Civil Society's Role in Peace-Building:
Relevance of the Cypriot Case

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This article argues that the rationale of the current conflict resolution strategy for resolving the Cyprus problem is problematic. Time and energy should be spent more on peace-building efforts that penetrate into ideas and identities of the Cypriots, than on negotiations that take place between the leaders. Greek and Turkish Cypriots should have a sense of 'we' based on equality rather than recognizing each other as the 'enemy' in case a durable solution to the problem can be found. In spite of the current political rhetoric which is very negative, civil society can be a crucial actor in reversing this trend and pursuing this important task. Even though the peace-building success of civil society in Cyprus may be questionable, the author argues that the opportunity for a highly profitable outcome exists if civil society can shift its focus on in-group socialization, increase work-related activities, apply a more participative strategy, and act in a coordinated way.

Keywords: Cyprus problem; civil society; peace-building; political rhetoric; 'the political'

On the occasion of a conference in Nicosia, Hugh Pope, Turkey/Cyprus program director of the International Crisis Group, once told the audience that nobody wants to hear about the Cyprus problem because compared with other conflict areas the severity of violence in Cyprus has been trivial since 1974. Nevertheless, he continued, it is one of the conflicts which people read the most about on the International Crisis Group website. Nothing explains the Cyprus problem better than this statement. Academics, politicians, bureaucrats and technocrats still talk about the benefits of reunification. They reiterate their expectations of a peace agreement in the near future

but the problem seems to be bullet-proof to all the hope and research that have been expended on the benefits of a solution. There is but one key concept that is crucial in understanding and solving the Cyprus problem. This concept which is called 'the political' may sound arcane to many of us who have yet to get acquainted with it. Nevertheless, one can argue that all the research and recommendations that have been done and will be done on the Cyprus issue should have had, and should have an understanding of 'the political' and its relation to what is going on in Cyprus.

The aim of the first part of this paper is to explain 'the political' by looking at the writings of Carl Schmitt and Hannah Arendt and discuss this concept's implications in relation to the Cyprus problem. In the second part, some practical recommendations to solve the Cypriot puzzle will be mentioned by looking at the state of civil society in Cyprus. These recommendations will not be completely foreign to the reader who is already acquainted with the Cyprus problem and reconciliation literature but the careful reader should have a better understanding of the importance of these recommendations and the insignificance of some of the efforts which is considered to be quite important.

The Concept of 'the Political'

The discussion about the meaning of 'the political' is debated in the field of political theory. Understanding the concept of 'the political' is essential for the purposes of this paper which argues that the solution to the Cyprus problem can only be found by addressing what is related with 'the political'. Creation and sustenance of any society and of a state is first and foremost related with 'the political' and civil society is suggested to be the key actor in accomplishing this task.

One can argue that there is no need for 'the political' so that there can be politics. Politics, which is about organizing collective matters, may exist in any form of organization. However, 'the political' exists only in the societies that are constituted. This does not mean that one can only belong to a single society, but the need for a society in order to talk about 'the political' and societal politics is conspicuous.

Arendt argues that 'the political' only exists in a society that has distinct borders and that is constituted. According to Arendt, 'the political' has to do with equal men in a space of freedom, interacting, debating or publicly deliberating (Arendt, 2005:117-118). So *men* are political only when they constitute a society that is built on equality and when they practice politics, which is the free deliberation that takes place between these *men*.

According to Carl Schmitt, 'the political' also has to do with the constitution of a society. 'The political' is a distinct concept, differing from economical, religious, moral, ethical etc. (Schmitt, 1996:37). It is the distinction between friend and enemy. This means that 'the political' has to do with a 'we', an association differing from 'them', 'the other', 'the enemy' (Schmitt, 1996:26-27). This does not necessarily mean that one has to be at war with the enemy all the time but in order to become a political community, whether state or the religious authorities decides to go to war; people should obey. Therefore, political power is the ability to decide to go to war (Schmitt, 1996:35).

