing the border further north as demonstrated in Fig. 2, a future agreement could include reserved lands for Greek Cypriots opting to return under Turkish Cypriot administration. By definition, reserved lands aim to protect a community by restricting others from purchasing land within that community’s specified territorial boundaries. Reserved lands could be formed through land consolidation where land is reallocated by federal authorities to both former and current owners. Land consolidation is sometimes simply used to remove the effects of fragmentation when, in reality, it could serve broader social and economic reforms, as demonstrated in earlier applications in Western Europe (FAO, 2003: 19). If it also provides roads, access to water, public parks and other services, as well as legal titles, land consolidation could increase the value of individual properties and contribute to sustainable development (Symeou, 2011).

In Cyprus, land consolidation in disputed territories could facilitate the broader needs of the peace process without sacrificing the financial position of individual land owners. Such a system could incentivize support among Turkish Cypriots and settlers for a settlement by providing certainty in current property disputes with previous owners, and it could galvanize support among Greek refugees if family houses with emotional value, holy places and schools are included in reserves designed specifically to attract Greek Cypriot returnees. Departing from the current framework in the Cyprus negotiations which emphasizes individual rights, land consolidation could lead to community cohesion, revival and rebuilding. Greek Cypriot dislocated communities could be offered such options as re-developing their community life in adjacent locations within the geographical boundaries of their village or alternatively in another part of the island under Greek Cypriot administration.

Establishing reserved lands for returnees in territories with majority settler populations has many advantages. For one thing, it could minimize Turkish and ECtHR (2003, 2010) concerns for massive relocation of settlers and Turkish Cypriots. Particularly, if reserved lands are developed in empty agricultural land adjacent to existing villages, there will be few negative effects on existing communities. In addition, Greek Cypriot return under Turkish Cypriot administration will facilitate economic integration and channel public resources toward the weaker segments of the population.

Turkish Cypriots and settlers/migrants will be also the beneficiaries of such arrangements because of the emerging economic opportunities and increased state capacity for social and economic provisions. A little known fact is that in federal systems, individuals commonly pay taxes in their place of residency; therefore, Greek Cypriot returnees with higher incomes and jobs in the South could potentially double the tax base of the future Turkish Cypriot federal state. Community-based land reserves will also offer Greek Cypriot dislocated communities the opportunity to secure a smaller but a more stable territorial basis in each village/city of their ancestral origin; knowing that other members of their community will return will provide a sense of community and security. Interestingly, these were also the most important concerns cited by Greek Cypriot potential returnees in the Cyprus 2015 survey (2009). Specifically, when asked whether they would return under Turkish Cypriot administration, safety was the most commonly mentioned concern. In the same survey, when asked which factors would encourage them to return home, 30.5 percent of Greek Cypriots mentioned ‘return of other Greek Cypriots from my village’; 15.2 percent said schools, 14.0 percent churches and only 12.9 percent hospitals (Cyprus2015, 2009).

Fig. 1. Map of Post-1974 Cyprus. Source: Central Intelligence Information (CIA).
Arrangements aiming to meet the concerns of displaced minorities are better from an ECtHR point of view and consistent with European guiding principles on minority protection such as the Lund Recommendations emphasizing decentralization, autonomy and effective democratic governance (Packer, 2000). Reserved lands are also more appropriate from a normative perspective, a point made by Kymlicka who argues that the most effective way to protect indigenous communities is to establish reserve territories where land cannot be alienated without the consent of the community as whole (1995: 43; 2007).

Compensation mechanisms

Last, but by no means least, granting various forms of compensation to settlers willing to repatriate to Turkey is a valid consideration. It is important to note that voluntary compensation schemes can have unintended consequences or simply fail to work (Jervis, 1978: 174). The experience of international organizations in Bosnia and elsewhere suggests that trial and error strategies might be needed until optimal outcomes are reached (Dahlman & O’Tuathail, 2005).

