<u>**WORK IN PROGRESS**</u>

NO PERMISSION TO CROSS: CYPRIOT WOMEN'S DIALOGUE ACROSS THE DIVIDE

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Abstract

In the last decade or so much scholarly attention has been given to the study of the gendered aspect of ethnonational conflicts trying to understand men's and women's experiences in a conflict situation and to what extent this shapes different types of intervention for peacemaking and peacebuilding (Sylvester,1989, Enloe 1988,1989, 2000, Cockburn.1998, 2004, Maynard &Winn 1997, Golan 1997, Sharoni, 1995, etc) Are women's experiences of the conflict different? Do women across the divide have a different voice than the mainstream dominant discourses as are produced by respective leaderships in a patriarchal system? Is militarism and violation of human rights experienced differently by women in conflict societies? Are women's needs across the divide different from each other and from those of men? This article tries to answer the above questions focusing on a feminist understanding of conflict in Cyprus. Specifically, empirical data/narratives (1995-96, 2003) will be used from different inter-ethnic women's workshops in which the author was either a participant observer or a facilitator. Cypriot women's voices and experiences are diverse and multiple. Both men and women are socialized in the same nationalist paradigm and this can explain how in the initial phases of the dialogue processes both groups of women tended to reproduce the official discourses. Their own experiences and differentiated voices started emerging only after a gender understanding of the conflict was introduced as well as trust and conflict resolution skills were being instituted in the dialogue process. Furthermore, women's dialogue came to challenge the omnipotence of the state and thus allows for a new space for diversity and a marketplace for ideas to emerge.

Introduction

Flying Away to the Other Side

Our birthplace is split in two and we
Are caught on barbed wire-hybrids
Turk and Greek alike

'Is it December is it July
Choose your Side
Are you Turkish or Greek
There's no Purgatory in between'.
……………………………..
We cannot be from both Sides
Because we are two, one and the other
       You refused to believe in:
We are loneliness itself   ("M. Yashin 2000, p.15)

Choose your Side!

In ethnonational conflicts members of opposing parties are called through dominant national

narratives, which are patriarchal, militaristic and oversimplified, to choose their **side** and locate

themselves on the conflict map. Chronology, (December 1963, 1967, July 1974, 1983 just to

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mention the most recent and contested dates) and issues, such as victimhood, truth, human rights violations, justice acquire a monofocal, musculinist meaning according to the processes of constructing memories and forgetting which enter into what Volkan (1987, p. 15.) aptly termed "chosen glories and chosen traumas ". What are the implications of this bipolar scenario for women and conflict resolution groups, who view political and ethnonational conflicts as having a multi-layered texture? Does a conflict culture, as it is defined by masculinist politics, one of whose many tasks is that of enemy construction, allow a narrow space for the development of alternative options and analyses? What is a feminist understanding of the Cyprus conflict and what have been the Cypriot women's interventions?

To discuss the above questions this article will present a feminist analysis of gender and conflict in Cyprus and how the inscription of conflict onto the Cypriot landscape can be changed through feminist practices such as dialogue and conflict resolution workshops. The constitution of the 'enemy' for both Greek and Turkish Cypriots and the ways in which, through conflict resolution workshops, Cypriots attempt to re-negotiate their sense of each other, and of the conflict in which they find themselves will also be presented.

I will first give a brief history of the Cyprus conflict so as to contextualize our ensuing discussion. Then as a Greek Cypriot who has been involved in bicommunal peace and conflict resolution work for over twenty-five years I present part of my own experience of being socialized into the "enemy image" and how I challenged that inscription. I then refer to the Turkish Cypriot experience in the "enemy socialization" process whereby I use both primary and secondary data. Second, a general discussion on Gender and Conflict followed by an analysis of Cypriot women's attempts to renegotiate their sense of each other, their multiple identities and the conflict. I use empirical data from conflict resolution women's workshops and inter-ethnic dialogues during the

period of 1995-96, 1999-2001, and 2003 in which I was a participant or a participant-observer and or a facilitator. Finally, I highlight some lessons learned and the need for future systematic research. One of the assumptions upon which I work is that both the feminist perspectives and conflict resolution processes open spaces for mutual acknowledgement of power disparities, creation of empathy, the need for emotionality and a "need for otherness" which lead to the development of a new shared narrative representing the "whole story" avoiding thus "compartmentalization" of issues which constitute part of the current unresolved Cyprus problem. The present dominant, official narrative is confrontational, and adversarial based on the "us and them" dichotomy and the "either …or" mentality.

Feminism as an ideology in all its different perspectives came to question bipolarities and social (class, color, religion, ethnicity, sexuality, etc) and gender divisions as well as existing ideologies and conventional political thought as inadequate vehicles for advancing the social role of women. The different kinds of feminism have succeeded in establishing gender and gender perspectives as important themes in a range of academic disciplines and in raising consciousness about gender issues in public life in general (Beasley 1999, Freedman 2001, Sharoni 1995) As have other social reform movements, feminism has lain emphasis on issues of equality, identity and difference. Patriarchy became an organizing concept to describe the power relations between men and women and how male dominance permeates all walks of life be it in the family, education, politics (issues of war and peace) at work and development. Millet (1970, p.25) described for instance 'patriarchal government as an institution whereby that half of the populace which is female is controlled by that half which is male.' She suggested that patriarchy contains two principles: male shall dominate female, elder male shall dominate younger.' Patriarchy is thus a hierarchic society characterized by both sexual and generational oppression. According to Sylvester (1989)

patriarchy is a system of power relations, which creates and bolsters male supremacy and denotes the historical depth of women's exploitation and oppression. Sylvester maintains that its emergence at different times in different societies maybe linked to man-the-hunter's use of tools as weapons to assault, and conquer. Socialist feminists tend to emphasize the economic aspects of patriarchy and in their view patriarchy operates closely with capitalism whereby gender subordination and class inequality become interlinked systems of oppression. Connected to this is the feminist questioning of the private/public divide, an aspect that interests us in this article as well as the position that the 'personal is political' as articulated by radical feminism. As one of the Turkish Cypriot women said in a dialogue session in 2003, " I want a solution (of the Cyprus conflict) to bring a culture of inclusion, everyone having a voice, everyone having an opportunity to contribute to change. I want an end to all divisions." And a Turkish Cypriot remarked, "I want a settlement to gain freedom from fear of renewed violence, freedom from suppression, freedom of speech, freedom to choose my own direction…."

One of the underlying principles of conflict resolution is the acknowledgement that power inequalities in all its manifestation including economic asymmetries constitute causes of conflicts. The Basic Human Needs (Burton 1990) perspective promotes the view that issues of identity, security, recognition, justice, and dignity need to be fulfilled in conflict societies whereby no group would feel being dominated by another. Within this understanding conflict resolution meets feminism in the common goal to bring about social and political change that would benefit all parties involved. Divided societies often view conflict as genderless and mobilize all polity to ascribe to this 'national cause'. A gendered understanding and analysis of the conflict experience is thus necessary so as to gain new insights into the causes of the conflict and the kind of conflict accommodation and social change that would be desirable. Both a feminist and conflict resolution

perspectives would promote the view that both sides' fears, needs, interests and concerns and men's and women's presence and contributions would be equally valued thus challenging the patriarchal norms in such societies. An interactive problem-solving approach, as has been used in the peacebuilding work in Cyprus, addresses adversarial masculinist conflict norms and power asymmetries which characterize deeply-divided societies and proposes a new understanding of and transformation in the relationship of the parties in conflict (Hadjipavlou-Trigeorgis 1998, Rouhana & Korper, 1997). A Turkish Cypriot woman articulated it in a 2003 inter-ethnc encounter, "I want people to be able to really try to talk to each other, to communicate the stories which at present we only hold in our minds because of fear. I want to hear their ideas about who we are. I then want to start a new story for our country, a new relationship."

Before I move to my own experience of the 'enemy construction' I will give below a brief history of the Cyprus conflict.

History of the Cyprus Conflict

The geo-strategic location of Cyprus in the easternmost part of the Mediterranean –40 miles south coast of Turkey, 60 miles from Syria, a 100 miles from Lebanon, 250 miles north of Egypt and 600 miles southeast of Greece—have made it vulnerable to outside conquests and interference. Whichever power dominated the region also controlled Cyprus. The various conquerors in different historical period left their imprints on the local landscape but by far the predominant character of the island has been determined in the second millennium B.C. with the arrival and settlement of the Mycenaean/ Achaeans from mainland Greece. They formed city-kingdoms on the Minoan model, and introduced the Greek language, religion and culture. To this day the Greek Cypriots, especially the nationalists, refer to this period to stress the Hellenic heritage and its continuity to the present. Another point of reference for the Greek Cypriots is the Byzantine

glory and culture. The fall of the city of the Byzantium, Constantinople, to the Ottomans marked a deep historical trauma for the Greeks and this gave rise to many patriotic myths to emerge in popular culture and school textbooks. Both Hellenism and Greek Orthodoxy formed the cultural configuration of the Greek Cypriots.

The Turkish Cypriot nationalists, on the other hand, stress the three centuries of the Ottoman presence (1571-1878) that determined the inter-ethnic character of the island and thus claim the island is Turkish. During the Ottoman rule the peasants, Christians and Moslems of the island lived and worked together under similar conditions whereby religious differences did not affect experiences of exploitation and poverty of them, "…the Ottoman system of land tenure and primitive agricultural practices were common to both communities.." (Crawshaw, 1978, p.122). Thus in the pre-nationalist era there were several uprisings by the Christian and Moslem population of Cyprus against the ruling elite which was made up of Ottoman administrators, landlords, and the higher Orthodox clergy which enjoyed high privileges until the Greek war of independence in 1821) (Hill 1952, Koumoulides, 1974, Hadjipavlou-Trigeorgis 1987, Kizilyurek, 2002).