So what do we make of all this in the framework of the Cypriot question? Cypriot leaders have been negotiating to find a power sharing system since the very early talks which brought Republic of Cyprus (RoC) into life. This has continued since then, as no political system seem to have been agreed by both parties.

Nevertheless, consociational federalism seems to be the most relevant example of what a political settlement would look like. Academics, bureaucrats, technocrats and politicians are discussing bicommunalism, bizonalism, consociationalism, federations, confederations, unitary states, sovereignty, guarantees, property issue, economic issues, 'settlers', territory issue, relations with the European Union, and governance. However, they seem to forget that without 'the political'; there can be no societal politics. The fallacy of many Cypriots and the international community in their strategy for promoting a solution stems from the fact that Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots are not one society but two societies. Just take a tour in Cyprus for a day and you will realize this when you see that the Cyprus flag is less visible than the Greek and Turkish flags (Hadjipavlou, 2007:357). The Republic of Cyprus (RoC) uses the Greek anthem whereas the 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus' ('T.R.N.C') uses the Turkish one. In addition to the fact that there are two distinct societies on the island, there is also no positive peace between these communities. Intervention or invasion of Turkey in 1974 (depending on where you stand politically) may have brought negative peace to the island but there still exists division and skepticism between the two communities. As it was the case between the USA and the Soviet Union during the Cold War, there is a cold war between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. Between these two societies, we see a Schmidtian 'friend-enemy' distinction. Research carried out in February 2008 by Hadjipavlou and Kanol on the impact of peace-building activities in Cyprus takes note of the fact that: "In Cyprus the dichotomy of 'us' and 'them' still prevails and a zero-sum approach is adopted which leads to the deepening of partition and mistrust" (Hadjipavlou and Kanol, 2008:54).

In this framework, whoever thinks that a yes vote to the Annan Plan by both sides would have made one society and bring peace to the island is mistaken. This also applies to the current situation in which negotiations between the Turkish Cypriot leader Derviş Eroğlu and the Greek Cypriot leader Dimitris Christofias are continuing in order to find a new plan which can be offered to Cypriots. The Cyprus problem is more than a technical problem; it is a societal one. Above all, it has to do with 'the political'. It is a 'political' problem which cannot merely be solved by institutional arrangements and negotiations; it can only be solved by 'the political'. Only when 'the political' exists, can we talk about a relatively durable society, country, state and societal politics. Politics is still possible without a society. What happens in the UN Security Council meetings, is also a form of politics, but there is no distinct world society yet and consequently no societal politics in these meetings. Likewise, without finding a 'political' solution to the Cyprus problem, finding an institutional solution would create a similar scenario where there will be politics without a society and without a doubt, serious problems. One might then ask; how does 'the political' comes into being so that a society is constituted?

According to Carl Schmitt, 'the political' appears and constitutes the society only when we define an 'enemy'. So do the Cypriots also have to find an 'other', an 'enemy' so that they can be constituted as one society? If this does not happen, is reunification in Cyprus doomed to failure? This somewhat disturbing notion might have some truth in it, however one can argue that 'the political' may exist even if people do not find a common enemy and wage wars. Below, I will give recommendations for a solution to the Cyprus problem. Having the arguments of Hannah Arendt as the prerequisites for 'the political' in mind and relating them to the

practical problem, I will give some suggestions on how the Cypriots can create a single society and a viable democracy.

Political Rhetoric

People do associate themselves with their representatives and what the politicians say has an enormous effect on the people. There is indeed a source of power in the representative system and the rulers do create ideas and defines the society. Therefore, in order to create a society, the rulers in north and south both have to change their rhetoric drastically.