An option potentially applicable to Cyprus is the Bosnian ‘right to regret’ whereby Bosnian returnees living temporarily in the UK and France were given the option to return to those countries with the same status if their experience with repatriation to Bosnia proved negative (Black, 2001: 186–87). In the case of Cyprus, settlers could be allowed to return to Cyprus after relocating in Turkey if they changed their minds and without losing their previous status. A similar arrangement could be offered to members of the large Turkish Cypriot diaspora living abroad as an incentive to return to Cyprus. At the moment, there is a sizeable Turkish Cypriot diaspora (about 80,000–120,000) in the UK, mostly in the London area (Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003). Turkish Cypriot émigrés have suffered from exile and loss of property and until now, they have not been offered compensation for their losses. Compensatory arrangements could maximize the options for émigrés and settlers, with potential benefits for all communities in the island. Options similar to Greek Cypriot reserved lands could also be considered for Turkish Cypriot émigrés as part of the arrangements for their properties to be exchanged south of the border.

Bridging theory and policy in contested spaces

The article confronts an important empirical and normative dilemma. While the colonization of occupied territories such as northern Cyprus is a violation of international norms, the indiscriminate expulsion of settlers and their descendants is equally problematic and a major source of future instability.

After decades, settlers often begin to resemble migrants in sociological terms, yet natives continue to view them as part of an expansionist policy of a threatening neighboring state. In contested territories such as Cyprus, the major normative and political challenge for the two Cypriot communities is to balance their own

Fig. 2. Map of the United Cyprus Republic and its Constituent States (Attachment 2a to The Annan Plan for Cyprus, March 2004). Source: United Nations Cartographic Section.
community rights for a federal homeland with the rights of others, including displaced persons and settlers/migrants. Stable ethnic relations in such a normatively complex setting require novel arrangements, especially on issues of territory and space. The article aims to fill this important empirical and policy-related gap by synthesizing alternative theoretical approaches from immigration and ethnic conflict studies. While IR studies (despite their lack of unanimity) have increasingly guided public policy, this is not the case for issues involving settlers/migrants in peace processes. Drawing from innovative ideas in both immigration and ethnic conflict literatures, the article broadens the repertoire of spatial, psychological and institutional arrangements that can be used to facilitate peace processes. By addressing settler/migrant politics in Cyprus and native responses, it takes a major step forward in `diagnosing events, explaining their causes, prescribing responses, and evaluating the impact of different policies’ (Walt, 2004: 23).

Bridging current theoretical debates with public policy is essential since relying on false or flawed theory frequently distorts assumptions guiding policy decisions and could lead to major failures in peace negotiations.

Moreover, the article demonstrates how the legal and political complexities of the settler question frequently underpin negotiations in divided societies. Overtaken by inter-literate which prevails the demands of international law vs. pragmatism, the international community has inconsistently addressed conflicts between settlers and natives. One school of thought advocates the centrality of justice and international law mechanisms; others emphasize security, community rebuilding and passage of time (Leckie, 2003: 12; Barkan, 2000: xxxiii; Carens, 2000). Balancing conflicting principles is difficult for international courts, not to mention mediators and regional organizations, as they could easily be charged with tolerating ethnic cleansing or demonstrating lack of sympathy toward a vulnerable settler population.

To resolve this dilemma, the article suggests a number of alternative arrangements not previously raised in the context of contested territories. The approach is parsimonious yet novel; it brings the ‘linkage’ aspect into the picture, suggesting alternative tradeoffs between the rights of settlers and those of populations affected by colonization projects. For the most part, the more credible and generous these linkages appear, the more likely native populations will be to accept settlers as immigrants, integrating them in a sustainable future relationship. Additionally, for scholars and practitioners advocating pragmatic considerations and local power dynamics in peace processes, this study suggests a set of generalizable human rights principles not to be compromised by short-term political expediency. Conversely, for international law critics, the article demonstrates that some form of victim-offender mediation and mutually agreed-upon compromise is essential to foster a durable peace. To this point, the study suggests new directions for the burgeoning literature on transitional justice (see Snyder & Vinjamuri, 2003); more specifically, settler/migrant studies are critical in evaluating the merits and weaknesses of alternative restorative or retributive approaches.