After the Ottoman rule, some of the Moslems who stayed on the island together with Islamised Latins and Greeks (a practice used to pay fewer taxes) formed what became the Turkish Cypriot community. By 1960 the Turkish Cypriots comprised 18 percent of the population, Greek Cypriots 80 percent, with 2 percent Armenians, Maronites and Latins. The Population today is about 750,000 living in the south and close to 200,000 in the North (**check**….

In 1878 the British took control of the island, and Cyprus became a British colony in 1925 and acquired strategic importance after they lost the Suez Canal. It is important to mention that the emergence of the Greek nation state in 1824 and the trends of modernity had a great impact upon the traditional society of Cyprus as well as on the traditional co-existence of Muslims and

Christians. Religious identities were ethicised and a split in the coexistence fabric was introduced in the form of exclusive identities of Greeks and Turks accompanied by the past myth of 'historic enmity between Greeks and Turks' This impact crystallizes during the anti-colonial struggle in 1955-59 whereby the Greeks of Cyprus fought the British for "enosis" (union) with "motherland" Greece and the Turks of Cyprus for "taxim," partition that is, union of part of the island with "motherland" Turkey. The 1950s was also a period of the rise of intense inter-ethnic mistrust, suspicion and fears. According to Turkish Cypriot writers (Salih 1968, Nedjatigil, 1997, Kizilyurek 2003), the Turkish Cypriot leadership expected that sooner or later the Greek fighters would terrorize the Turkish Cypriot community, and so by 1957 the "Turkish Resistance Organization" (TMT) was formed in an effort to counteract the E.O.K.A (National Organization of Greek Cypriot Fighters). EOKA, which was led, by the Orthodox Church, and the guerrilla section of the movement by General G. Grivas and other conservative factions in the community was viewed as a 'terrorist organization' by the colonial government. The organization excluded the left because "they (nationalists) were in a hurry to have enosis realized so as to halt the spread of communism, the enemies of God and Hellenism" (Markides, 1977, p.15). Thus we see a split not only between communities but also within each community leaving little space for co-existence and cooperation. Furthermore, these organizations were conservative in orientation and both designed and run by men in a strictly patriarchal and exclusionary manner. Women had no voice but adopt the male agenda of "national struggle".

The British politicised communal differences to serve their colonial interests in the Middle East (Pollis, 1976, 1998). This reinforced the rise of the two antagonistic nationalisms and competing visions for Cyprus based on each group's "primordial attachments" to their respective motherlands. According to Kitromilides (!976 p.156) out of the configuration of two opposed,

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conservative and authoritarian nationalisms symbolically antagonistic, and mutually exclusive ,

developed the dialectic of intolerance that provided the ideological content of ethnic conflict

Cyprus is a case of an imposed agreement whereby a compromise settlement was worked

out by outside stakeholders--Greece, Turkey and Britain—excluding both partition and union, and

instead promoted independence, which led to the creation in 1960 of the Cyprus Republic. The two

Cypriot leaders, Dr. F. Kutchuk and Archbishop Makarios also signed the 'London-Zurich

agreement' (Xydis, 1973). Decolonisation, however, has never been completed since the British

still hold two sovereign bases on the island occupying 99 square miles of the territory and often

served as NATO bases (see map below) .

The top-down settlement ignored local realities (culture of intolerance, mistrust and inter-

ethnic antagonism) and micro level concerns (Hadjipavlou-Trigeorgis 1987) and thus the

constitutional arrangements that were also divisive leaving no room for integrative politics to arise

remained fragile. When President Makarios submitted his 13 amendments to the constitution the

Turkish Cypriots interpreted this as a threat to their communal rights and together with Turkey they

rejected them. Inter-ethnic violence broke out in December 1963 and later in 1967 (Kyriakides,

1968). This crisis resulted in the creation in 1963 of the "*Green line*", that is, a dividing line in the

capital of Nicosia to keep the two warring factions apart. This L*ine* was drawn by a British

commander and was later (March 1964) patrolled by the United Nations Peace Keeping Force.

Turkish Cypriot enclaves were set up in the major cities of the island where Turkish Cypriots

moved for security reasons (Patrick 1976, Attalides 1979). The year 1967 witnessed the first

concrete move for division and segregation of the two communities in the creation of a 'Provisional

Turkish Cypriot Administration'. The Turkish Cypriots having withdrawn from the government in

1963 exclusively the Greek Cypriots ran the Cyprus Republic. During these crises Turkey tried to

invade the island but the American administration prevented it for fear of a war between two NATO allies, Greece and Turkey.

The period between 1963 and 1974 was a time of unequal social and economic development, a factor that drew the two communities further apart, and a reality that persists to this day. Greek Cypriots experienced economic prosperity and modernization, whereas Turkish Cypriots entered a period of economic and cultural dependency on Turkey, which they regarded as their "protector" from Greek Cypriot domination. Their leadership promoted partition as the desirable solution reviving past grievances and hatred between Greeks and Turks. Efforts through the United Nations Secretary General's good offices to find a compromise solution led nowhere. In July 1974 the Greek junta launched a coup d´etat to topple the Makarios government and there followed the Turkish invasions on July 20 and August 14, respectively. This led: to de facto partition of the island, to the rearrangement of the Green Line to the "*Attila Line*" (120 miles long); to the displacement of nearly one third of the Greek Cypriot population (about 180,000) and of about 60,000 Turkish Cypriots; to the killing of hundreds of people from both sides, to the unknown fate of thousands of missing persons; and to an economic catastrophe.

In 1983 the Turkish Cypriot leadership in consultation with Turkey declared the "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" (TRNC) but failed to gain recognition by any other country but Turkey. This meant international isolation of the Turkish Cypriot community and increased dependency on Turkey in all aspects. Over the years the demographic composition in the north has changed with the influx of over 80,000 people from the poor Anatolian regions. They became known as "the settler problem". The issue of (non)recognition thus became a major political official tool to intimidate and prevent citizens from reaching to each other across the military lines.

A long series of inter-communal high-level negotiations have been conducted on and off since 1975 under UN auspices, but to this day no agreement has been reached. All these negotiations were exclusively conducted by male politicians and this gendered aspect was never questioned so was the latest initiative led by the UN Secretary General in what became known as the "*Annan Plan*" for a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus conflict. This plan was defeated in referenda on April 24, 2004, whereby the Greek Cypriots voted 76 % 'No' to the Plan and 67% of the Turkish Cypriots voted 'Yes'. This marked a new turning point in the recent history of the conflict in the sense that the "super ordinate goal" (Sherif 1961) the accession of the island to the European Union was not strong enough to overcome past divisions and fears.

Each side still holds a separate vision of what kind of Cyprus it imagines. Each side offers conflicting interpretations of the terms "bizonality, bi-communality, federation, and reunification". All these are concepts used in the High-level agreements of 1977 and 1979 and were accepted by the leaders of both communities. The "Annan Plan" was largely based on those guidelines and attempted to marry the competing interpretations as well as address the fears, grievances and interests of both communities. The final version, a compromise, in the "*Annan Plan, V*" was put before the people of both communities in the form of a referendum. The Turkish Cypriot majority viewed the "Annan Plan" as an opportunity for the future whereas for the majority of the Greek Cypriots it was a dangerous risk that would have led to the dissolution of the Cyprus republic and thus lead to new political adventures. The major issues of security, guarantees for the implementation of the Plan, territorial adjustments, and the property rights marked disagreements and contestations in the Greek Cypriot community. A by-product of the conflict was the creation of new economic elites in both communities subsequently many of them remain invested in the continuation of the conflict.

The partial opening of the *Line* on April 23, 2003, by the Turkish side, marked a historical opportunity for inter-ethnic (re)approchement. No violent incidents occurred; a public euphoria and a desire for solution and reunification were created. Moreover, the 2003 elections in the North of Cyprus gave a majority to the pro-solution forces headed by a left wing prime minister, Mr. M. Talat. Turkish Cypriots, primarily women and youth were out in the streets promoting a change to partition and ethnic division. In Turkey, for the first time, the government of Tayyip Erdogan challenged the military bureaucratic establishment and supported the '*Annan Plan V'* as well as working its position toward getting a date for European Union accession negotiations. The decision was taken on December 17, 2004 whereby Turkey was given October 3, 2005 for the opening of negotiations. Turkey refused to unconditionally recognize the Republic of Cyprus insisting on a Cyprus solution prior to October 2005. In theory it is the expressed desire of all interested parties.

Polarization ensued after the referenda. The social and political euphoria and hopes have died off in the Turkish Cypriot community. Instead, suspicions and a renewed sense of betrayal arose, especially among the Turkish Cypriot left. Both the international community and the European union took initiatives to help the Turkish Cypriot community get out of its decades' old isolation and economic stagnation. It still remains to see whether the present partition will continue as it is with certain modifications or whether reunification efforts would be intensified in the coming year creating a new imagination for all Cypriots.

In the meantime, new generations have grown up in each community having distorted information about the other and feelings of mistrust, stereotyping and psychological distancing.. Selective histories and memories are used as "text," to dehumanize the other and thus justify the division (Hadjipavlou 2002, Bryant, 1998). It is within this context that women and other social groups from both sides have been for years challenging the conflict culture and official narratives.

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The "*Annan Plan V*" became a victim of the adversarial, confrontational politics on the island. This failure also points out the absence of *a culture for a solution* as well as a lack of linkages between macro (Decision-making level) and micro (societal) level initiatives and activities (Hadjipavlou-Trigeorgis, 1987, 1998). By a *culture for a solution* I mean the reframing of the conflict as a shared problem to be solved cooperatively whereby the Cypriots would be the owners of the joint agreement, thus both sides committed to a shared vision. All state and non-state institutions-education, the church, the media, the semi governmental organizations, the NGOs, etc,- should be actively engaged in the construction of the culture for a solution, that is preparing the *solution mentality* and the emergence of new images and information about the other (Hadjipavlou, 2004). A culture for a solution would address the question of what is "good for all Cypriots" and would have discussed the Annan Plan or any other plan as a common project to benefit both sides.