Currently, far from promoting a single society, the two leaders only entrench division and strengthen the borders between the two societies. The rhetoric that I am talking about is not 'why is it good for us to unite with them' but 'why is it good for us to unite'. Hadjipavlou and Kanol point to the kind of rhetoric used by both societies which puts a barrier between 'us' and 'them'. They argue that rather than using phrases such as: "This plan is good for us and not for the others". They should change their rhetoric to: "This plan is good for all and in the end it is a 'win-win' so we should push the process together to reach a mutually accepted arrangement internalized and actively supported by a good majority of both communities" (Hadjipavlou and Kanol, 2008:54-55). Such rhetoric should also involve an apology for the past crimes against the other community (Ladisch, 2007:105). As the constructivists would argue, positive identification with the others' welfare results in solidarity, community and loyalty in a group, and this could be done by the process of creating new definitions of self. This does not mean that states become totally irrational and egoist interests are totally replaced by collective interests as exogenously given, nevertheless a sense of 'we' can be introduced between the two

31

societies where people would positively correlate their individual interests with the common interests (Wendt, 1994:386). It is the duty of the politicians to change their rhetoric in order to influence the ideas and identities of the people. Nevertheless, we should remember that social construction works in both ways. Although the people are listening to the leaders which consciously or more often subconsciously, construct their identity and alter their views, one cannot take the society as one insoluble homogenous entity; so one can argue that pluralism in society means that there will always be different views. According to recent research, the majority of the civil society in Cyprus is not content with the status quo and is open to reconciliation (Hadjipavlou, 2007:362), (Trimikliniotis, 2007:127) and (Sitas, Latif and Loizou, 2007:63). It is again this civil society that should pressure the politicians to change their rhetoric.

The importance of education in shaping people's ideas and identities cannot be argued. "Formal education serves as the medium through which a society comes to define itself. Its norms and values are articulated and transferred from generation to generation through its educational system" (Johnson, 2007:20). Coming to Cyprus as a foreigner and looking at the problem from outside, Benjamin Broome noted that both communities have a very selective memory when the history of Cyprus is concerned (Broome, 2005:83). This selectivity can in fact be too much that we can speak of amnesia-like situations. A brief overview of the education system can explain why this is the case.

Currently, the education system in both parts of Cyprus functions as a nationalist ideology which demonizes the other part. According to Arendt, politics presupposes equal men deliberating in a free space (Arendt, 2005:117-118). In order to create the political condition, Cypriots should not only get rid of all the history

books that are aimed at filling the pupils' hearts and heads with hatred but recognize the other community as their equals. A survey on the populations of Cyprus has suggested that about two-thirds of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots think that educational system had a negative effect on the Cyprus issue (Hadjipavlou, 2007:361).

According to Yiannis Papadakis, Greek Cypriot schoolbooks depict the rule of everyone on the island (Frankish, Venetian, Turkish and English) apart from the Greeks or Byzantines as oppression (Papadakis, 2008:6-7). The term Cypriot is used as equivalent to Greeks in the same paragraphs in order to give the message that the indigenous people of the island have always been Greeks. One secondary-level schoolbook states: "Many peoples passed over Cyprus or conquered her... But its inhabitants safeguarded its Hellenic character created since the Mycenaeans settled in Cyprus..." (Papadakis, 2008:7). This of course has put the Turkish Cypriots in an inferior position. They cannot be the natural inhabitants of the island and they do not belong in Cyprus (Papadakis, 2008:8). So they can never be the equals of the Greek Cypriots. History books project the Turks as barbaric, savage creatures who killed and tortured the rightful owners of the island (Papadakis, 2008:8-9).

There is an almost mirror situation in the Turkish Cypriot schoolbooks. One secondary-level school book argued:

> From historical-geographical, strategic and economic perspectives, Cyprus is connected to Anatolia, while for Greece, Cyprus has no significance at all neither from a historical nor from a strategic perspective... History begins with the arrival of the Ottomans in Cyprus, the most important historical event as it was the event that sealed its character, to such an extent that Cyprus with today's numerous Turkish monuments has preserved its Turkish character (Papadakis, 2008:13).

Turkish Cypriot books emphasize the barbarism and savagery of the Greek Cypriots concentrating on the 1963-1974 period (Papadakis, 2008:14). There were very positive developments in the Turkish Cypriot books when the content was changed by

the moderate governing party Cumhuriyetçi Halk Partisi (CTP) (Papadakis, 2008:20-25). This has not lasted long as the defeat of CTP to the hardliner party Ulusal Birlik Partisi (UBP) allowed the nationalists to change the books back to its negative form.

