THE CYPRUS CONFLICT, PROSPECTS OF RECONCILIATION AND THE POSSIBILITY OF GOVERNANCE: A THEORETICAL ACCOUNT

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I.   THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The purpose of this presentation is to utilize Gramscian critical theory to explore prospects of reconciliation and the possibility of a viable bi-ethnic governance in the Republic of Cyprus. Kincheloe and McLaren (2002) emphasize the 'Critical theory's dialectical concern with the social construction of experience ... as manifestations of the discourses and power relations of the social and historical contexts that produced them' (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2002, p.88). According to the same writers

> Gramcsi understood that dominant power ... is not always exercised simply by physical force but via people's consent to domination through cultural institutions such as the media, the schools, the family and the church, [and hence] Gramsci's notion of hegemony is central to critical research (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2002, p.93).

Gramscian historicism as interpreted by Esteve Morera (1990) is taken as the notion that asserts 'scientific theories have no truth value independent of the circumstances of their formulation' (Morera, 1990, p.10). Hegemony as an 'invisible power' (Heywood, 1994, p.85), conditions what Gramsci (1971) referred to as 'the relations of force'. As Heywood (1994) points out "hegemony [is] reproduced in cultural life through the media, universities and religious institutions" which are used "to 'manufacture consent' and legitimacy" (Heywood, 1994, p.100-101). These Gramscian theoretical insights help establish their own epistemological foundation, which is derived from specific socio-historical and cultural settings and their internal dynamic, and set the analytical parameters of my suggestion.

It is the **historical context** I believe, that could produce a theoretical foundation [evidence] of the historical transposition of the dominance of the ideology of Hellenization in the hegemonization process of the Republic of Cyprus from its inception in 1960. This process continued all through the post-independence era. The socio-cultural and political consent of the Greek-Cypriot majority to the powerful and diachronically uncontested hegemony of EOKA on the cultural and political contours of the modern Cypriot state to this day is unequivocal. This dominance today orients reconciliation prospects and it also infuses educational practices and contexts. Suffices to state here that since 1966 the Greek national anthem has been adopted by the Republic of Cyprus. It is the only national anthem that is shared by two sovereign states. The hegemony of Hellenization reigns supreme in the Cypriot state (Barbagiannakos, 2015) and it can be taken as an axiomatic sociological postulate for our understanding of a bi-communal political consolidation of peace in general.

Reconciliation involves any activity that attempts to transform conflict and it has always been a major issue on the public agenda of Greek-Cypriots.

So far however, all effort towards reconciliation has been limited to what Robert Cox (1983) referred to as problem–solving theories. These theories do not interrogate the nature and development of historical structures (Cox, 1983).

History necessitated the strengthening of national identity of the post-1974 generation about the Occupied north, the 'terrible other' the Turks and Turkish-Cypriots. Close to 80% of the Greek-Cypriot population were either unborn or under 14 years of age in 1974 (when the Turkish invasion took place). The young generation is used to living separately from the Turkish-Cypriots and has been raised and schooled with ideas of returning to a pre-invasion version of the Cypriot state .Actually, it is this ethnocentric narrative that has been the dominant socialising tool for the younger generation through the state educational system and its curriculum (Barbagiannakos,2015). Its underlying meaning, in fact, points to a political hesitation if you like, by the Greek-Cypriot majority to accept Turkish-Cypriots of having their own political and cultural domain within an overall institutional inclusion but with a clear bi-communal demarcated framework.

An analysis of the dominant historical narrative on the island right before and in the post-independence period is required. In particular the struggle of liberation by EOKA and the nationalist forces in alliance with the Church are institutionally concentrated and materialized in the core of the modern Cypriot state. This reality is systematically neglected or underestimated by policy makers, opinion makers and relevant researchers. EOKA has become an undisputed historical-political ingredient and receives blind veneration by a vast and compelling majority of Greek-Cypriot society. Even when left-leaning AKEL and its candidate won the presidential elections in 2008 for a five year term, they failed to bring to the social agenda their own narrative regarding the struggle of liberation from the British. No political party or any organized social interest was willing to listen to their political narrative.