Instead, still everywhere in Cyprus the militaristic environment and the "enemy images" are visible in the barbed wires, the military posts, the blue berets, and the blue and green posters which read: "Buffer UN Zone"; "Beware Mine Fields"; "NO Entry; Occupied Zone"; "Dead Zone"; "No Photographs-Security Zone". Flags of all kinds are seen together or apart: the Greek flag, the flag of the Cyprus Republic, the red Turkish flag, the blue UN flag, and the TRNC flag, and now the EU flag, all reminding us how strong national symbols and nationalism are still on the island.

Greek Cypriot women, mothers and sisters, and those grandmothers who are still alive, dressed in black and wearing black headscarfs hold tightly the photographs of their missing loved ones. These relatives, who have been instrumentalized by the state, stand every Saturday at the police check point in the buffer zone in Nicosia (see map below) not only to express to passers-by their pain and right to know what happened to their relatives since thirty years, but to also project the "badness of the barbarian other". The fear of coping with otherness excludes mention of the

Turkish Cypriot missing since 1963. Recently a feminist journalist raised through interviews the case of the missing in both communities and a new investigation has just begun (S. Ulutag 2003-4)

In the meantime the conflict culture promotes the victimhood role, often essentializing the other in an effort to justify one's own claim for justice and its political maximalist positions. One of the institutions that engage in the reproduction of ethno-national conflict is both formal and informal education. Below I give such an example from my own experiences.

Multiple and opposing realities: Diversity in "Enemy Images"

When I was a child in the mid 1950s I learned that the *British* colonialists were my island's enemy. This was during the " anti-colonial, liberation struggle (1955-59)" which was fought by brave E.O.K.A fighters demanding Enosis with "motherland" Greece. The *Turkish Cypriots* who promoted either the prolongation of the colonial status quo or "taxim", partition also became my island's enemy. Later, in high school in the mid 1960s *Turkey* became the fearful enemy which tried unsuccessfully "to invade the fragile, independent state", after the Turkish Cypriot insurrection in *December* 1963 and later in 1967. (The Greek Cypriot responsibility was silenced. I was told nothing of the terror some extremists from my community caused the Turkish Cypriots. The expulsion and isolation they experienced. (I read about the other's perspective when I was at the university and when I listened to Turkish Cypriots in conflict resolution workshops in the early 1980s). Had it not been for the American administration (President Johnson), I was told, Turkey would have occupied   the island in 1964 and 1967 claiming to have come to safeguard the lives of the Turkish Cypriot minority.

 In the mid 1970s, however, the *American* administration and its Central Intelligence Agency (C.I.A) became the enemy that plotted to destroy the non-aligned status of my homeland and to get rid of the democratically elected president and turn Cyprus into a NATO base.

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I remember our teachers taking us to the *National Struggle Museum* to see the guillotine where the colonialists hanged the young EOKA fighters. Some of us had nightmares after such visits and hated the British. (Decades later, (early 1990s) my daughter in the elementary school experienced the same horror when taken to the same museum and to the "imprisoned graves" of EOKA heroes and how she was told "we must never forget their heroism and bravery").

Years later, the *junta* which ruled *Greece* from 1967-74, became, together with *Turkey*, in 1974, the most severe enemies since the first staged a fascist coup (betrayal of motherland) and the second (a saviour for the Turkish Cypriots) invaded militarily the island, *July 15 and July* 20, and *August 14*, respectively. These dates constitute reference points of national mourning in the Greek Cypriot textbooks since " Attila divided our homeland with many tragic consequences." The Greek Cypriot children learn about new heroes and new enemies. In the meantime more statues are everywhere to commemorate their sacrifice and bravery. Pupils are reminded of their responsibility to liberate the "enslaved lands". The "Attila Turks", did not show any respect to our churches and cemeteries and to archaeological sites, which are a proof of our Hellenic and Byzantine past. We are constantly told that our government has launched an international campaign for justice to prevail on our side. The Greek Orthodox Church has joined in the struggle. New textbooks are written with the general theme " I *Do not Forget and I struggle*". The socialization into the conflict continues to this day. Issues about textbook revision and eliminating references to otherness in a demeaning way meet with resistance from nationalist educationists (The state uses its power to mobilize the youth for its own purpose as it happened in the pre-referenda period in March 2004, where schoolchildren were seen promoting the "No" vote wearing stickers from head to toe) .

When I became an adult with two degrees, one from a British university and in the late 1980s a doctorate from an American university and a Fulbright scholarship I travelled a number of times

to Turkey for conferences and for conflict resolution and gender workshops. And so what have I made out of this socialization into multiple enemies? Through personal experiences of meeting the "other" and my education in conflict resolution and feminist perspectives of conflict analysis I was able to question the notion of "generalized primordial enemies" and discover that within the "enemy camp" I could find peace activists, men and women with whom I could communicate and work together. I also discovered that there are multiple narratives that cut across gender, class and ethnicity. The ability to experience others in all their contradictions and complexities can serve as antidotes to the simplistic essentializing view that a certain nation are "all bad and will never change". Most importantly through my contacts with otherness I was able to learn a great deal about myself and my community and that our collective identities are not a given but are constantly being renegotiated and that there is a lot of overlap between Greek and Turkish cultures.

I have learned that both sides have their own share of responsibility in the creation and perpetuation of the conflict thus the conflict is a shared prioblem. In fact the construction of an enemy serves a need in that an enemy is seen as a reservoir into which all our shared unwanted aspects can be deposited. After my meeting the other I made a conscious decision to become involved in bicommunal groups working toward softening the hard *Lines* and the conflict mentality. Not an easy task because this involves reformulating existing knowledges, processes and overcoming simplistic classifications.

The Line " No Permit to Cross! Occupied Area "

This *line* is about a 112 miles long stretching across the island separating us in North and South. According to one's positioning in politics, ideology and history, this line is referred to as the *green line*, the *ceasefire* line, the dead *zone*, the *demarcation* line, the *partitioning* line, the *Attila* line, the *no-man's land*, or the *border* These different designations of the "*line*" constitute part of

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the collective historical and political experience in each Cypriot community. This *Line* has acquired

both a symbolic and a physical presence in our daily life. The ideology of rapprochement after 1974

invited citizens to do away with the *Line* and rediscover or discover each other through dialogue

thus exploring the diverse cartography of historical and political experiences.

Cynthia Cockburn in her book *The Line* (2004) describes the performance of a Greek

Cypriot dancer *Walking the Line* in her effort to converse with the partition of Cyprus and she

writes:

"What strikes me about this scene is that the dividing line seems to be alive. The rope slithers and
slides, now one thing, now another. This helps me to see how a geo-political partition is not just
armored fencing, it is also a line inside our heads, and in our hearts. In fact the physical fence is a
manifestation of these more cognitive and emotional lines that shape our thoughts and feelings….
When we are afraid or angry at some identifiable moment, a line springs out and plants itself in the
earth as a barrier. It becomes The Line, and passage across it is controlled, by uniformed men, at a
Checkpoint."

These internal "demarcation lines" are indeed the most difficult to rearrange because of the emotional and psychological baggage they carry. A long process of intervention is needed. This I will describe later in the paper. I will now briefly refer to the Turkish Cypriot "enemy socialization"

The Turkish Cypriot Context

From my experience in cross-ethnic encounters and conflict resolution workshops as well as from recent Turkish Cypriot activists and authors we hear of similar process in "enemy socialization" taking place in the Turkish Cypriot community. The information provided here derives from both the official discourse; the media and the personal stories participants share in conflict resolution workshops where the "personal narrative" is used as a tool in reconciliation. Similar experiences of displacement and uprooting of the Turkish Cypriots, in both the pre and post independence periods- 1958, 1963-64 and 1967, 1974- led to the development of a Turkish Cypriot collective narrative about the "other", mainly the Greek Cypriots who are referred to as the "Rums" and the "enemy". This period is used as the most frequently quoted "chosen trauma" to demonise the other. The Turkish Cypriots experienced the military intervention in *July* 1974 as a "peace operation" and as a redemption of their long suffering in enclaves (Volkan 1979).

Collective memories and their reproduction accentuate chosen aspects of the experience of conflict and war, often disconnected from their social context, historical circumstances and material conditions and even human interactions. Furthermore, official war narratives are often sustained by the reference to individual testimonies, audio-visual documentation of atrocities pointing at the cruelty of the enemy as men in official posts have produced these. Many schools in the north of Cyprus, for instance, carry the names of "martyrs", the statute of Kemal Ataturk and the two flags- one Turkish and the other the TRNC. Motherland Turkey as the "rescuer" is promoted in all official

discourses. Many of these schools were prior to 1974 Greek Cypriot elementary or high schools but as a Turkish Cypriot activist said:

"I don't think any teacher would give an assignment to the students about the history of the school building. Or if she or he would talk about it would be to give the historical narrative that would justify the situation. Very probably it would be like this: 'our oppressed people were liberated one day thanks to the Turkish army who gave us all these opportunities for the future." (Yashin 2002, p.415).

The Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot participants in conflict resolution training workshops and ïnter-ethnic encounters, especially the youth, come laden down with the "barbarian other" in their mental maps. One of the young Turkish Cypriot women shared her experience with the group, after meeting the "other":

What I have learned in my school and the mass media about the Greeks is not completely true. Discovering it I feel pain and shame for being cheated… as children we learn not to challenge what the authorities tell us. The patriarchal system exerts control over us through fanaticism and militarism. I now know I have friends on the other side and I feel safe being with them.

