Political Parties and Trade Unions
in Cyprus

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ABSTRACT

The political parties in Cyprus are extremely powerful. They play a dominant role in the public as well as the private sphere, resulting in a civil society that is extremely weak. The article will address two issues. First, it will map the evolution of civil society organisations (CSOs), especially the trade unions, and their relationship with political parties. Trade unions are probably the most important and influential of the CSOs in Cyprus. Second, it will examine the relationship between political parties and trade unions in contemporary Cyprus, focusing on the changing context within which their interaction takes place, the strategies adopted by the two actors and the direction of influence between them. Research and analysis are based on interviews, surveys, party documents and other secondary literature.

Keywords: Cyprus, political parties, civil society, trade unions, AKEL, DISY, PEO, SEK

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1. Introduction

Research shows that in politicised and polarised societies, most civil society organisations (CSOs) are little more than extensions of the major political parties; many trade unions (TUs) in particular would fit this description (Duverger, 1954, pp. 5-7). The relationships between parties and CSOs will vary according to a number of factors including: the nature of the polity, the legal provisions, the society's conception of the two entities, the level of public confidence in the political institutions, the characteristics of civil society and party organisations, etc. A general observation is that a strong party system will act as an obstacle to the functionality and efficiency --as well as the very existence-- of CSOs (Bevis, 2003, p. 4).

This article addresses two issues: first, the historical evolution of the relationship between political parties and CSOs in Cyprus focusing more explicitly on TUs; second, the relationships between political parties and TUs, especially the changing context of their interaction in recent years, the strategies employed by the two actors and the direction of influence between them. This paper will focus on the two major political parties of Cyprus (left-wing AKEL[1] and right-wing DISY[2]) and the two largest trade

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[1] AKEL: Progressive Party of the Working People (left-wing). Originally founded as the Communist Party of Cyprus in 1926; renamed AKEL in 1941. Historically, the party captures approximately one-third of the electorate. From the outset AKEL developed strong ties with the labour movement.

unions of the private and semi-governmental sector (PEO[3] and SEK[4]).

The links between political actors are usually formed in relation to historical processes—highlighting a dynamic element in their relationship. Coalitions and alignments will vary and shift as a result of societal changes and/or significant historical events. Therefore, history matters. To investigate the changing context of the interaction between the two entities, I draw on the works of Hyman and Gumbrell-McCormick (2010) and Schmitter (2008). These authors have identified several recent key developments that altered both the trade union context as well as party activity. The analysis of how the two parties interact with TUs in more modern times will also utilise the Bevis model (2003) (see below).

The article comprises five sections. The first section looks at the literature focused on interest groups (and especially TUs) and their relationship with political parties. It also presents the analytical framework of this investigation. The second section offers a brief overview of the island's political and party systems focusing on CSOs' historical and current position vis-à-vis the parties and the state. The third section offers a historical perspective of the relationships between parties and TUs. The fourth section addresses the various social and political changes that have altered the context within which party and

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[2] DISY: Democratic Rally (right-wing) was founded in 1976 and constituted the vehicle for unifying the right-wing forces under the charismatic leadership of Glafkos Clerides, former President of the Republic (1993-2003). It is currently the biggest and the governing party in the country.

[3] PEO: the Pancyprian Federation of Labour was founded in 1941 and has since established close ties with AKEL.

[4] SEK: the Cyprus Workers Federation was established in 1944 as a means for right-wing forces and the Church to counterbalance AKEL's rising influence among the working class.

trade union relations have developed in recent years. The fifth section explores the relationship between AKEL and DISY with certain TUs (PEO and SEK).

Research tools include secondary literature, surveys and opinion polls, personal interviews with party and TU officials and party documents. Personal interviews are indicative and are based on a semi-structured questionnaire. Interviewees included party and trade union officials, which affords a complete picture of the history between the two actors as well as their evolving relationship in contemporary Cyprus. An interview was also conducted with a representative of the NGO Support Center, an organisation that facilitates the creation of NGOs in various areas of activities, in order to have a general view on the CSO sector in Cyprus and their relations with political parties. The NGO Support Center was also responsible for the first ever comprehensive study in CSOs in Cyprus in 2005. All interviewees were informed and gave oral consent to use quotes from their interviews in the article.

2.   Political Parties and Interest Groups

The relationship between political parties and interest groups is both crucial and controversial. While it is generally believed that the two actors are involved in a zero-sum game (e.g., Almond and Powell, 1966), this may not actually be the case. The two may share long-term policy goals, and to this end interest groups will provide parties with political and other expertise, financial resources and organisational support in order to influence public policy, etc., while the party sees its traditional functions like mobilisation and representation being increasingly

performed by CSOs (Allern and Bale, 2012, p. 8). Consequently, the boundaries between the two are not so crystal clear. In a similar vein, some scholars and NGO activists demonise political parties as the main enemy of civil society. However, despite their shortcomings, political parties play a unique role in democratic systems (Dippell, 2000; Bevis, 2003, pp. 1-2), and so the solution does not lie in the abolition of political institutions. Active and strong political institutions are both necessary and desirable for democratic freedom and equality (Keane, 1993, p. 59).