In order to understand the ongoing conflict of the last sixty years or so and the power dynamics that it entails, one needs to contextualize historically the island's socio-cultural domain. Gramscian critical theory is quite clear on this epistemological imperative which safeguards for reliable, valid and change driven analytical frameworks. Kincheloe and Mclaren (2002) have emphasized succinctly, drawing from the Gramscian tradition that 'the hegemonic field, with its bounded socio-psychological horizon garners consent to an inequitable matrix of powers ...and [it] is depicted as natural and inevitable' (p.93). As they point out 'our notion of hegemonic ideology is a critical form of epistemological constructivism' (Kincheloe and Mclaren, 2002, p.94). These Gramscian theoretical criteria should inform current political debate in order to address self-defeating illusionary risks.

II. THE HISTORICAL CONTEXTUALIZATION OF THE STATE AND THE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The historical context of Cypriot (or any) society establishes the parameters within which hegemonic relations are conditioned and as a result define extensively society's political and cultural characteristics. Historical contexts not only condition and delimit theoretical frameworks but also focus the analysis on the dynamics of societal issues. The historical narrative of the Cypriot state with its hegemonic potency, dictates the mental and empirical conditioning and formal socialization of its subjects

By definition value systems are conditioned by their respective historical contexts and dictate policies as well. Their primary objective is to manufacture consent by legitimising political regimes and their respective interests in society.

Hence the critical theoretical evaluation of historical contexts assumes primacy over other contexts. This critical evaluation informs the constitution of analytical frameworks in order to better understand the historical conflict between the two ethnic communities on the island. It requires however an appropriate conceptualization to be epistemologically productive. I.e., to create knowledge that contributes to a deeper understanding of social reality and its inherent dialectic between culture and structure.

The conceptualization of the historical context has as a point of departure Gramsci's theoretical insight on how hegemony is politically effectuated. As he puts it:

> The historical unity of the ruling classes is realized in the state...But it would be wrong to think that this unity is simply juridical and political (though such forms of unity do have their importance too, and not in a purely formal sense). The fundamental historical unity, concretely, results from the organic relations between state or political society and 'civil society' (Gramsci, 1971, p. 53)

Gramsci's concept of civil society implies a wide array of socio-cultural and politico-economic relations as well as collective subjectivities. It is in this sense that I utilise this Gramscian concept to explain how the Church emerged as the hegemonic institution in Cypriot society but also as the undisputed successor of the colonial regime in the newly established state. This exemplifies the fact that state and church were in effect fused into one. Poulantzas (1978) has argued that

> The precise configuration of the state apparatus as a whole and the organization of any one apparatus of a given state... (e.g. the church) are dependent on the relationship of forces not only within

the power bloc, but also between the bloc and the popular masses (Poulantzas, 1978, p.141).

The Church's involvement in the cultural and social affairs of the Greek community but also its role in organizing the struggle of liberation from British colonial rule caused it to gain extensive popular approval and thus political legitimisation as the representative of the people. (Here I refer to the Greek-Cypriot majority vis-a-vis the rest of the population). The Church's emergence as a proto-state within the circumstance of colonial rule facilitated the succession of colonial rule by the Church. As Gramsci (1971) notes, a social group must exercise 'intellectual and moral leadership...before winning governmental power (this is indeed one of the principal conditions for the gaining of such power); it subsequently becomes dominant when it exercises power' (Gramcsi, 1971, pp. 57-58).

The merger of State and Church is symbolized by Archbishop Makarios who became the first President of the Republic of Cyprus. What the new independence era brought with it was also a further marginalization of cultural diversity and political pluralism which was enforced in the Greek community's mindset by the power bloc that the church now was (Kattos, 2007). (However with the Turkish–Cypriot Community as the new politically junior, albeit constitutional partner).

Statolatry was the strategy chosen by the power bloc to control society via the state. Christodoulou's (1992) remark on the way the power bloc managed to impose its hegemony on Greek-Cypriot society and thus led to a marginalisation of the socially liberal forces, including the left, is highly pertinent:

> The marginalisation of the left during the armed rebellion ensured that all initiative would pass to the nationalist right in both communities. The church itself through the election of Archbishop Makarios III lent its contour to the new regime- conservative, nationalist and of course religious minded (Christodoulou, 1992, p.271).

This circumstance reflected a political derivative of the amalgamation of statolatry and religion. As a result, there was a complete absence of the value of the social transformation of society from the political agenda of the patriotic front (the nationalist force) whose main ideology was formulated along Greek-Christian ideals. Consequently it did not facilitate the bridging of inter-communal communication, nor a potential emergence of a viable *modus vivendi* between the two ethnic communities.