Some other Turkish Cypriot participants, especially women, mentioned the impact school visits to the "*Museum of Barbarism*" have had on their minds and feelings in constructing the "cruel, fearful other". They later talked about the nightmares they experienced after that visit (Hadjipavlou-Trigeorgis, 1998, Killonan, 1998). In the words of a female participant:

The education in our schools poisons the minds and souls of our young children who have had no experience of the other community. We take the children to the Museum of Barbarism and we teach them to be afraid of the Greeks and hate them. We show them the atrocities committed by the Greeks and the enlarged pictures of mass graves. In the end they have nightmares. I am twenty-three years old and I still do. We must do something to stop this… We have no appropriate services to help these children deal with these fears and to tell them that there are good Greeks too. Chauvinism and racism are on the increase. There is urgency to do something…(Conflict resolution workshop, 1995)

The issue of re-membering and not-forgetting are significant aspects of national narrative, filled with martyrs, heroes, monuments, statues and public representations, all leading to a

Patriarchal sense of "our national identity and family", never allowing any hints about the presence of a "barbarous self" within the "barbarous other" because the naming of the enemy becomes a shared socio-cultural experience for each side.

Neshe Yashin , a Turkish Cypriot poet, recalled as a pupil being taken to this same museum on a school field trip:" In our childhood they took us to the Barbarism Museum…and we saw dead people, we saw the blood and this because they want us to never forget the war…. Seeing is enacting a story, a memory, a history" (Killoran, 1998, p.163).

War and specifically inter-ethnic strife act as catalysts, in recharging and resurfacing un-addressed trauma, past grievances and instincts of survival creating patterns of behaviors in everyday life which aim to reinforce the badness of the other (Evans & Lunn, 1997). The Turkish Cypriot writer and poet, Mehmet Yashin, who has been opposing ethnic separation, and militarism spoke in a simple and powerful way about the absurdity of the "us" and "them" dichotomy in one of his poignant short poems titled ,"*Our Cat's Tale*" showing the denial of the existence of the "hidden barbarity in the us" and acknowledging insightfully the "evil" within the in-group as much as in the out-group. And yet, this mutual recognition and acknowledgement of each other's legitimate pain and suffering has taken place neither at official nor at unofficial collective levels:

> *When I was a child I used to wonder*
> *If our Greek neighbor's cat*
> *Was also Greek.*
> *One day I asked my mum*
> *And she said cats were Turkish*
> *Dogs were Greek*
> *And dogs attacked the kittens.*
>
> *Much later one day*
> *What should I see?*
> *Our cat was eating*
> *Her own kitten.*
>   (M. Yashin, 2001, p 81)

Another point, which is profoundly made in the poem, refers to the role women play in reproducing nations and the national agendas. According to Yuval Davis (1993) it is not just bureaucracy and the hegemonic intelligentsia who have access to state apparatus who reproduce nations but also women, biologically, culturally and symbolically. The division of civil society into public and private domains and thus women and the family being part of the private domain are not thought of as politically relevant. Furthermore, nationalism and nations have usually been discussed as part of the public political sphere; the exclusion of women from that arena has affected the exclusion from discourses as well (Yuval-Davies 1993, p.622). And moreover as Cypriot women said in a dialogue meeting (2003) they are expected to reinforce the reductive, ethnically produced narrative, which they internalize as being their national duty.

But there are cases of others who challenge this "duty ". For instance, after the opening of the *Green Line* (border) in Nicosia some Turkish Cypriot mothers who have crossed the *Line* told me their sons and daughters refused to cross to the other side because "they are scared the Greeks will harm them as they did to our community in the 1960s." The mothers tried to convince them that nothing wrong would happen and that there were good people on the other side too but their children were still fearful, taking refuge in the images their teachers and the media portrayed of the "other" across the Divide. There are, of course, Greek Cypriots, many of my students (men and women) for instance, who told me they would not cross to the north because they were angry at the presence of the Turkish army and at the fact that they had to show their identification card to the Turkish police at the check point: "this is my country and I am not going to a foreign country so as to have to show my ID card. Anyway I have never met a Turkish Cypriot and I do not know how to approach them and what to say," many insist. Other students out of curiosity crossed the Line to visit their parents´ villages and homes but returned disappointed because the places were not as they

had seen them in photographs so they refuse to go again. Some other Greek Cypriots refuse to drive to the other side "not to dirty the wheels of their car", implying the other across the *Line* is dirty and "we are clean".

The new generations under the influence of their schooling and official narratives have formed an imaginary of the other and the inscription is often so sharp that realities were formed on assumptions that have never been tested. Once these images become complex and blurred as happens in conflict resolution workshops then the participants start confronting their own mental maps and with the help of a facilitator they start rearranging the mapping. It is usually a painful process but a necessary one if people want to move ahead beyond the conflict culture which dichotomizes experiences and uses hierarchies to politically manipulate differences and undermine any shared cultural experiences. Thus the distance widens amongst the people whereby the militaristic and patriarchal aspect of the conflict prevails. I will now turn to a brief discussion about women's struggles in conflict societies before I discuss the Cypriot women's experiences.

Women's Struggles and Feminist strategies

According to Coomeraswamy (2001) there exists a need for more dialogue within the international community about what is meant by 'gender lens' and issues of feminism with regard to conflict and conflict resolution. The discussion from a gender perspective of international conflict and peace building processes is gaining ground in view of the gaps and limitations of existing international policies and programs, mainly framed by men, relating to conflict prevention and conflict resolution. There is also an increasing need to reconsider the changing global context of men's lives and contemporary masculinities. Today a plethora of literature looks at gendered aspects of the social phenomena of war and peace, of security and human needs informing us of the

different socializing influences on how men and women behave and respond to these phenomena (Pearson 2000, Cockburn 1998, Enloe 1983, 1990, Maynard and Winn 1997, Sylvester1989).

It has also been noted that the military as an institution plays a big role in reproducing masculinity and femininity as a result of its dependence on gender divisions. For instance as the "custom" goes fighting and war is the job and duty of "real men" and women ought be excluded. Alternatively women can spend time to support the men who hold the guns morally, physically and materially. As Cynthia Enloe argued :militaries not only need 'men' that is, to be willing to kill and die on behalf of the state to prove their 'manhood' but militaries also need women to behave as the 'gender women'(Peterson and Runyan 1993, pp.83-4)

The consequences of armed conflict on the lives of women and children has been well-documented by national and international organizations as this reflects on the large world military budget at the expense and detriment of the civilian population's needs (Fisher 1998?).   War is thus gendered. War destroys everyday life, "… involving the specific destruction of the homesteads, animals, gardens, shops and markets that are the basis of family life. Women (in the war in Bosnia) were the majority of those who became refugees and internally displaced people. These were shockingly unanticipated identities for women who had lived their previous lives in a modern developed country. Nothing had prepared them for this" (Cockburn, 1998, p..). Similar has been the experience of women refugees worldwide, including the experience of Cypriot women displaced in 1963-67 and 1974 to this day.

Ann Ticker, wrote in 2001 about her experiences of the war and bombing of Kosovo and how the media reports portrayed NATO spokesmen with charts, and maps briefing on bombings, targets and the "wonders" of new high technology warfare:

Beyond the images of the men, we saw more chaotic images of refugees many of them women and children being helped by aid workers, many of them also women. All of them seemed overwhelmed by the task. These are all gendered images: male heroes making sacrifices for their countries, women far from the centers of power, caring for the victims or as victims themselves (p..)

Moreover as Coomeraswamy reminds us victimization of women in ethnic conflicts takes many forms, their bodies turned into platforms for revenge and humiliation of the enemy:

"… it is necessary to understand that rape, sexual violence and forced pregnancy are directly related to the male dominated social systems and values that govern those who are fighting. A community's honor , especially at times of conflict, often rests on the bodies of women. To defile that honor is to humiliate the whole community. Women's bodies become the battlefield, the point of communication between men… (Coomeraswamy, 2001, p..).

Cynthia Cockburn (1998) also informs us from her research in conflict –ridden communities that the role of women during conflict is primarily humanitarian (securing food, shelter, and health) as well as trying to heal themselves and others of psychological traumas and wounds. Women put their traditional roles asunder and become the main breadwinners, and heads of families. Adolescent girls mature and become women more quickly and if mothers are killed they assume the mother role. Women build networks for solidarity with other women and form groups to protest resumption of violence both in and outside the home. For as Cynthia Enloe (1989, p.13) argues "the national political arena is dominated by men but allows women some select access whereby they are expected not to shake masculine presumptions'.

After the warfare and violent conflicts women are called upon to re-construct the society and mend the pieces left. According to Brock-Utne (1985 p.33) women's socialization and experiences impart a privileged understanding of oppression, injustice, and that, which passes for power in a patriarchal society. Many women in Bosnia for instance advocated the establishment of peace institutions and centers to promote nonviolence, the gender equality agenda and women's rights (Teselic 1997, Andric-Ruzicic 1997, McCann 1997 Golan 1997). In the aftermath of warfare,

as Harding (1986, p.26) informs us victimization continues for both as widows and heads of families women are under great threat due to social conventions, power relations which bolster male supremacy or local traditions which often denote the depth of women's exploitation and oppression. For instance, in Rwanda where 57 percent of the population is female, the laws forbid women from inheriting land or property and are under threat of eviction or rely on male relatives.

At a Balkan women's conference in Athens (February 2001) I was alarmed listening to the women from all the south-eastern European countries agreeing that the role and position of women in their countries has become more devalued and inferior than it used to be before the democratization processes began and that domestic violence was on the increase. Gender inequalities, women's exploitation, trafficking of women and girls, poverty and oppression have become everyday experiences in these countries as new forms of colonialism.