Political parties and CSOs have forged various types of relationships. In the early phases of modern European politics, strong links were established between socialist parties and trade unions, between agrarian parties and farmers' unions, and between religious parties and certain organisations (Duverger, 1954, pp. 5-7; Von Beyme, 1985, p. 192). The conservative parties followed suit by establishing alliances with business associations and other organisations (Schmitter, 2001, p. 82). However, in more recent times, scholars purport that the traditionally strong links between particular parties and interest groups have weakened along with social cleavages (Allern and Bale, 2012, pp. 8-9). The common belief now is that parties are less reliant on support from members and affiliate organisations and more dependent on state resources (Katz and Mair, 1995).

The notion of relationship in the present context usually refers to how parties and CSOs are linked as organisations, and how they interact (Allern and Bale, 2012, p. 10). The literature suggests several directions this relationship may take. Lipset and Rokkan (1967) emphasized that

some parties (socialists, religious) developed their own social networks, while other scholars consider that their linkage is more likely based on leadership, membership overlap or collective activities (Koelbe, 1987, p. 256). Sometimes the relationship is rather abstract, pointing to ideological affinity (Poguntke, 2006), and sometimes it takes an economic perspective with the CSOs financially supporting the parties (Yishai, 2001). Thomas (2001, pp. 270-2) concluded that there is no single pattern of party-interest relationships within or across countries, even if the links between the two actors, in general, seem rather weak.

Political parties and trade unions

There is substantial research on relationship patterns between political parties and trade unions. For example, Hayward (1980, pp. 5-6) identified four distinct patterns: first, a 'Leninist model' in which the party seeks to control the policies and actions of its associated union; second, more exceptionally, the British case in which the unions themselves created the political party (Labour Party) and felt it was their right/duty to dictate policies; third, a more general social-democratic pattern involving 'interdependence and symbiosis'; finally, a position in which unions, even if politically engaged, refuse any alliance with political parties.

Ebbinghaus (1993) has drawn on the cleavage theory to explain distinctive national patterns and to argue that their evolution is path-dependent. He identifies all four models described above as different outcomes of the fundamental cleavage between labour and capital, but stresses two other cleavages. In countries where there was historically a

sharp confrontation between church and state, divisions between secular (commonly socialist) and religious identities led to an ideological segmentation of unions and parties competing for working-class allegiance. These divisions often produced a third cleavage, between reformist and revolutionary unions and parties—this occurred most notably in southern Europe.

Hyman and McCormick (2010, pp. 321-22) argue that, almost universally, highly dependent relationships between parties and unions – in either direction – have historically given way to looser attachments and a more flexible interdependence, and sometimes even a complete divorce. The authors identify three key developments in the past few decades that have affected these relationships. The first is cultural and ideological. Ideologies inherited from the formative period of trade unions have proved persistent, shaping identities and relations to political parties, which cannot easily be altered. However, all trade unions have been subject to "ideological blurring". Secularisation has undermined the identities of formerly Christian-democratic unionism while in those countries with mass communist parties and satellite trade unions, an analogous process occurred in the post-1990 era.

The second key development is structural. Traditionally, both trade unions and left-oriented parties have found their core support among manual workers in cohesive industrial communities. The decline in industrial work, the growth in white-collar and professional occupations and, more generally, rising educational levels have posed challenges for both unions and parties. Many union movements have found these newer working groups difficult to recruit (at least in the private sector);

where they succeed, however, the homogeneity of interests and identities within the membership declines. The third key change is in the politico-economic environment. Economic hard times have resulted in largely neoliberal responses, especially in recent times. International competitiveness, efforts to contain public finances, loss of faith in Keynesianism and conversion to "lean government" have become as much the hallmarks of centre-left as of right-wing governments.

In a similar vein, Schmitter (2008, pp. 201-8) identified several developments that have contributed to this changing environment, including: the impact of exogenous shocks, e.g., the collapse of the socialist rule; the process of globalisation / liberalisation, i.e., the process of removing all types of barriers to the flow of goods, services, money and --to a lesser extent—people, which profoundly affect the relative power of classes; regional integration in Europe, i.e., the EU, which has significantly reduced the negotiating power of national actors; the massive increase in migration flows that led to an abundant low-cost foreign labour source that replaces the national labour force and, in turn, again affects the balance of class forces at the national level; individuation, which he believes that has the most profound impact on the politics of interest.