If one takes a deeper look at Gramsci's notion of hegemony and his discussion of culture and the intellectual, the **historical specificity of society** assumes critical significance.

According to Barbagiannakos (2015), issues of an identity redefinition which has taken place due to the existence of the 'pseudo'-state (as Greek-Cypriots call it) in the North of Cyprus need to be addressed. That is, the much smaller Turkish-Cypriot community of 1960 has developed into a ruling majority in the ' TRNC'. This implies a shift in their identity (as now a majority) and so the need to continue to make decisions for their side is shown by their insistence on a solution of the Cyprus problem where their 'state' is acknowledged (if not recognised) by the Greek side and is thus based on a bi-zonal federation. To the Greek-Cypriot side which was the majority before 1974 and remained so in the south (albeit in a smaller state due to the Invasion) there needs to be a re-evaluation towards a change of the way they view the opposing side's identity (Barbagiannakos, 2015). This most probably presupposes the transcendence of the hegemony of Hellenization. Its socio-historical organicity however, articulates collectively the Greek –Cypriot mind-set (Barbagiannakos, 2015). On the other hand, the Turkish-Cypriot side should acknowledge the international political and legal status of the Republic of Cyprus in order to facilitate the devolution of integrative bi-ethnic socio-cultural arrangements in a future settlement of the Cyprus issue. Their claim on how property and population, rights and privileges in the north should be apportioned or appropriated, does not contribute to a peaceful settlement.

As Hirst and Thompson (1996) argue "Bitterly divided communities cannot accept the logic of majority rule or tolerate the rights of minorities" (Hirst and Thompson, 1996, p. 173). As they further add, "the concept of a culturally homogeneous and therefore, legitimately sovereign territory could justify both the formation and the break- up of states" (Hirst and Thompson, 1996, p. 173). Indeed the above statement is very instructive for the case of Cyprus. Hirst and Thompson (1996) argue that "nationalism is in essence a claim that political power should reflect cultural homogeneity, according to some common set of historically specific political understandings of the content of the nation" (Hirst and Thompson, 1996, p. 172). This observation describes quite precisely the socio-psychological predicament that prevails in the two ethnic groups in Cyprus.

The Greek-Cypriot side, susceptible to vulnerability due to its small strategic scale, (rightly) legitimately, is adamant not to forfeit its internationally recognized prerogative to exercise its legal authority on the whole island. This is derived from the UN Security Council Resolution 186 of 1964, (which is based on *jus cogens*,-peremptory norm- but also from Protocol 10 regarding the Cypriot accession to the EU in 2004). Since then, it has been enjoying legal power essentially in a culturally homogeneous society. Its legitimisation has been since then, derived from the hegemonic ideology of the Hellenization of the Cypriot state as a sui generis second Greek state, albeit smaller. The collective mindset of the majority of Greek-Cypriot society has been assimilated into this

hegemonic narrative. The institutional dividend as this has been accrued from the 2004 accession to the EU has enhanced further this narrative.

This presentation has been developed utilizing the Gramscian theoretical paradigm to provide an account regarding the influence of historical contexts on inter-ethnic conflicts. It shows, how structure (the Cypriot state) and culture (nationalism) and their dynamic interplay condition social-political discourses and historical narratives (Hellenization) that orient and establish the articulation of hegemonic interests and their legitimization. Hence it attempts to make a positive contribution to the current debate on the island towards bi-communal peace processes. Kincheloe and McLaren (2002) argue:

> A critical social theory is concerned in particular with issues of power and justice and the ways that the economy; matters of race, class and gender; ideologies; discourses; education; religion; and other social institutions; and cultural dynamics interact to construct a social system! (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2002, p.90).

[As Wodak and Meyer (2008) further add 'Critical Theory [is] directed at the totality of society in its historical specificity' (Wodak and Meyer, 2008,p. 6). (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2002, p.96) emphasize the centrality of critical interpretation... and underline that

> a central aspect of...socio-cultural analysis involves dissecting the ways people connect their everyday experiences to the cultural representations of such experiences...[within] ... [the] situating socio-historical structures ...[and] in relation to cultural texts that reinforce an ideology of privilege and entitlement for empowered members of the society... [and] discover the ways they and their subjects have been entangled in the ideological process (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2002, p.101 -103).