A very important aspect feminists have promoted is the conviction that there is a relationship among all forms of violence- interpersonal, domestic, social, institutional and international. This stems from imbalances in a male-dominated world where women's participation and perspectives on important issues of war and peace are still absent. Patriarchy builds its own self-preservation mechanism, as Sylvester reminds us:

> As with most accepted ideologies and practices, once in place, patriarchy is self sustaining: if a majority of politicians, priests, ministers, popes, professors, chairs of corporate boards, physicians, job supervisors, judges and peace makers are always men, then challenges to that group's monopoly can actually seem unnatural, silly or even harmful to social order…. Patriarchy is a system in which there is constant, covert, low-intensity, structural warfare against women-in "war and in "peace"…. With the cessation of "hostilities" women have been abruptly dismissed from the homefront jobs that pay, and sent back to their "natural" nonpaying jobs in the private household. Both the shooting wars and subsequent peace contain hidden wars of dominance over women (Sylvester 1989, p.99-100)

According to UNICEF statistical information (1997) women hold only 7% of ministerial positions globally and in executive posts only 4%; in law and justice 10%; in economic ministerial

positions 4 percent In legislatures only 11.7% are held by women; only 7.1% of world legislatures are presided over by women and 10.8% are women political party leaders. The under-representation of women in decision-making centers where issues of war and peace are being decided was aptly brought up during the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, 1995 and is adequately mentioned in the Plan of Action Document. The UN Security Council Resolution 1325 of 2000 reaffirmed, among other issues, the role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding and noted the need to consolidate data on the impact of armed conflict on women and girls and expressed its willingness to incorporate a gender perspective into peacekeeping operations, and urges the Secretary General to ensure that where appropriate, field operations would include a gender component.

The debate over "nature" or "nurture" on issues and behaviors relating to war and peace also entered the debate among feminists and it was expressed in diverse ways. Some feminists explain women's "peacefulness" in terms of their ability to be mothers, that is, they argue that women have some special biological connection to the significance of life and therefore the mother is "moral by default" (Woehrle, 1993). Others speak of "preservative love (Ruddick, 1983), which is developed from the responsibility of the mother to preserve and protect the child. Thus Ruddick argues that preservative love is the basis for women's peacefulness, "women learn preservative love from being daughters and from being mothers, and thus we learn the pacifism which opposes fundamental military values (p.479). The problem of this argument, apart from excluding the possibility that some men, as sons and husbands and fathers can also learn "preservative love and be peaceful", it implies that the "moral mother" is biologically framed, something that has been contested by other feminists who believe that the values of caring, non-violence and relational connections *are learned* and girls are socialized in these values and attitudes whereas boys are

socialized into being strong, independent, self-relying, powerful, aggressive and as young men are

prepared by society for war (Gilligan 1978?, Eisler 1990, Brock-Utne 1987, Francis 2004). Francis

(2004) for example argues that in a patriarchal system women, too, contribute to the construction of

masculinity as aggressive:

> Women at times goat men to greater violence- for instance, distributing white feathers to men not enlisting in World War I or identifying potential victims for slaughter in the Hutu genocide against Tutsis in Rwanda Through such displays of supportive aggression they may be playing out a "non-feminine" aspect of their own personality , but they are also making their own gender roles subservient to those of their men. In fact as most recent discussion of war trauma confirms , to commit acts of violence does not come naturally to most people. Soldiers have to be trained and 'psyched up' for it, because it goes against the grain, and are liable to be profoundly disturbed after it. Post-traumatic stress has acquired the status of a recognized syndrome" (p.67).

I agree with Hooks (2000) that dualistic thinking reinforces the cultural, biological sexism

which suggests to be male is synonymous with aggression and the will to dominate and do violence

whereas to be female is synonymous with weakness, passivity, submission and the will to nourish

the others.

> "In keeping with the tenets of sexist ideology, women are talked about in these discussions as objects rather than subjects We are depicted not as workers and activists, who like men, make political choices but as passive observers who have taken no responsibility for actively maintaining the value system of this society…. which advocates and makes war. Discussions of feminism and militarism that do not clarify for women the roles we have played and play in all their variety and complexity make it appear that *all* women are against war and oppose the use of violence, and that men are the problem, the enemy. This is a distortion of women's experience, not a clarification or a redefinition… we need to see women as political beings…(pp.127-128)

Other feminist theorists (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1989) maintain that women's

involvement and participation in the processes of war and national struggles take the form of:

biological reproducers of members of ethnic groups, of reproducers of boundaries of these groups

as well as participating centrally in the ideological reproduction of the ethnic collectivity and as

transmitters of its culture. Furthermore, women act as symbols for the reconstruction, reproduction,

and transformation of ethnic and national identity and become participants in national, economic, political and military struggles. Thus ethnic nationalisms tend to reinforce the power and privileges of patriarchal institutions by forcing women to demonstrate their loyalty to these institutions and by turning them into symbols of their national collectivities.

This role is often been challenged by groups of those women with a gender consciousness in deeply-divided societies. For example, the political agency independence, and active participation of Palestinian women in the first *intifada* (1989) called into question their stereotypical depictions as passive, subservient, dependent and confined to the home   This has also had a big impact on Jewish feminist movement in Israel and abroad and coalitions and new alliances among women were formed to mobilize support against the occupation (Sharoni 1995). Similarly, the women of *Hands Across the Divide* in Cyprus protested the official time limit on cross-visits after April 2003 staging the "Cinderella time" theater thus ridiculing the irrationality of such controlling measures. This generated public discussion and the "time limit" soon became an obsolete military measure. .

In my view women should be seen as political and social agents making political decisions and choices who have power, different kinds of power. In order to develop this view of ourselves we need to develop gender awareness which means becoming aware how women and men are socialized in the needs of the patriarchal system and the gendered needs of power structures as laid out by a few ruling elite men. This type of culture which is viewed, as a form of colonialism tends to advance one group at the expense of the other and generate multiple divides, especially ethnic ones. For as Patty Walton (1983, p.44) suggests :

"…the work of women supports both a society's war and its peace activities. And our support has derived from our particular socialization as women. In fact, the socialization of women and men complements the needs of the culture in which we live. It is necessary to recognize this because we need to change these material relationships and not just the sex of our world problem-

makers. Men are not more innately aggressive than women are passive. We have culture of war as we have cultures of peace"

Brock-Utne (1985) has also shown that gender difference is generated in upbringing and education of girl and boy children. For instance, girls are socialized into supporting peace in a more concrete and inclusive framework and in the values of forgiveness and caring about the other. Women, Brock-Utne has found in her research, support, on the whole, more equal distribution of resources than men, reduction of military budgets, advocate dialogue and non-violence as means to solve differences and conflicts. Another finding in Brock-Utne's work relates to the structural changes promoted by women and men who support "positive peace" (i.e. gender equality and equal opportunities). In a nation state when the defense expenditure is high then the women suffer much more than men in terms of employment opportunities, and are dismissed from work more easily. This indicates the need for a feminist policy on issues of defense and security.

In national governments and parliaments where there is a critical mass of women in the centers of decision-making it was observed that the priorities of those nation-states were focused more on issues of peace, abolition of all forms of violence, promotion of gender equality, quality Education for all in comparison to the political and social agendas of other countries in which women were absent or very few in decision-making bodies (B. Brock-Utne, 1982c.)

The work of Cypriot women I discuss below connects to the issues above in the sense that women's groups in Cyprus have refused to conform with the nationalist agenda of patriarchal institutions and decided to look at women's condition through the gender lens and the feminist ideology and values which they also see connected to the conflict resolution principles. These women tried to transcend the *Line* in all its manifestations and create spaces for the articulation of

their experiences of the conflict and of the "Other". In addition, these women opened a new space for a shared narrative to be created with possibilities for reconciliation.

Conflict resolution puts the citizens back in the process of political participation and empowerment as does feminism in that citizens become agents for political and social change In this sense international conflict is viewed both as a conflict between nation-states and between societies. This means that processes within and between societies can create a political environment, which can influence de-escalation of the conflict and contribute to its resolution. The basic human needs cannot be ignored in any political arrangement, "Only this kind of solution is capable of transforming the relationship between societies locked into a protracted conflict that engages their collective identities and existential concerns (Rouhana & Kelman 1994, p.159).   The proactive view of national interests and the feminist understanding of security support the view that protracted conflict relationships are susceptible to a range of influence processes from both official and unofficial sources (Kelman 1979, Cockburn 2004). Let us now look at the Cypriot women's experiences and efforts to reach across to the other and jointly create a feminist understanding of the conflict culture within and across the divide.

Cypriot women's intervention and feminist practices

…..Too, too late, we are, Cleopatra
look… look at our sons
they are holding guns again
listen… listen to my cry Cleopatra, our sons are being killed
one from your side, one from my side
one from my side, one from your side
and then years follow years
killings by killings
Let us think for once who is the real loser
Instead of politicians,
Let us , we, the mothers
Speak NOW Cleopatra   (Neriman Cahit, We are Too Late Cleopatra, 1995)

Neriman is a Turkish Cypriot (TC) woman poet speaking to her friend Cleopatra, a Greek Cypriot (GC) teacher on the other side of the divide calling her to join hands to plant almond trees along the Green *Line* so that the children can fly their kites safely. Mothers have always lost in Cyprus "*let us make sure, Cleopatra that our children win for once*". The struggle of these women still continues. Of course as elsewhere, in Cyprus, too, the virtues of heroine mothers offering their sons to the state and national cause has been stressed in occasions of national movements and external threats or during national celebrations. A special understanding of womanhood and femininity is then promoted and is often internalized by women as their "national duty". Images of motherhood equated with nationhood appear in the Cypriot history textbooks. Many Cypriot women have spoken in conflict resolution workshops about this dilemma as does Neriman in the above poem where she tries to break away from this gender stereotype and resist militarization and the act of war and killing "the enemy".