As a result of these changes, the political parties and the TUs have both suffered a huge decline in power. Developments and changes in western Europe in the last few decades point to a demise of the party. The indicators include: public distrust of politics in general and political parties in particular; party competition that is increasingly characterised by ideological decline and increased political consensus; the reduced

importance of party identification; reduced membership, etc. (Mair, 1984; Bartolini, 1983, p. 214; Lane and Ersson, 1997, p. 191; Daalder, 1992, p. 269). Likewise, unions have also suffered deterioration in membership numbers, collective bargaining outcomes and political influence (Schmitter, 2008, pp. 199-200). Many European trade unions members criticise their organisations' political attachments, and many cite this as a reason for non-membership (Hyman and McCormick, 2010, p. 316). Despite their loss of power, TUs still attempt to influence the ways in which the state shapes the rules of the game in the labour market; in fact, Korpi (1983) has argued that strong trade unions increasingly shift their focus from conflict in the industrial arena to pressure in the political arena, i.e., the parties.

The current investigation will draw on the works of Hyman and McCormick (2010) and Schmitter (2008), as well as. Bevis's (2003) model for the relationships between political parties and TUs. This model evaluates these relationships along three dimensions: (a) the type of activity linking a party and a group; (b) the strength of this link, i.e., the closeness and exclusiveness; and (c) the direction of the influence. Activities that connect the two actors include: lobbying and advocacy on specific issues, information and analysis, candidate forums, leadership overlap and voter mobilisation. On the other hand, trade unions may avoid contact with parties, distribute support across parties, ally with one party or seek to form a party, while the parties may have distant relations with TUs, or have more exclusive relations with specific TUs. A party may request support from a TU and in return support TU issues in decision-making arenas, pursue the union's preferred policies by

providing money and other material support. Clearly, the direction of influence can go both ways.

The way in which political actors behave is conditioned by their institutional, political and cultural settings, factors that structure both their relationships and their character. For example, a parliamentary system will shape how parties are likely to rely on interest groups very differently than a presidential system. Presidential systems are seen as supportive of these groups, whereas a political system built on nationalism and clientelistic relations is more likely to be unfriendly toward civil society groups (Mavratsas, 2003). The degree to which a party system is considered strong or weak influences the environment within which a civil society functions. Therefore, it is important to first examine the political and party system of Cyprus.

3. The Cypriot Party System and the CSOs

The political system of Cyprus changed fundamentally with the island's independence in 1960. However, remnants of the old regime were still in place -namely, the tension between the two larger ethnic communities of the island (Greek and Turkish Cypriots) incited by British imperialism. Due to Cyprus's late independence, the island was given little chance to develop a civic and democratic culture: it suffered sporadic inter-communal violence and has been de facto divided since 1974. Nationalism has been the dominant ideology throughout the twentieth century. The constitution of the Republic provides for a clear separation of powers: the President holds executive power and is not accountable to the Parliament. The power vested in the president's office (in Cyprus's

rigorous presidential system of administration), places the elected president at the heart of the political system. However, the entire political structure is centred on the institution of political parties. The parties play a crucial role in every aspect of political life: they are the exclusive nominators of presidents and deputies and the principal nominator of mayors and municipal councillors (for a more detailed discussion on the role of parties in Cyprus, see Katsourides 2012).

The development of political forces across the ideological Rubicon was totally divergent. The left side was united and dominated by AKEL early on. No type of social democratic party ever managed to become strong enough to threaten AKEL's supremacy. On the right, the picture was completely different: division and fragmentation were the principal features until 1976; this scenario still applies today, but to a much lesser extent. Political parties did not really acquire the complexion of the parties we know today until after 1974, with the domination of four parties that take more than 90% of the votes: the left-wing AKEL, the social democratic EDEK, the centre-right Democratic Party (DIKO) and the right-wing DISY. Other smaller parties did not manage to break this pattern until the mid-1990s when, among other factors, proportional representation was introduced in June 1995, which lowered the entrance barrier to the minimum (1.79%) and the franchise was extended to all adults above the age of 18 in 1997. Voting is to this day compulsory; however, it was essentially made redundant after the country's accession to the EU in 2004.

The dominance of politics in Cyprus is a common feature in what Mouzelis (1994, p. 20) refers to as 'societies of late development'. In

these societies, politics penetrate all aspects of social and institutional life. In Cyprus, it is evident that the political agenda plays a consistent and forceful role in any discussion of the society (CIVICUS, 2011, p. 28). The political agenda permeates all aspects of society, influencing the education system, media reporting, and the development of both the private sector and civil society. This situation is further intensified by the unresolved Cyprus problem, which has monopolised the entire political life of the island, and which heavily contributes to the politicisation of Cypriot society. Over-politicisation in a country with an unresolved ethnic problem is thought to lead to a relative atrophy of civil society and a prominence of political parties (Mavratsas, 2003, p. 121). In Cyprus this atrophy is manifest in terms of the mass media's lack of autonomy, the commanding role of the Cyprus Orthodox Church, the lack of respect for individual rights and the social marginalisation of foreigners, the corporatist features in the society especially as portrayed by the powerful role of the state, political parties and trade unions and, finally, the impressive growth of the economy but also its small size. On the ideological level the key force that suppresses civil society is nationalism, which translates into a lack of tolerance and a reluctance to engage in social criticism. Civil society's historically weak position and its dependence on the state and the political parties are well known (see CIVICUS, 2005; Kotelis and Cuhadar, 2008, pp. 6-7; Hadjipavlou and Kanol, 2008, p. 43). Historically, CSOs have wielded little influence unless they include members of the ruling political parties (CIVICUS, 2011, p. 29).