In this context, it is absolutely necessary to change the education system. Rather than projecting the other side as evil and arguing for the ownership of the island, a sense of 'us' should be introduced with a 'common ownership' of the island. Johnson argues that a good start to overcome the negative sides of education in divided societies is to induce peace education which is about promoting knowledge in order to build and develop mutual understanding, respect, trust, empathy, tolerance and the tools to exist in a multicultural society (Johnson, 2007:23). Apart from the changes to the curricula, pedagogy should be reconceptualised and teachers themselves should be trained to cope with the shift from ethnocentric history teaching to peace education (Johnson, 2007:26-27). Furthermore, Johnson argues that the 'hidden curriculum' in the schools should also be changed. Johnson identifies 'hidden curriculum' as: "everything implicit that impacts students learning from the pictures or images that are displayed on the walls, to the holidays or festivals that are celebrated, to the ways students and teachers interact in the classroom" (Johnson, 2007:29). As in the case with the politicians' rhetoric, it is here that the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) can be useful. Organizations such as 'Association for Historical Dialogue and Research' in the buffer zone should flourish and pressure the state to change the curricula (especially the history books) and the 'hidden curriculum', promote better teacher training and effective pedagogy.

The same applies for media, since it is arguably as important as education in the quest for promoting the sense of equality among the people in Cyprus. The media in fact has for a long time depicted the other community as the 'other' or 'the enemy'.

According to research carried out by PRIO on Cypriot media, the final conclusion is that:

> The mediated reality promoted the idea that the real problem was the 'other', since this enemy, a threat, a wrong-doer with inherently bad or evil intentions meant that no change in behaviour or positions could take place and the problems would remain unsolved forever (Christophorou, 2010: 183).

Thus, one can say that the media so far has been very much negative considering peace in Cyprus and equality between its people. The PRIO report also contains some conclusions about the language issue:

> The language factor also has implications at various levels, as a criterion of distinction and identity on the basis of ethnicity. This was a major point creating the dichotomy across origin. Furthermore, language determined the public of the media, and conditioned their content. The media became the forum of expression of the respective group speaking that language; they aggregated and promoted the readers' and viewers' interests. The most significant effect of the above was that members of one community could learn about the other only through their respective media, since contacts were limited and most people cannot read the other's language (Christophorou, 2010: 186).

It is in this context that the CSOs should strive for bilingual newspapers, TV channels and websites in order to overcome the negative effects of the hostile media exacerbated by the language issue. The second part of this paper will concentrate on the state of civil society in Cyprus and try to make recommendations in relieving its problems and improving its effectiveness.

State of Civil Society in Cyprus: Addressing Problems and Pursuing Opportunities

In one of its reports, the UNDP has defined CSOs in the following way: "CSOs are non-state actors whose aims are neither to generate profits nor to seek governing power. CSOs unite people to advance shared goals and interests" (UNDP, 2006:3). CSOs can promote equality between the people of the island by holding conferences, trainings, demonstrations, bicommunal youth camps etc. CSOs can pressure the state

to change their education policy, politicians to change their rhetoric or work with the media in order both to get publicity and also to reverse the negative effects of it. So we see CSOs as an independent variable on many aspects including the three independent variables (politicians' rhetoric, education and media) I have specified above. We see that all of these initiatives aim at bringing people together and fostering equality among them. Previous research has suggested that contacts between different ethnic communities have a positive effect on people's attitudes and perceptions of the other (Webster, 2005:148-149). 70% of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots believe that lack of communication exacerbates the conflict, so communication and trust-building are crucial in solving the Cyprus problem (Hadjipavlou, 2007:360). However, civil society's work in peace-building stays limited. CIVICUS report in 2005 suggested that:

> Bi-communal cooperation between Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot communities, as well as citizen participation in bi-communal events, seems to be very limited, with 82 percent of survey respondents saying that they had not participated in any kind of bi-communal activity during the last year (CIVICUS Executive Report, 2005:6).