I have spoken and written in detail elsewhere about the conflict resolution and unofficial citizens' work in Cyprus (Hadjipavlou-Trigeorgis, 1993, 1998, Hadjipavlou, 2001). Here I will mainly discuss Cypriot women's voices and efforts toward a gender understanding of the conflict and peace-building. I refer to two specific groups and their struggles within a conflict and patriarchal culture. One is *the Bicommunal Women's group* (1995-1996) and the other is *Hands Across the Divide* (2003-till now)

The women of Cyprus, Greek and Turkish, as I have already mentioned, have experienced interethnic violence and war, displacement, rape, loss of beloveds and dignity, lack of opportunities for growth and economic hardship. This connects them with women in other conflict situations such as in Palestine and Israel, Northern Ireland, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Rwanda, etc. The memory and collective experience of conflict events for the Cypriots across the divide differ in time and

intensity. It is important for each group to understand these different experiences relating to ethnic nationalisms and to a patriarchal social system. There still exists the collective attitude in each community that it is *only we who suffered and became uprooted.* What happened to the other was unintended; it was an accident of war. The prevalent narrative still denies the other's pain, suffering and loss and institutionalises "high politics" whereby "recognition phobia" would hold back inter-ethnic contacts.

Methodology-The Formation of the Groups

The *Bi-communal Women's Group* (thereafter BWG)(1995-96) composed of 22 individuals (eleven women from each side) of different ages, social and educational backgrounds came together at the initiative of both a third party, a Fulbright scholar, Dr. Benjamin. Broom and two local coordinators. I was one of the coordinators in the south and Sefgul Ulutag, a feminist journalist from the North. This was the first attempt to fill in the "missing feminist voice and perspective " of the Cyprus conflict and engage in dialogue about our perceptions of the other and jointly choose how to move forward. All the previous conflict resolution workshops did not address gender as a specific legitimate category of analysis of the Cyprus experience. The BWG were not all feminists, some were aware of gender analysis, others felt that the conflict was "genderless because everybody suffered, as did the women". Some of the women had been to other bicommunal conflict resolution mixed groups while some met the "other" for the first time. The group worked either separately or together twice a week for nine months. When the Turkish Cypriot women got permission to cross the *Line* to the buffer zone the meetings were held at the Ledra Palace Hotel, which is under the UN peacekeeping contingent. A room was provided for the group. Over the years this space became the symbol for rapprochement and conflict resolution work. In Cyprus we have the phenomenon where no women's independent movement or feminist women's groups developed. All existing women's

organizations are affiliated to political parties which often adopt the party agenda which is based on a male understanding of politics and conflict excluding the gender issue as unimportant to be tackled with. In fact, the Cypriot women from all communities believe that the national problem has silenced all other social issues, including women's issues (Hadjipavlou 2004)

Hands Across the Divide (HAD) constitutes the first independent Cypriot women's NGO. Together with other women I was one of the cofounders. It was registered in 2001 in Britain due to the political obstacle of "(non)recognition". Cynthia Cockburn has helped the Cypriot women both in the formation of the group as well as in securing funding from the British Council and Mama Cash. Many more details about HAD can be found in Cockburn's newly published book "*The Line*",2004). Since the embargo on "crossings" to and from the *Line* has been lifted, HAD members have proposed the re-registration of their NGO in the Cyprus Republic so as to benefit from funding privileges. This women's organization aspires to become the first independent movement and to raise public consciousness on the issues of gender equality and women's human rights as important as other social and political issues (Agathangelou 2003). Moreover, the understanding of gender, as pointed out earlier in the paper, introduces complex discourses, power relations and practices that shape and inform particular notions of femininity, masculinity and asks questions about a complex set of behaviours, social norms, systems of meaning, ways of thinking and relationships that affect how we experience, understand and represents ourselves as men and women (Sharoni 1995).

The *BWG* worked first on a leading question: *"what contributes to pain and suffering in Cyprus through the eyes of women", what needs to be done and how can it be done*?" The group used a special methodology '*the interactive management*" (IM) which Dr. Benjamin Broome introduced to different bicommunal citizens' groups (Broome, 1992, 1998). It is a computer-supported decision-making methodology. The group goes through three stages of planning and

design which include :(a) analysis of the current situation, (b) goal setting/vision for the future and (c) development of a collaborative action agenda. The facilitators for this group were three, a Greek Cypriot man who handled the computer, Broome, Sefgul Ulutag , and myself as facilitators. The design of the workshop was collaborative and we worked as a team. Some of the basic assumptions, which guided us in this workshop, were the following:

(a)Ethnic communities are heterogeneous and contain many voices, one of them being women's voices. (b) Every woman speaks as an individual rather than as a representative of her community, party or business. (c) Debate about political positions is best left to the politicians. (d) The opportunity to engage in bicommunal dialogue is a privilege, and (e)We are not here to solve the Cyprus problem but create conditions for the solution .

The BWG was not able to meet for the first part of the workshop due to no permissions given by the military authorities that imposed, often arbitrarily restrictions even though the applications were submitted according to official guidelines. This was often experienced as violence based on the patriarchal assumption that the "state", or male authority, can decide for its citizens without giving any explanation, simply because it has claimed the power to do so (Freirer, 1970). The frustration and powerlessness felt was immense. The Group adapted and continued to work mono-communally at first and when permissions were granted they worked jointly.

The BWG voices on the lead question reflected the complex and multi-layered fabric of the conflict and we noted how gender intersects with class, ethnic, sexual and rural/urban modalities of our identities. This is in opposition to the GC male official view, which was turned into a popular belief that "as soon as the Turkish army withdraws the people in both communities will have no problem coexisting as they did in the past". The obstacle was only the army but as we realized from many inter-ethnic citizens' contacts and conflict resolution training workshops a great deal of

systematic work is needed to overcome past fears, hatred, suspicions and decades old alienation before we can claim any level of co-existence. The need for a culture of otherness is far from a becoming a value (Hadjupavlou-Trigeorgis 1998 and Hadjipavlou 2000).

The IM methodology allows each participant to generate as many ideas as she or he has in answering the lead question that was *about what has contributed to the pain and suffering of women in Cyprus*. The eleven TC women produced eighty-two factors /causes that have contributed to pain and suffering and the eleven GCs produced seventy-two. These responses can be mapped into four broad categories which reflect the many layers of the conflict: (a) (social)psychological ; (b) structural; (c) historical and political; and (d) philosophical. These factors were, sometimes specific to GC women, or to TC women, and sometimes were shared.

Once an idea is presented the group engages in discussion about that specific factor as it is understood by each individual participant, the purpose being to form a shared understanding and where possible a consensus. For instance, in a general discussion the majority of the GC and TC women connected the idea of peace with the biological functions of childbearing and motherhood and thus concluded that women are more peace loving than men and that women have nothing to do with war and violence. Their assumption became complicated when some other women in the group challenged this view and sought an explanation as to why some men are peace loving and some other women supported war. The feminists in the group brought up the role of gender socialization and social expectations and gender stereotypes explaining that women in a patriarchal society at times of conflict are turned into "objects" and promoters of the national cause and values as articulated by the male dominated system. Previous research findings among Greek Cypriot women (Hadjipavlou-Trigeorgis 1995) and among women in all Cypriot communities (Hadjipavlou 2004) confirm this discussion in that many Cypriot women were confused about the concepts of

patriarchy, feminism (still carries negative connotations in Cypriot society) and anti-militarism. Such concepts are still absent from both the school curriculum and public discussions. Due to this lack of gender consciousness and knowledge about feminism and alternative views about how femininity and masculinity are exploited by ethnic nationalisms and conflict cultures a number of contradictions arose: On the one hand, all the women in the BWG, described the social organization of their societies as patriarchal and hierarchical, but on the other hand, many (apart from four) said they were not feminists and that the conflict affected everybody irrespective of gender. The belief that women are "by nature peace-loving and caring" was deeply contested.. Some, at first did not question their role as mothers "offering" their sons to fight for the liberation of their homeland as a gender issue nor did it occur to them that they can challenge and resist such practices and expectations- so deeply they had internalised their "national duty" role. Through, a guided process, however, the women who resisted gradually were helped to look into their own experiences using the gender lens. The discussion on the rest of the issues became more gendered focused and for many this constituted a new revelation of a different worldview about women and peace. What we learned from this initial discussion was that Cypriot women who were exposed to feminist theories and gender analyses of social phenomena in their formal education were able to inform and share with the rest of the BWG alternative viewpoints to the prevalent male one and sensitize the others to the fact that both the national and international agendas were being decided by men and that Cypriot women adopted this agenda as if it were their own too. Many admitted that as women we are not trained in Cyprus to "challenge authority."

After this initial introduction to a gendered understanding of the Cyprus conflict the BWG was invited to imagine a new construction of the self and a collectivity of the "we", which would not be based on the traditional conceptions of masculinity and femininity and gender relations in

conflict. It was much easier for many women to probe into their own experiences and locate knowledges outside the dominant hegemonic history as told by men in their communities. The gender lens perspective, a new tool for many, helped them articulate alternative interpretations of the conflict. This mental shift was not easy to maintain without constantly being reminded.

I now turn to the conditions, which the BWG had articulated as factors that contributed to their suffering and pain on the island. I will refer first to the *social psychological and philosophical* factors because these are the least to be noted and addressed in a divided society where power politics is the norm and the "us" and "them" dichotomy creates sharp boundaries. The social-psychological factors as pointed earlier in the paper relate to the construction of otherness, to the shaping of individual and collective identities, to perceptions and belief systems, to mutual victimhood and stereotyping, factors that not only hinder the resolution of the conflict but also can help us understand the deep-rootedness of the conflict and the exclusion of some groups from the peace process.

Fear of Domination and free expression-Who is the Other?

One of the issues that the TC women expressed strongly was their fear of being dominated by the GC majority and Turkey, "we feel like a sandwich between the two" some said. They related personal stories of how they experienced the other, the GCs, and what it felt living for a decade (1963-1974) under constant fear and exclusion from the privileges which the international recognition the Cyprus Republic provided. This reflects in the majority/minority dynamics whereby often the dominant group claims to know what is best for the dominated and granting equal voice to the lesser powerful is not a feature of patriarchy (Baker Miller 1978).