When studying the evolution of civil society in Cyprus, it is important to note two distinct periods (waves) that reflect different concerns and

different degrees of affiliation to state institutions and political parties. The first wave of CSOs in Cyprus was to a large extent controlled by or affiliated with the central government or the political parties. The governing bodies of these CSOs were appointed by the state and their budget was (and still is) totally covered by the state. This first wave was based on the human rights of people affected by the Turkish invasion in 1974.[5] CSOs were comprised of citizens who belonged to particular groups (e.g., they were refugees themselves) and they actively campaigned for their cause either domestically or internationally (Demetriou and Gurel, 2008, p. 28).

The organisations of this first wave also included sports and youth associations as well as many other social groups either naturally or ideologically tied to political parties (Kotelis and Cuhadar, 2008, p. 7). All amateur football clubs and cultural associations in Cypriot communities and villages, and also all trade unions, are either leftist or rightist. The Church of Cyprus has historically been linked with right-wing political forces (Katsiaounis, 2000; Christophorou, 2006). The impact of the left-right axis and the pervasiveness of the Cyprus problem constituted the frame within which these first CSOs were established and consequently influenced the causes they pursued and the affiliations they developed.

Beginning in the early 1990s and following and/or developing along the set of changes examined below, a second wave of CSOs appeared. The CSOs of the second wave are made up of members who are not affected directly by the purposes of the organisation, at least not in the short-

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[5] There are three major CSOs of this kind: the Pancyprian Union of Refugees, the Pancyprian Committee of Parents and Relatives of Undeclared Prisoners and Missing Persons, and the Relief Fund for Affected Persons.

term. Examples include ecological groups, organisations for the political rights of immigrants and asylum seekers, organisations for the modernisation of society, cultural associations, etc. From the very outset, these organisations intended to operate freely, with no overlap with the political parties and the state (Karayianni interview). Consequently, they have no overt relationship with political parties, and some CSOs even forbid this practice through their statutes. Nevertheless, some have attachments and affiliations to parties either in terms of personal relations or on ideological and political terms, but none have any intrinsic attachments.

4. The relationships between parties and trade unions in historical perspective

The history of the Cyprus trade union movement can be separated into four periods (Sparsis, 1995, p. 5), with a fifth period following Cyprus's official negotiations for EU accession in 1998, which signaled an era of harmonisation with EU directives. The first period covers the years between 1910 and 1931. During this period the trade union movement was essentially non-existent, although there were a few scattered unions mainly associated with the newborn Communist Party (CPC) and individual politicians. The second period began in 1931 with the British colonial authorities' imposition of an autocratic regime in the aftermath of the Greek Cypriot-led October revolt and lasted until 1941. In January 1932 the British government enacted the first ever legislation on trade unions, which in effect constituted the official recognition of the Cypriot trade union movement. By the end of this second period the trade union movement managed to increase its numbers, while in 1939 the illegal

CPC made an unsuccessful attempt to unite all trade unions under a common umbrella.

The third stage began in 1941 with the establishment of the Pancyprian Trade Unions Committee (PSE) and represents the years until Cyprus's independence (1960). This period is considered crucial in the process of the labour movement's institutionalisation in Cyprus (Sparsis, 1995, p. 9). The mass labour and anti-colonial struggles in the 1940s forced the British authorities to recognise the situation and integrate the trade unions into their colonial institutions. It was no accident that the Labour Advisory Body, which comprised colonial authorities, employers and workers, was founded in 1949. It represented a precursor to the tripartite cooperation of state, trade union and employer associations, which developed further in subsequent decades (Ioannou, 2011). It was also the time that the labour movement divided along ideological lines and a period when several trade unions in the government and semi-government sector chose to form independent unions (later on, however, they became part of the right-wing trade union confederation SEK).

The fourth period extends from 1960 to the country's official beginning of negotiations for EU accession in 1998. It was during this period that many important institutions were set up to govern industrial relations in Cyprus. The year 1998 is considered landmark because it was then that the labour market in Cyprus underwent significant changes in order to harmonise with acquis communautaire.

The most important feature of industrial relations in Cyprus is the Code of Industrial Relations, which is based on the unofficial institution of

tripartite cooperation and collective negotiations. Tripartite cooperation is crucial to the overall system of industrial relations, described by Slocum (1971, p. 54) as a process whereby all government initiatives in the field of labour follow an intensive dialogue among government, the unions and the employers to reach consensus before implementation. This has helped Cyprus maintain long periods of peaceful labour relations. The Code was adopted in 1977 and was based on the earlier 1962 Basic Agreement of (see Sparsis, 1995, pp. 33-38). Neither agreement has legal status; they represent a voluntary agreement among the parties. The Code provides for: the right to free organisation, the right to strike, what is negotiated and how; it also assigns to the Ministry the role of arbitrator in cases of disagreement.