Civil society in Cyprus has been relatively weak according to the CIVICUS report (CIVICUS Executive Report, 2005). So any work contributing to capacity-building of the civil society in Cyprus in order to enable the CSOs to contribute to the reconciliation process is essential. Political culture and the political system are important factors in determining the role of civil society in a country. Indeed the political cultures and the political systems of Cypriots across the divide have created hindrances working against active civil society. Everything in Cyprus, even the football teams, are politicized (this applies only to the southern side) and "citizens tend to consider that political parties are the only channel able to convey their concerns, and use their political affiliations as a vehicle for personal and political

career advancement" (Vasilara and Piaton, 2007:117) and (Çuhadar and Kotelis, 2009:186 and 188).

The third-parties have up to a certain extent taken the responsibility here in order to remedy the situation and reverse the tendency of the CSOs to be dependent on the political parties and should continue to do so (Lönqvist, 2008:8). This is crucial since the governments on both sides of the divide have not supported this kind of work at a significant level. Although outside funding has a drawback in the sense that it may stimulate "latent organizations or create artificial interest in an issue" (Lönqvist, 2008:8) or decrease volunteerism in society (Paffenholz, 2009:24), one might consider outside funding as a better tradeoff situation for overcoming dependency on political parties. There are good examples of successful peace-building projects that have been funded by third-parties. One such program is the 'ENGAGE' program which is listed by UNESCO among the best 450 projects in the world in the field of rapprochement culture in 2010 (UNDP-ACT, News). When we look at the history of funding for rapprochement activities, we see that the UN and the USAID have been leading the way (Demetriou and Gürel, 2008:13) and (Hadjipavlou and Kanol, 2008:20-22). Although peace-builders can get funding from the budget that is set up for the Turkish Cypriot community to be used for reconciliation activities, the EU could set up its own funding program just for reconciliation projects in order to be helpful to solve this problem that is a part of its own political system.

However, one should not think that the real problem is the amount of funding available for the CSOs. The nature of the projects proposed by the Cypriot CSOs and accepted by external funders may have much more effect than the budget reserved for peace-building work. Cypriot CSOs and external funders may have to reconsider the type of peace-building work that has so far been common practice. CSOs should

divert a considerable part of their efforts from advocacy and intergroup social cohesion towards in-group socialization as this function has been widely neglected (Çuhadar and Kotelis, 2009:204-205). "In-group socialization as a civil society function supports the practice of democratic attitudes and values within society, realized through active participation in associations, networks, and democratic movements" (Çuhadar and Kotelis, 2009:195). Activities directed towards changing the education system or creating positive media in each community separately are good examples. International organizations and international CSOs can also be involved in trainings that can train the local CSOs so that they can develop more effective in-group socialization and conflict resolution strategies. They can also provide peace-building activities and tools directly to the Cypriot society based on this in-group socialization perspective (Hadjipavlou-Trigeorgis, 1993:82). These efforts can have a major effect on how one society sees the other society.

Laws in both parts of Cyprus can be restricting for the CSOs. In the south, CSOs are working in an obscure legal environment with complicated registration and operation procedures (Vasilara and Piaton, 2007:116). In the north, the government is trying to take control of CSOs by its recently introduced associations' legislation which is still being discussed in the parliament. Therefore, to function effectively, CSOs need to comprehend the functioning and decision-making mechanisms in order to make an impact on public policy (Vasilara and Piaton, 2007:116). However, returning to the point about culture, Vasilara and Piaton argue that the positive sides of enabling laws do not mean much if there is no culture of activism and engagement to solve societal problems (Vasilara and Piaton, 2007:117).