They also felt "fear of expressing our true feelings contrary to official narratives because we would be ostracized". This is a form of self-censorship, a critique of gendered restrictive democracy

when male political elites set the parameters of free expression. Cypriot women (as do some men) resort to silence or those who spoke their mind were labelled "traitors or unpatriotic". They felt sadness at the lack of solidarity with and indifference shown by the GC community at "their tragedy" as experienced in the 1963-till 1974 period when they felt "second class citizens". The GC women also feared Turkey's domination and expansionist intentions in Cyprus (official propaganda abounds on this in an effort to essentialize the other). Thus mutual victimhood emerges as each group refers to the other. For the TCs the other in the pre-1974 period was the Republic of Cyprus and the GCs whereas for the GCs in the post 1974 period was Turkey. Some women expressed their difficulty in "reconsidering established beliefs about the other" and they explained this as due to the "attachment to ideas and belief systems as being unchanged" Both groups admitted "fear of opening up to the other which we do not know". These discourses indicate a mixture of official views about the other and recourse to self-critique. Moreover this shows that each group faces a reality that is different from the others and thus have to deal with different problems. They admitted that they have things in common (I refer to these below) but also differences that need to be acknowledged. The BWG discovered that the gendered view of history as developed by each official side left "outside their consciousness the existence of the other" that is why the "need for otherness" became an issue. Each group tried to inform the other. The TCs tried to make the GCs aware about some of the severe problems and violence they were subjected to in the 1960s and the GCs to make the TCs aware of the tragedy of 1974 for themselves. The confrontational male-dominated narrative silenced such discussions. Concepts such as apology, forgiveness and relational empathy entered into their dialogue. Thus trust-building released energy to engage exploring their multiple identities. This led the GC women to admit to the Greek complex of superiority and cultural arrogance saying, "The

Greeks have difficulty to accept other cultures. And because we are the majority we believe Cyprus belongs to us".

Both groups pointed out the privilege of being together and the new possibilities these contacts created vis-à-vis the "unnaturalness in being forced to live in one part of the island and keep fantasizing about the other." This they connected to the fact that Cyprus is an island and "it is difficult to escape from it in a psychological sense. Thus we are inter-dependent" But this ethnic division and *Line* was experienced in a real physical sense as one TC woman vividly expressed it:

When I am with you, Greeks, I find my other half, which is missing. At the end of a workshop when I leave the Ledra Palace and each of us crosses the check point to go to our homes in opposing sides I feel at that moment something really physical, a split within my body. The geographical proximity becomes irrelevant compared to the forces of militarism and foreign occupations as this defines my relationship to you, the other.

(This explains the enormous lines of cars at the police check points after April 23, 2004, to cross to the other side. People waited for over fourteen hours to cross saying this was nothing compared to the 29 years of waiting).

What the BWG was discussing and articulating in these series of IM (interactive management) workshops shows women's struggles and processes to move beyond "the very practice of remembering against the grain of public hegemonic history and locating the silences" and thus create alternative feminist strategies (Chandra Mohantry, 1991, p. 39). For this to happen a facilitated process was necessary and it did last for nine months.

Identity and Structural Conditions

The issue of identity in the Cyprus conflict has been for each side both significant and contested. Is the island Greek, or Turkish, or Cypriot, or European? Many men died fighting for the Greekness or Turkishness of the island and none for the Cypriotness. The imposed constitution in

1960 did not leave space for Cypriotness and integrative institutions to develop; instead the majority/minority model permeated every aspect of life creating mistrust and separation In the post 1974 period many citizens' groups started exploring the "local Cartography" of struggles and framed shared inter-ethnic desires and vision of Cypriotness. This was a response to the ethnic nationalisms which brought about the division of the communities. The BWG challenged the national dichotomy imposed on collective identities. My research on this issue has shown that despite the official propaganda on the preservation of "Greekness" and or "Turkishness" an overwhelming majority in all communities in Cyprus define their collective identity as *Cypriot* and the majority of these were women who connect with the land and the community much more in a concrete way than the majority of men who become exposed to the military and national discourses since they serve in the army for more than two years (Hadjipavlou 2003, 2004). The BWG expressed their concern about the future in a divided and militaristic island where "biased education and biased history leave no say to women to determine our future".

The TC women feared losing the Cypriot part of their identity due to the influx of Turks from Anatolia since the late 1970s whom they consider less educated, less cultured and more religious. Thus TCs created another 'other' who although from the same ethnic background, they are viewed as different and must be excluded. In a sense they are behaving and treating the "other Turks" as they were treated by the GCs in the past. The GC women viewed the "settlers" as a problem too but from a different perspective. The settlers were given GC homes and properties, which were "illegally occupied by the Turkish military" thus the "settlers" issue emerged as a shared concern but for different reasons. This issue then opened up the discussion on the power of the military and how this fed the assumed power of the TC leadership which invited the "mainland Turks" to use as a voting instrument to remain in power. Thus when looking at the issue of settlers

from a feminist understanding revealing the different layers of male power could lead to new coalitions being formed among women challenging sharp dichotomies and high politics.

The GC women felt that the "overemphasis on the Greek part of their identity led to the exclusion of other aspects of their identities" thus for the purpose of national unity the political male actors defined in an exclusive way what constitutes the "imagined community" as well as the nationalist project. Cypriot women were included in it as long as they served the national agenda which included primary responsibility for reproduction and cultural transmission of their respective communities. Some women in the BWG called this "patriotism" and "love of one's country" while others called this a gendered nationalist project, which they connected to "the need to have enemies" as this helps each official side to refrain from taking its own share of responsibility in the creation of the conflict as well as promoting the view that men are socialized to be the protectors and liberators of their nation whilst women are there to reproduce the nation.

Both groups viewed the patriarchal structure of social organization as well as the absence of women from decision-making bodies and the peace processes as big obstacles to the well functioning of true, representative democracy in the whole of Cyprus, and violation of their human right to participate in all levels of governance. They spoke about "…insufficient levels of democracy in both communities and the predominance of the national problem hindering women's separate space to articulate women's issues". In other words, democracy in divided societies often functions within the ethnic nationalist agenda, setting the criteria of what not to reveal to the enemy, imposing covert censorship. Both groups also agreed that the lack of structures "to get to know each other's culture, life and education" reinforced the communication embargo and restrictive movement of ideas, and complex realities, as additional factors to serve confrontational politics.

Both education systems according to the BWG "are structured to support the patriarchal mentality and socialization of the youth in the conflict and the national history on each side emphasizes the atrocities committed against themselves". The GC women noted the prevalence of religious and social prejudices against inter-marriages as these were until recently included in the Cyprus constitution. (Due to the accession of the island to the European Union the Cyprus government had to abide by European laws and thus eliminated such non-democratic provisions.)

Another mutual concern was voiced regarding the gendered division of space into private and public. In both communities the BWG agreed "women are absent from key policy-making centres of power so they are not allowed to voice their concerns and views unless they behave like men or do as men say". Thus the politics of space builds a certain type of masculinity and femininity whereby Cypriot men are viewed as pragmatic, tough, assertive and emotionally strong and women as emotional, home carers, and easy to give in, or, "paying attention to the wrong things". Many women in the group also spoke about the increase in structural and domestic violence and the lack of sufficient support centres to provide the necessary services and empowerment of women. This they related to the perpetuation of the conflict and the stalemate in the negotiations for a solution. It also agrees with the latest research on women in all Cypriot communities where women spoke openly about inter-personal and family violence thus breaking down the taboo that this is simply a personal issue and does not impact politics or policies, thus the "personal is political" in their understanding (Hadjipavlou 2004)

Historical/Political Obstacles

As was mentioned in the section on the History of the Cyprus conflict the role of the third parties and outside interferences was instrumental in shaping the relationships within and between the two communities and politics in general. Thus the BWG had no difficulty identifying this

factor. They went, however, further than the national narrative which only attributes blame to the "outside interference factor". They looked at the domestic factor as well pointing out the role of the "extremist and nationalists in each community" , the role of leadership and how "the need for domination of the TCs by the GCs led to the creation of the Green *Line*". This analysis challenged the dichotomy of "us" and "them" and introduced a conflict resolution discourse that allowed perspective taking as well as getting away from the "blame the other model". An acknowledgement of the "struggle who is going to own and rule the island" led to the discussion of domination, nationalism and inequality in power and economic development between the communities. The GC women pointed out that "the Greek words for fanaticism and nationalism are masculine whereas peace, love and equality are feminine" in an effort to elicit the male dominated culture of exclusion and violence in their community. The BWG believed that due to the lack of internal cohesion and intercommunal solidarity the Cypriots "failed to prevent harmful interference from outside powers thus we need to take our own responsibility."

In conflict resolution workshops the issue of trust both inside the "room" and outside is significant in helping participants move beyond confrontational, gendered politics. The BWG identified "the loss of trust for decades in each other and the development of incompatible goals and expectations" as causes of alienations. The desire for building alliances across ethnic divides was expressed, not yet an easy task to accomplish across the civil society levels.

We also noted some intra-group differences as these emerged from time to time in the way some women projected their level of thinking and identity vis –a-vis the other. For instance, some of the GCs who were highly educated (university level) were more reflective at times on issues of self-criticism, vulnerabilities and abstractions: "We have deep fears in accepting the other's truth and we are unaware of one's own identity as human beings. There is unawareness of what I am…"

This level of abstraction or 'transcendence' was too much for some TC women who were struggling for basic, concrete needs, such as employment, safety, and visibility and they did challenge these GC women. This was not surprising in view of the fact that these women belong to the dominant and more privileged ethnic group which because of international recognition of the Republic of Cyprus have to a large extent resolved their lower basic need for economic survival (very low unemployment rate, and four times higher per capita income than that of the TCs) and can thus afford to move to higher level needs and reflection. This brought out not only the ethnic difference but also the class issue as well reminding the privileged group to be more aware and sensitive to these other identity differences.