The article's empirical findings and theoretical innovations are relevant to the broader literature on immigration and settler studies. The article draws on theoretical frameworks designed for immigrant experience (Kymlicka, 1995; Laitin, 2009) and demonstrates their usefulness beyond their original scope, including the ‘most difficult’ case of an ethnic conflict in a divided society. By specifying the conditions of settler non-politicization in Cyprus, it fills an important gap in the ethnic conflict literature which until now has focused on ‘non-typical’ cases such as Israel/Palestine. The current emphasis in the literature on highly politicized cases restricts generalizations since the latter might not be representative across a larger number of available cases. On the contrary, Singapore and other comparable cases such as Tibet and Western Sahara are better suited for considering the difficulties involved in distinguishing between immigration and settler colonialism. Related comparisons on settler/migrant populations could advance the debate on why newcomers (whether migrants or settlers) to a territory do not participate in civil wars or mobilize for expansionist territorial politics. In this case, the article’s empirical findings suggest that the socioeconomic and class features of migration could often trump nationalism and the ideological aspects of settler experience.

At the same time, an exclusively migrant approach to the issue might not always be applicable in the study of settlers in contested territories. While the article emphasizes the humanitarian and immigration aspects of the settler question, it cautions against treating an essentially political problem in exclusively sociological and immigration terms. As demonstrated in the case of Cyprus, even if the Greek Cypriot public is convinced of the benign ‘immigrant character’ of the settlers, insecurity will remain because of the sheer number of Turkish settlers, an ongoing fear of Turkish involvement and the potential for future uncontrolled migration from Turkey to Cyprus.

Thus the article suggests a multifaceted diagnosis of settler/migrant politics in contested territories, including an analysis of the language, issue framing and identity categorization. Besides advocating the creation of necessary institutional arrangements, it makes a threefold empirical contribution to the study of framing and communication in divided societies. First, it emphasizes the importance of categorization processes, identifying how settler/migrant populations redefine their identities in contested spaces and how natives label newcomers in response. For scholars interested in framing analysis, it highlights the fluidity of discourses and adaptive nature of frames even in ‘difficult’ and emotional territorial issues involving settlers/natives.

Second, the article distinguishes between settler and migrant categories, while highlighting significant empirical, normative and policy-related overlaps between the two. It questions ethnocentric frames that emphasize the most suitable dimensions of the settler/migrant categories downplaying the complexities of identity construction. At the same time, it identifies a set of framing tools to use when advocating compromise among settlers and natives. Additionally, the article provides a more nuanced image of settler communities than is generally understood. Such communities are often equated with expansionist states in the popular imagination, but as the article illustrates, they are often internally divided in religious, political or generational terms and could even pose a challenge to the nationalist program of the core state.

Third, the article introduces a theoretical rationale for the use of the hybrid term 'settler/migrant' which is often more appropriate in addressing the sociological complexity of a population’s experience. As Andreasen argues, using the term settler to describe a particular population can be contested depending on the political context, and in some cases, it has been eliminated from public discourse (2010). By highlighting how conflicts transform settlers/migrants from alleged beneficiaries of colonization to potential victims and by specifying the empirical and theoretical rational of the hybrid settler/migrant term, the article sets the stage for related future studies.

Conclusion

Irreversibility is a major and defining aim of any colonization project, as new demographic facts on the ground could define a community's entitlement to a contested geographical space. A central question in Cyprus, as well as in other divided societies, is whether colonization has reached the point of ‘no return’, thereby
ensuring an irreversible stalemate in a peace process. Emphasizing the normative and sociological dimensions of the settler/immigrant experience, the article identifies instead a set of generalizable tools for the study and positive transformation of settler/native conflicts. This framework is particularly relevant for Cyprus and other divided societies where this point has arguably not yet been reached and where negotiation could produce better alternatives to the current stalemate. While resolving complex issues such as the one in Cyprus is still possible, the article argues that such a settlement requires a theoretically nuanced understanding of the main fears and concerns of each group in the conflict and innovative public policy responses, particularly on the territorial aspects of a future peace settlement.

Focusing on the antinomies of ethnic conflict and immigration politics, the article argues that the current situation in Cyprus is manageable, particularly given the low levels of mobilization among the settlers and the general propensities of both Greek and Turkish Cypriot political elites to accommodate large numbers in a future settlement. However, a failure to reach a settlement in the current negotiations could intensify the settler dilemma in Cyprus. Lustick’s comparative historical analysis stands as a stark warning of a potentially highly unstable relationship in Europe’s southeast corner, if the Cypriot stalemate persists, and demographic balances shape a new Cypriot question. But as the article demonstrates, a peace settlement which includes creative institutions can stabilize inter-communal relations and ensure peace in the island, regardless of demographic uncertainty and population movements.

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