The Code was essentially a social contract between labour and capital, as well as a historic compromise between labour and capital dictated by the need for national unity after 1974 (Sparsis, 1998). It also reflected the balance of power in the aftermath of the 1974 events that saw the trade unions accepting a severe cut in wages and benefits in exchange for the completion of the institutional integration of the working class and its representatives in the system of tripartite cooperation (Ioannou, 2011).

The trade union movement in Cyprus is historically linked to the CPC (Katsourides, 2009, chapters 10 and 11). Unlike many of its counterparts, upon its founding in 1926, the Cyprus Communist Party could not count on an existing network of solid mass organisations for support. Due to the late and light industrialisation of the Cypriot economy, trade unions were at an infant stage of development in the 1920s. During this period,

then, Cypriot communists helped establish or reorganise these nascent trade union organisations, in ways that left a lasting imprint on the subsequent party/trade union relationship. From the outset the party took a leading role in these labour organisations, and throughout the 1930s when the CPC was banned by the British colonial authorities, it channeled its activity through the trade union movement. By the time the PEO was established in 1946, the communists had established *de facto* control of the trade union movement. As a leading member of AKEL points out, 'We founded PEO, not the other way around. This is different from what happened in many European countries' (Alecou, personal interview).[6]

AKEL was established in 1941 as a successor to the illegal Communist Party. Its role was decisive in the development of trade unions in Cyprus (Christophorou, 2006, p. 299). The PSE, which was also established in 1941, soon came under the party's full control or at least its influence. Members of AKEL's central committee actively participated in the PSE's founding Congress and promised support and co-operation. This was not without consequence; in the 1943 local elections, the PSE sided with those candidates proposed or supported by AKEL, a move that led to a split and the departure of some right wing members. Nevertheless, the party maintained its close relations to take control of the PEO, the new labour union that succeeded PSE in 1946.[7]

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[6] Alecou Christos, May 2012. The interview was given to the author and A. Ellinas for the purposes of a research study on AKEL's organisation (Ellinas and Katsourides, 2013, forthcoming).

[7] In January 1946, the Court found guilty 18 individuals, including the leaders of the PSE, on charges of being members of an illegal association, i.e., the PSE, and of conspiracy against the government. The Court's decision meant that the Pancyprian Trade Unions Committee,

Right-wing forces established SEK three years after the founding of the PEO, in an attempt to counterbalance AKEL's influence in the labour movement--which caused concern among the dominant classes and the Church (Christophorou, 2006, p. 300). Although the conservative class comprised numerous and differing factions, they realised that urgent and united action was required to confront AKEL. Conservative labour forces were first organised in October 1944, when representatives from 20 trade unions convened in Limassol and decided to establish SEK. SEK held its first congress in September 1945, and quickly became a mass movement with the support of the Church of Cyprus (Christophorou, 2006, p. 300).

In the course of the 1940s, the left and right gradually hardened their positions. In 1947 and 1948, industrial action culminated in violence and clashes (Christophorou, 2006), creating a climate that echoed the civil war in Greece, and offered no remedy to the already tense situation. In addition, the two camps took different stances on the national problem, competing to be leader and the voice of the people in this crisis. Thus, it was at this time that the social and ideological cleavages were formed and solidified, and they persist to this day.

A side effect of this intense situation and mobilisation was an increase in trade union membership, which rose from 2,500 in 1939 to more than 15,000 six years later, and to over 65,000 in 1959 (Christophorou, 2006, pp. 310-11). This occurred not only because the labour force was growing and sought support; it was also a Greek Cypriot reaction to the British authorities' and employers' disregard for demands for better

which operated openly for five years was declared illegal, thus necessitating the establishment of PEO.

economic conditions, and the government's repressive measures against demonstrations and industrial action.

Consequently, industrial relations in Cyprus have always been highly politicised. Regardless of ideology, the Cypriot unions are deeply embedded in national structures of concertation and social dialogue, with an instititutionalised system of tripartite collective bargaining involving the state, the trade unions and employer associations. This has allowed the trade union movement to organise approximately 80% of the labour personnel in Cyprus (Sparsis, 1995, p. 12).

Before turning to our examination of the current relationships between political parties and TUs, it is imperative to examine and analyse recent developments in the Cyprus political and party system. The analysis is based on Hyman and McCormick (2010) and Schmitter's (2008) work (presented above, section 2.1).

5. The changing environment

Cyprus has experienced significant and sometimes rapid changes in its social and political environment. The dissolution of the socialist bloc (ideology) and Cyprus's accession to the EU in 2004 are the two most important reasons for the changing political scene.. The collapse of the socialist bloc posed a serious identity crisis for communist parties worldwide, depriving them of a concrete project for their socialist vision. AKEL's relationship with the trade unions was naturally affected by this event. Cyprus's 2004 EU accession saw the island undergo significant changes in the short space of 10 years that the rest of Europe experienced over several decades. Nevertheless, the country also

experienced quite significant changes in the aftermath of the 1974 war.