The critical investigation on the influence of the Cypriot historical context on the state's socio-cultural and political arrangements since 1950 and onwards and how this context has conditioned the overall political and cultural orientation of the island to this day is a fundamental prerequisite if one wishes to gain a deeper understanding of how to regulate ethnic relations fairly and peacefully. The EOKA historical discourse has been, and still is, the dominant political narrative on the island and constitutes the ideological raison d' etre of the Cypriot state. It is deeply ingrained in the collective mind-set and historical consciousness of Greek- Cypriot society. As such it sets the political and socio-cultural boundaries and limitations, for better or worse, on any inter-communal reconciliation discourse through the hegemony of Hellenization.

It safeguards and preserves Greek-Cypriot national distinctiveness vis-a-vis Turkish-Cypriots. It represents an ethnocentric cognitive system, [**see note 2]** which leads to a holistic encapsulation of the historical narrative

[and politically marginalizes any other competing narratives] in relation to inter-communal reconciliation. [**see note 1**]

Gramsci's theoretical concepts of hegemony and relations of force, and his treatment of culture and history set the ground rules for reliable political and historical inferences.

Social Science researchers (Berg and Lune, 2011; Maxwell 1996; Babbie, 1983) point out:

behavioral regularities of everyday life; language and language use; rituals and ceremonies, and relationships; The analytic task ... is to identify and explain the ways people use or operate in a particular setting; how they come to understand things; account for, take action and generally manage their day-to-day life (Berg and Lune, 2011, p.239.

III. CONCLUDING REMARKS
Some Preliminary Empirical Evidence on <u>Models of Inter-Ethnic Regulation as Concluding Remarks</u>

Hellenization has been the hegemonic narrative in the Republic of Cyprus, which as a 'consensual power' maintains and preserves its political and socio-cultural engulfment on a (sui generis) second smaller Greek state. This institutional control and the manner in which it is materialized, has significantly conditioned   the island's bi-ethnic historical dimension.

This is where Gramscian Critical Analysis with its social deconstructive potency can shed light on all aspects of the Cyprus Issue and their historical dynamic that contributed to the establishment of the current social and political formation on the island, and   orients to a great extend its future as well.

Since 1983, a dominant organic trend or a social regularity has been assimilated in both ethnic groups .Let us have a quick look.

Since 1960, the historical development of inter ethnic relations experienced various types of models of regulation. From a short-lived social and political pluralism up until 1963, to subjugation and segregation of the Turkish Cypriots by the Greek Cypriot community until 1974, and from then onwards the longest in time de facto partition between the communities, with each community enjoying its own distinct social regularity. This distinctive attribute has been extensively internalized by each community and it is manifested by two distinct stratification systems.

However, between the two systems lies a fundamental difference; neither in terms of habit, customs and tradition nor in terms of class power and prestige, which by themselves are formidable cultural forces and condition behavioral outcomes, but rather in terms of legitimacy.

The social regularity in the government controlled areas enjoys both internal and external legitimization. Following accession to the EU in 2004, it has safeguarded its international legitimacy for all socioeconomic strata. This legitimacy is derived from the international recognition the Republic of Cyprus enjoys. In stark contrast to the above, the "TRNC" enjoys only internal legitimization.

These organic trends concretely condition behavioral patterns and attitudes and influence the Greek Cypriots' collective mindset. And most probably, in like manner, they influence collective attitudes in the occupied north. The 1959- 1960 agreements encapsulated the misinterpretation of history, the result being unprecedented hardship on both communities. Today history, might have superseded the current framework of the inter-communal dialogue. Nevertheless, we have to wait to see its outcome, before we contemplate anything else.

Notes

note:1

For instance since the island's independence in 1960, school and public celebrations on April 1st every year commemorate the beginning of the liberation struggle by EOKA against the British. These celebrations are a diachronic institutional ritual (social representations) at both the political and educational levels. Their main objective is to reinforce Greek-Cypriot national identity and at the same time the [Greek-Cypriot] state's (social system) political and institutional legitimization. A circumstance based on EOKA's narrative as being the politically uncontested and unequivocal heroic liberators from British colonial rule.

note:2

Cognition: the mental action or process of knowing, including aspects such as awareness, perception, reasoning, judgment. Process of acquiring knowledge and understanding through thought, experience and the senses

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