I have to notify the reader before proceeding with civil society any further that such talk about civil society should not imply that all civil society is good. There are

good CSOs and there are bad CSOs (Trimikliniotis, 2007:139). Civil society

formation in Cyprus ran parallel with nation-state building and nationalism. Even

though those times have passed and some issues are no more valid, nationalism still

defines everything around (Trimikliniotis, 2007:140). Orthodox Church in Cyprus

which is itself a CSO, has contributed to division and ethnic tension on the island for

decades (Turk, Vol.28:208) and (Trimikliniotis, 2007:146). It still occupies a

powerful place in decision-making in Cyprus and has influence on the Greek Cypriots

(Hadjipavlou, 2007:324-355) and (Hadjipavlou and Kanol, 2008:39). It is not

arguable that the influence is still negative. For example, during the Annan Plan; a

bishop publicly stated that whoever votes 'yes' for the plan would go to hell

(Hadjipavlou and Kanol, 2008:44). I ask the following question in order to show the

importance of CSOs in the context of the Cyprus Problem. What if the Church which

is still influential in the 21st century was contributing to peace rather than division and

enmity between the two communities?

Likewise, on the Greek-Cypriot side, we see civil society action concentrated

on rights of refugees/property rights, missing persons and their relatives. We see that

the civil society in the north is less active (in the negative sense) since: "non-

recognition of the state made lobbying internationally impossible" and "nationalist

discourse held that the war of 1974 had been an operation that restored peace in

Cyprus and that the Cyprus conflict had now come to an end" (Demetriou and Gürel,

2008: 32). Thus the Turkish Cypriot nationalist rhetoric concentrates on the 'rightful

revenge' that has been taken from the Greek Cypriots because of their deeds before

1974 (Demetriou and Gürel, 2008: 32). Nevertheless, there are some organizations in

the north which in defence to the nationalist organizations in the south, constantly

demonize the Greek Cypriots (Demetriou and Gürel, 2008: 32). There are also anti-

isolation movements such as the London based 'Embargoed' group, fighting for the lifting of isolations and recognition (Demetriou and Gürel, 2008: 32). These activities only focus on the victimization of one side. What if these organizations came together in order to promote positive values in the societies asking for a better and fair future which will remedy the losses of everybody and create a better Cyprus?

Civil society's role in peace-building is not exclusive to the Cypriot case. Countries such as Bosnia, Northern Ireland, South Africa, Sri Lanka etc. all have relevance. According to Lönqvist, the key role for civil society is to make the people feel that they have ownership of the peace process. In South Africa, civil society promoted publicized truth and reconciliation whereas in Northern Ireland, civil society helped the Protestants and the Catholics to interact (Lönqvist, 2008:7-8). One criticism to the work of the CSOs in Cyprus is that so far they have not been able to encompass the whole society. Looking at various Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) initiated peace-building projects, one can see that the people who attend these events are mainly English speaking elites or even worse the same people over and over again. Therefore the NGOs that engage in peace-building should find alternative strategies to improve participation and have a better effect. Adding to this, they can be protagonists in implementing projects like establishing a 'historical clarification committee'. Virginie Ladisch argues that Cyprus needs a committee that could be a forum for alternative views of the past and be a catalyzer for reform of the current education system rather than a South Africa-style 'Commission for Truth and Reconciliation' which was envisaged in the Annan Plan (Ladisch, 2007:105). While doing this, they have to be careful and consistent in applying a highly participative strategy. As one non-Cypriot peace activist involved in the peace process in Cyprus argued: "they (civil society) could have been preparing the people for compromise but

they did not take the debate to the people" (Hadjipavlou and Kanol, 2008:36). "Unless society finds a way of energizing civil society to get involved in the debate, it will be difficult to make progress and civil society will be used as it was before" (Hadjipavlou and Kanol, 2008:36). Based on her research, Paffenholz states that civil society initiatives that have media coverage become more successful. Media can promote or dismantle images and stereotypes in society (Paffenholz, 2009:22). By working with the media, civil society can reverse the tendency of its advocacy of division.