Post-1974 the Cyprus economy underwent rapid structural changes, as the agriculture-based economy gave way to a tertiary-based economy focused primarily on tourism and other services. The working class also changed fundamentally: clerical work increased and the educational level rose significantly; women gradually entered the work force. Moreover, Cyprus's preparation for EU entry along with an increasingly high standard of living changed Cyprus from an exporter of manpower to an importing country. The face of the working class gradually changed as migrant workers infiltrated the work force, becoming both the victims of discrimination and the vehicle for exercising pressure on Cypriot workers to accept minimisation of their status (Antoniou, 2010). This created new cleavages and tensions, with issues of equal pay, gender discrimination and the fight against racism and xenophobia, coming to the fore. Cyprus's EU accession in 2004 aggravated the problem, as this led to an influx of EU nationals in the Cyprus labour market.

The class structure of the entire Cypriot population has in fact changed significantly in recent years. While salaried labour has risen significantly (Statistical Service of Cyprus 2009, p. 32)—traditionally a pool from which the left parties draft members, activists and followers-- most such labour is no longer manual and is no longer found in high-density workplaces (i.e., factories). Today's working class is mostly white collar employees working in the public and semi-public fields, the banking sector and small to medium-sized service enterprises (72.5% of the total profitably employed population) where the capacity to organise is negligible, as these companies are scattered throughout Cyprus.

The new context for labour relations in Cyprus has been largely determined by the EU, which promotes deregulation and flexible forms of labour. Labour relations today tend to be based on the concept of flexicurity-- the new paradigm for labour market reform in the EU (Wilthagen, 1998). Collective agreements are constantly undermined and labour relations have become much more individualised, with workers signing personal contracts. All these developments have had a knock-on effect for labour relations and trade unions. Ioannou (2011) argues that the deregulation of labour relations in Cyprus is occurring within the wider context of globalisation and neoliberalism that the EU promotes, but he also believes that the specific conditions in the country as well as the local balance of power between labour and capital must be taken into consideration. In this regard, he argues, labour (trade unions) is now in quite a defensive position.

The unions recognise that they are unable to organise and mobilise the working class, despite the fact that in Cyprus the trade unions are still comparatively strong. Their power has been gradually eroded by both internal and external factors. Internal factors include workers' contempt and indifference, democratic deficits, the exaggerated power held by the trade union bureaucracy, among other things. Although the most important factor influencing trade union relations/power is the EU stance deregulating the labour market, employers have become more aggressive in recent years. Therefore, Ioannou (2011) says, TUs distinguish rhetoric and practice, and now avoid lengthy, general strikes in favour of "drills of mobilisation", or symbolic strikes lasting but a very few hours and aiming more to exert pressure than to impose a stance. This reveals a conceptualisation of strikes as a tool to threaten

employers rather than a method of achieving goals. Consequently, trade unions today are mostly perceived as organisations that offer services, rather than vehicles of struggle. The opening up of the Cypriot labour market through EU enlargement, and the rapid growth of a sector not covered by collective bargaining, have revealed how eroded the unions' purely economic strength has become.

The data confirm this new state of affairs. The trend towards abolishing any regulatory frameworks-- favoured by EU directives—has led to fewer people joining trade unions and political parties. A survey undertaken by the PEO in 2009 disclosed that TU membership represented approximately 46% of the salaried employees in Cyprus, compared to 53% found in the corresponding survey in 2004. A further finding is that only 30% are actively involved in trade union affairs; the main reason that people join a union is for the personal benefits attached to membership, a finding that concurs with what Schmitter (2008) calls individuation.

The recent changes have also affected the political parties. The traditional hegemony of politicians is weakening as a result of external pressures (EU) as well as changes in the social structure of Cypriot society. There are scholars who believe that the process of Europeanisation has been a strong force in fostering changes in the party and political systems in general (Mouzelis, 1994, p. 25), and in Cyprus in particular (Katsourides, 2003), and that the changes favour the development of civil society (Mavratsas, 2003, p. 152). The EU encourages the government to boost the civil society sector and enhance its cooperation with CSOs. EU accession has also opened up

new channels for the CSOs to pursue their policies directly with the European Commission and the Parliament either through the Cypriot MEPs or through other CSOs operating in Brussels (CIVICUS, 2011, p. 27). This changing context has been a apparent in the CSO sector since the 1990s (see section 3).