A serious concern was voiced though regarding the emphasis both communities put on their differences "we always emphasize differences and not enough attention to similarities and avoid mention our shared positive past". Each group understands the past differently: The TCs seek acknowledgement by the dominant group of their past grievances and violence inflicted on them which still remains unaddressed whereas the GC women wanted to forget the past and move on. The "past" these women believed became a tool for male politicians in each community to promote their political incompatible positions on the solution of the conflict and to justify the *Line*. The GC women were openly critical of how the state uses the military institution to promote their idea of security and defence to intimidate the people to be critical about the defence budget and militarisation. For these women security meant building trust at both official and unofficial levels. The BWG embraced the view that gender does matter in different contexts of Cypriot women's lives. Women's experiences also need to be accounted for so as not to take for granted the dominant interpretations of the Cyprus conflict as the only existing one.

In general, the BWG by the end of their encounter they formed a new community with a deep awareness of the impact of patriarchy and of the conflict on their personal and collective lives. They promoted the practice of conflict resolution workshops, of dialogue, of direct personal contacts together with a gender understanding of the conflict, of history and power as tools and practices in bringing about a culture for a solution and in promoting political and social action

I believe the BWG laid the foundation for the creation of *Hands Across the Divide* (HAD) since some of the members of this organization were participants in the BWG until 1997 when due to political obstacles and the embargo on permits the group stopped meeting. This is another example when the rigid conflictual political environment assumes the power to regulate civil society development. The impact of its work continued to inspire other women. HAD as mentioned was established in 2001 as the first Cypriot women's NGO.

Hands Across the Divide

I now come to discuss the issue of a Cyprus solution seen from the perspective of HAD. I use data from a meeting/symposium held in 2003 to which I was a participant and note-taker. The meeting took place in a restaurant across the diving *Line* in the Turkish Quarter of Nicosia (in Cyprus we combine work and thinking with food and drink. It is a ritual, our way of contacting a symposium!). The members who attended were 18, ten TCs and 9 GCs. At the official level the Annan Plan had been submitted to the leadership of both communities. The women had read parts of the Plan and public discussion in the TC community was quite extensive. The underlying shared worldview of HAD members is that we all believe in the values of democracy, which for many of us means an open market of ideas and freedom of speech, gender equality and equal access to resources and opportunities and we all aspire to live in a united country. Moreover,

...We have come together to form a unitary organization, disregarding, as far as possible, differences of ethnic or national identity, and even geographical location…. We know that to cooperate effectively we must take account of the inequalities between us and inevitable differences in the needs we prioritise, deriving from our different past experiences and different realities today."

The question that the group worked on was: *Why do I as a woman want a solution?*

The facilitative process, which Dr Cynthia Cockburn used, was as follows: Women worked in pairs brainstorming on the leading question. Then each had to choose one main reason for wanting a solution. All the answers were recorded on flip charts and became working material for the second phase of the workshop the following week. Here are some examples, which indicate the multi-layered aspect of the conflict, as well as women's desires for change:

A future, that's what I want. I want all the things that are suppressed now, to be liberated, including gender. I want to feel free to plan ahead, and move on … I want to live in a house that I know is my own …I want the barbed wire and barrels, and sand bags out of my garden … I want a solution so as to have normalisation of space and unblocking of energies (HAD meeting 2003).

The women of HAD voiced concerns and needs from a feminist understanding of the solution unlike the way it is often projected in mainstream male politics which deals with the solution in a legalistic and exclusionary way, not close to the reality of most of the polity. The language, which is used is full of constitutional jargon, and is unfamiliar to the wider public. Women do not want an agreement on paper. They long for a change in mentality, a new thinking and a constructive way of looking at the future through a gender lens. "We want particular attention to be given to the practical implementation of legislative provisions on gender, so that equality does not remain a mere principle, but it is achieved in effect…all new policies should be screened and evaluated for their gender implications before they are introduced… and their gender effects should be monitored during implementation."

HAD members also feel strongly about the Cypriot part of their identity but also go beyond the ethnic part to demand opportunities to develop as women and as citizens. "As women We also

want respect from each other in a society that will be fully democratic. We want an electoral system that guarantees women numerical parity with men in parliament and on all decision-making bodies."

> I want a solution urgently because I want my identity… my Cypriot identity. I want to gain my identity rid of the oppression I feel now. Women could change society if there were opportunities for women to develop. I want the name Cypriot, that's all.
> I want to be sure of having equal rights as a woman and as a person.

Security, Opportunities, Equality, Democracy

Security for the women of HAD is defined beyond the military and armaments. It means human relationships, doing away with dividing *lines* whereby new arrangements would be in place without check points and passports or identity cards to cross *to* and from. These are tools of male control and domination. The TC members were more concerned with their children's future and wanting the settlers to leave as well as have the ability to "present us to the outside world as one country". For the GC women the freedom of movement on the whole of the island was important and the need for security and respect. "I want a land without borders, a single county with respect, gender equality and security." For the TCs the prospect of Cyprus joining the European Union created a hope "because EU laws may help us solve some of the problems of inequality we face in a patriarchal society and offer us opportunities to work elsewhere as equals" Peace for the women of HAD meant demilitarisation, not only withdrawal of foreign troops but change in the mindset about the other, "I want to start thinking positive, new thoughts about the other." Most of the desires of these women were future –oriented and longed for a "peaceful environment, a culture of peace. The nationalist propaganda is bankrupt. Above all we want a solution in order to give us a future, to unlock our energies so that we can all contribute to change. I believe men are suffering too, they are victims of the patriarchal system as well" The women of HAD are much more aware of their role as social agents than were the members of BWG which shows a further development in gender

awareness work. They had very concrete ideas of the content of the solution of the Cyprus conflict should be like and wanted new structures and institutions to address among other issues, gender inequality: "As women we wish to see the post of a gender ombudsperson created, an office to which individuals suffering from discrimination on grounds of gender, marital status, etc. may appeal for redress."

These Cypriot women's desires, as expressed here, shed light on what is lacking in the politics of the country as a whole and how the national issue, as defined by a patriarchal elite, has completely ignored these multiple inter-subjective realities of women's perspectives and needs. It is a clear example of the gendered nature of peace and conflict—a dimension that is not included in the political or formal peace agendas. Women in Cyprus are still absent from the peace negotiations in contravention to the UN Security Council Resolution 1325, signed by Cyprus, calling upon states to include women at the peace table so that their perspectives, experiences and concerns are legitimated and included in a future solution.The Cypriot women in this organization noted some of the omissions of democracy such as limitations on women's human rights, continuation of gender inequalities and the invisibility of women's agendas and needs. The above desires also reveal the multiple levels of realities women experience and the efforts needed to employ a feminist understanding and gender perspective that takes into account the realities of both men and women and is generally lacking in Cyprus.

Some Lessons Learned

From the Cypriot women's experiences as I have presented them in the BWG and HAD we note that to employ a feminist and gender perspective in the analysis of the conflict and their condition as they experience it entails the use of a conflict resolution processes and tools. The fact that certain women in the groups were themselves feminists and had been exposed in their formal

education in women's studies helped the others listen to alternative worldviews about identity definition and challenge the role of patriarchy in defining the development of men and women on the basis of their sex. Cyprus is still suffering not only from a patriarchal order of things but also from nationalism and militarism. Militarised masculinity is not the only form of masculinity and these women hoped that with a solution and a new peace structure gentler forms of manhood for men and boys would be constructed. The feminist values of tolerance, understanding, cooperation, empathy, acknowledging the other's truth and reality as well as building networks to highlight the absence of Cypriot women from decision-making levels are very much part of the bi-communal women's peacebuilding efforts and agenda for equality and fulfilment of their basic human rights and needs. The culture these women desire to promote is more needs-focused than on political positions and static legalistic principles that characterize the male understanding of the politics of a solution. Patriarchy and nationalism tend to separate people and build stereotyped images and models of men and women, men are active and good soldiers, and women are passive and good care takers, etc. The Cypriot women want an end to this gender stereotyping.

In conflict cultures there is a tendency tomomogeneize the communities, failing to acknowledge their complexity, and thus prolonging misperceptions, stereotypes and misunderstandings between and among conflicting parties. In this paper I tried to show heterogeneity and multiple voices of women within and across communities. In Cyprus, we still lack extensive research to know women's realities, what women really want and need. This micro level research will be useful to both women and policy makers as well as to third parties involved in the peace negotiations. Some indications we got from qualitative and quantitative research initiated by political party women's organizations and by a group of five NGOs which I coordinated as president of the Peace Centre inform us that Cypriot women find themselves in a transitional

context where modernity and traditionalism are intermixed both in the private and public realms of their lives. This can explain the many contradictions, confusion and ambivalences women have expressed. Women's experiences and voices can produce new knowledge and information which are significant to be heard and taken into account in a future Cyprus because this will build further and strengthen democratic principles, one them being gender equality and the "need for otherness."

My personal journey to peacebuilding and the choices I made convinced me that there is no other way to question simplistic, monolithic, patriarchal understandings of "national interest" and "national security" other than experiencing the "other", the perceived "enemy" and realize that the "enemy" has been socialized the same way as myself. I also know that a different education in feminism, gender studies and conflict resolution can help us question and overcome the socially-constructed enemy images and gender stereotypes. We can even use this reflective learning to enhance our own insights into the victim-perpetrator mentality and acknowledge that the perpetrator is as much a victim as is the victim a perpetrator. The Cypriot women's daily psychological and political 'suffocation' within the parameters of *Lines* is a testament to the continuing power of militarism and ethnic nationalisms despite the fact that the Republic of Cyprus has become a member of the European Union. These conditions need to change urgently as the Cypriot women in these groups have shown us. There is the willingness and ability to make it happen. And as Sharoni has reminded us, "every time a woman explains how her government is trying to control her fears, her hopes and her labor such a theory is made", that is a feminist theory on international conflict and international relations.

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