As Paffenholz argues, it is also much more effective to use work-related activities which bring people together rather than most of the peace talk-related initiatives aimed at changing attitudes (Paffenholz, 2009:21). Broome argues that bicommunal gatherings take place at the periphery but does not go deep enough due to the natural politeness and reluctance of the Cypriots to confront each other in social gatherings (Broome, 2005:87-88). Hence, Broome concludes that: "polite conversation and friendly relations are not the same as mutual understanding, respect, and ability to work together" (Broome, 2005:87). Such work-related activites could also come from businessman engaging in work across the divide. In fact, one can argue that economic cooperation between businessmen can have a more lasting effect than a three day workshop aimed at peace-building in Cyprus. Lesson-drawing from the French-German example is totally suitable for the Cypriot case. Following the neofunctionalist argument, one should also start with incremental and strategic means to integration rather than finding a constitution between the leaders. One does not need to create a High Authority and put all the resources in a specific sector under the command of this authority (it is highly unlikely that either side will consent to this). Nevertheless, cooperation in certain economic sectors can build trust and promote the

notion of equality between the persons. Moreover, this cooperation may 'spillover' to other fields.

Whatever the CSOs do, it is essential that they have contact with each other in order to make sure that they are working collaboratively towards the same goal. This should make sense, as in state departments, fragmentation can cause serious problems towards achieving what you are aiming for, thus influencing the output.

Finally, I would like to argue that civil society should keep their efforts towards implementing successful bicommunal camps. Ungerleider in his article emphasizes the role of bicommunal camps and their effect. Whereas some of the former participants in these camps lost connection with individuals from the other community, some of them have even made their relations deeper (Ungerleider, 2006:146). His research is not the only one suggesting this trend as Hadjipavlou and Kanol also points to the surveys showing that the youth participating in bicommunal camps keep contact after the camps and have higher level of trust and understanding of each other (Hadjipavlou and Kanol, 2008:19). Research conducted by RAI in 2007 suggested that there was no real contact with the other community and people were not aware of intercommunal events taking place. Therefore, people were shaping their opinions about the other community based on what they hear by friends, relatives, stories, media and education and many of these sources are either biased or outright propaganda (Vasilara and Piaton, 2007:113). Here the importance of bicommunal camps is well understood. Of the people who had contact with the other community, 82 per cent of Greek Cypriots and 65 percent of Turkish Cypriots expressed that the contact left a positive impression of the other community (Vasilara and Piaton, 2007:113). In fact, I believe that one can make more impact in a single bicommunal youth camp than in dozens of meetings between the leaders.

Conclusion

Starting with an explanation of 'the political' and its relevance for the Cyprus problem, this article pointed out the Cypriot civil society as the true holder of the key to the solution. Relying on Arendt's definition of 'the political', the importance of the perception of equality between the peoples of the island is undisputable. Stressing the importance of political rhetoric, media, and education, one can suggest that it is civil society which can turn the negative effects of these spheres into positive effects. Moreover, civil society can hold events such as conferences, trainings, demonstrations, bicommunal youth camps, and create a 'historical clarification committee'. All of these efforts combined can achieve this perception of equality that is needed for a solution.

However, the current success of civil society in Cyprus is questionable. One can argue that such success was more or less achieved only during the Annan Plan period and only in the northern part. This success was the main reason why there was 65% support for this plan. This article argues that problems of the civil society in Cyprus can be addressed by concentrating the efforts on four important tasks. Firstly, CSOs should shift a substantial amount of its work from advocacy and intergroup social cohesion to in-group socialization and funders should support such a change. Secondly, civil society should shift their efforts considerably from peace talk-related activities to work-related activities and funders should support such a change. Thirdly, Cypriot civil society should necessarily agree and act on strategies to engage the wider society in peace-building process. One can argue that better usage of the media can be the first basic and positive step towards this kind of strategy. Finally, CSOs

should talk and work with each other for the sake of coordination, efficiency and effectiveness.

Current conflict resolution strategy employed in Cyprus is significantly erred. Cypriots and the international community should understand that the Cypriot problem does not exist because of the discrepancies between the two sides' 'technical' preferences. In fact, finding a solution to the problem in this way without concentrating on reconciliation and peace-building may cause bigger problems in case an agreement is found between the leaders. Reflecting on Arendt's and Schmitt's ideas on 'the political', one should concede that the Cypriot conflict can only and truly be solved by creating a sense of 'we' among the Greek and Turkish Cypriots based on equality with an open space for discussion.

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