Current developments indicate that the power of the political parties is rapidly declining. There are clear indications of party dealignment in Cyprus: in 2008, 37% of those asked about their party ties in the European Social Survey (ESS) replied that they felt no affiliation to any party; two years later 51% replied that they did not feel close to the party they had voted for just a few months earlier in the 2011 parliamentary elections (*Kathimerini*, 15 July 2012, p. 4). Abstention rates reached a significant 41% in the Euro elections of 2009 and 21.3% in the latest national elections of May 2011, a most unusual occurrence in Cyprus politics. The public's trust in political, social and representative institutions and the politicians is at a historic low with only one unexpected exception: the Church (CyBC1, 17 March 2011). The contrast with the figures of the corresponding 1996 survey is suggestive (Table 1). The Civicus Report (2011, p. 60) revealed similar results, finding that the most trustworthy institution was the Church, with 33.3% trusting it a great deal, while the least trustworthy institutions were the television stations with only 4.4%, preceded only slightly by the political parties at 4.9%.

TABLE 1: Level of trust in various institutions (%)

Institution / Year	1996	2011	Variation
National Council	93	73	-20
Church	58	69	+11
Education	82	67	-15
Police	62	56	-6
Trade Unions	72	46	-26
Government	60	44	-16
Parliament	79	41	-38
Parties	42	23	-19
Politicians	34	21	-13

Source: CyBC 1 Poll, 17 April 2011.

The ESS surveys (2008; 2010) and the latest Eurobarometres also highlight the same trend with regard to political institutions (Tables 2 and 3). The same negative trend is also found with regard to TUs. The CyBC survey (2011) identified a 26% drop in the level of trust in TUs compared to the 1996 figure. A recent survey by the largest trade union in Cyprus, the left-wing PEO (2009), reveals that only 50% of the population positively evaluate the TUs' contribution in society compared to a 62% in the respective survey in 1999.

TABLE 2: Levels of trust in political institutions (scale 0-10)

	CYPRUS	
	2008	2010
Trust in country's parliament	5.44	4.59
Trust in the politicians	4.38	3.59
Trust in political parties	4.26	3.52

Source: ESS Surveys 2008 and 2010.

TABLE 3: Trust in political parties (%)

	CYPRUS	
	2008	**2011**
Trust in political parties	33	8

Source: Eurobarometre no. 69 (2008) and no. 76 (2011).

The ESS surveys also revealed that political participation is increasingly declining in Cyprus, while placing political demands is increasingly more individualised (Katsourides, 2013, forthcoming). The era of collective and organised mobilisation through the mediation of political parties and TUs seems to have been replaced by an attitude of repugnance towards collective forms of action and conventional politics.

TABLE 4: Different types/expressions of political participation (%)

	CYPRUS	
	2008	**2010**
Voted last national election	86.5	79.2
Contacted politician or government official	19.3	18.7
Worked in political party or action group	7.8	4.3
Worked in another organization or association	7.1	6.4
Wore or displayed campaign badge/sticker	7.6	5.4
Signed petition	5.6	7.2
Took part in lawful public demonstration	2.3	4.1
Boycotted certain products	5.8	5.4

Source: ESS Surveys 2008 and 2010.

In addition, the findings shown in Table 4 indicate that political activism in Cyprus is a minority-driven process, and while this is the case in many other European countries, what differs is the unique status of Cyprus as

an occupied country – which might lead one to anticipate increased levels of political participation. The findings also reflect the lack of a participatory civil culture among Cypriots compared to other established European democracies.

6. Assessing contemporary relationships between political parties and TUs

This section will examine the relationships between political parties and TUs in light of the changes analysed in the preceding section. The two largest trade unions in the private sector (PEO and SEK) will be considered in terms of their relationships to the two major political parties in Cyprus, AKEL and DISY. Trade Unions in Cyprus are very powerful and their membership comprises over 50% of the Cypriot workforce (PEO Survey, 2009, p. 5), with PEO totaling 83,000 members and SEK 73,000 (Cyprus total population is 750,000). However, within a short period of 15 years, their ability to organise has steadily declined, considering that in the mid-1990s, TUs were able to organise approximately 80% of the workforce in Cyprus (Sparsis, 1995, p. 12).

The Cyprus trade union membership has followed worldwide patterns: the percentage of blue collar workers is shrinking in favour of white collar workers, with rough estimates indicating that membership is almost equally divided between the two. Membership provides trade unions with the bulk of their income since all members must turn over 1% of their salary to the trade union (Tombazos and Matsas interviews). State funding is not provided except in the cases of grants given for building rest facilities for their members or for research projects where

there is open competition. Funding from parties or vice versa is explicitly forbidden and does not occur. The financial muscle of Cypriot political parties is still strong, however, capitalising on their exchange and colonisation of the state. The largest part of parties' income originates from the state budget (see Table 5),[8] which could suggest that trade unions are becoming obsolete for party purposes. However, this is not the case, especially for the left-wing AKEL (Kolokasides interview).

TABLE 5: Funding of Cypriot political parties (total)[9]

YEAR	AMOUNT (Cyprus pounds*)
1998	650,000
1999	650,000
2000	650,000
2001	2,044,522
2002	1,525,433
2003	1,889,106
2004	1,510,387
2005	1,508,560
2006	2,511,212
2007	2,614,584
2008	7,032,040 (euro**)
2009	4,468,035
2010	4,470,000
2011	7,032,040

Source: Annual State Budgets
* 1 CYP equals approximately €1.60.
** Cyprus entered the Eurozone in 2008.

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[8] The political parties of Cyprus receive an annual state subsidy that covers important aspects of their operation. An additional subsidy is given in election years.
[9] The figures represent the funding granted to parliamentary parties on the basis of proportionality according to their vote share. For the years 1996-2001 there were five parliamentary parties, for the period 2001-2006,eight and for the period 2006-2011, six. During election years (e.g., 2001, 2006, 2011) the grant is increased to cover election expenses.

Personal interviews with party officials and their official documents reveal different as well as evolving attitudes/strategies towards CSOs in general and TUs in particular. AKEL maintains a long-standing strategy of developing its own networks of social organisation based around youth, sport and, more recently, other targeted groups and activities. AKEL is also bolstered by a number of auxiliary organisations – what the party calls "the popular movement"-- which represent important segments of society like workers, farmers, women and youth. They offer AKEL a dense network of officials and members to communicate messages, mobilise support and recruit members. AKEL is additionally affiliated with a number of cultural, athletic and professional associations and clubs, which enable the party message to be conveyed to various specific audiences as well as the general population. This strategy clearly places the party in a prime position vis-à-vis CSOs.

AKEL asserts that some CSOs purposefully degrade the concept of 'organised struggle, to instead promote individualistic concerns and interests -- which results in the "splitting of forces in the world of labour. The various CSOs do not address the opposition between labour and capital as the major source of conflict and inequality and choose to focus instead on "soft" issues' (Kolokasides interview). According to this line of criticism, the concept of civil society minimises the role of social classes as the main political subjects and obscures the class struggle, placing an overly heavy emphasis on other types of organisations. Proponents of civil society idealise its various forms and present them as alternatives to the parties. AKEL criticises CSOs for their view of civil society as a post-modern and alternative system of political representation that is in opposition to the traditional political and party system (AKEL, 2010, p.

43). Therefore, they see CSOs as representing an alternative political system whose "platform" is their expert knowledge or a special sensitivity to a certain issue; they are not seen as functioning on the basis of society's mandate.

The party advises engagement in trade union activities instead, believing that many of these activities would be even more beneficial if they were organised and executed by a combination of party mechanisms and TUs. Furthermore, AKEL does not believe that CSOs are the only option for active citizens who want to make a contribution to society, and the party acknowledges that this sector has evolved independent of party beliefs. Therefore, the party tries to influence these organisations' activities. 'Our members and voters do not enter these organisations in order to control them but if they do get involved we expect them to communicate the party's positions on the issues at hand' (Kolokasides interview).

DISY, on the other hand is more receptive to CSOs and encourages their activities, seeing the relationship between the two groups as complementary (Stylianides interview). DISY also believes that political parties ought to perform an administrative role within society and leave action up to the CSOs. This viewpoint concurs with the party's liberal ideology that sees the state (and the parties that control its mechanisms) as responsible for providing the contextual parameters for private initiatives of any kind to flourish. DISY does not especially encourage its members to engage in civil society activities and states outright that party officials should not be involved in the administration

of CSOs (Theocharous interview). TUs are not treated any differently than other CSOs.

DISY realises that SEK represents a large part of DISY's constituency (Tornaritis interview)—resulting from the ideological legacy of the 1940s and 1950s. The party also acknowledges that the union will try to advance its members' interests in various ways. So while the party notes their demands they do not necessarily comply with them. SEK in particular (TUS in general) is just one of the many social organisations that the party must listen to; the two have no privileged relationship. What is privileged, according to the party, is TU status in society, which is not always in the citizens' best interest. TUs use their power to influence the parties to respond to their demands.

In recent years DISY has adopted an even more open policy towards interest groups while maintaining its traditional ties with certain trade unions and other CSOs of the first wave (i.e., cultural and football associations, national organisations, etc.). The party's new approach is reflected in the revised party statute (DISY, 2010), which calls for dialogue with civil society (article 3.7) and public deliberation with NGOs (article 3.11); further now NGOs may participate in party forums and most importantly, their members can be appointed to DISY's Supreme Council (article 14.20). Informally, i.e., not mandated, the party undertakes a variety of strategies to establish contacts with interest groups and participate in social platforms and forums.

While the context for the parties/ TUs relationships has changed significantly (see above), these relationships still reflect the two groups' specific history (see section 3.1). The two unions under consideration

have historical bonds and affiliations with the two respective parties, although these are not official bonds and the unions feel politically affiliated (Tombazos and Matsas interviews). And while neither trade union stipulates political allegiance of its members, union officials concede that the overwhelming majority of their membership votes for the two particular parties. However, a number of SEK members vote for the centre-right DIKO and EUROKO (Tornaritis interview).

The PEO and AKEL have a much stronger affiliation because of the circumstances of establishment: 'AKEL is the one that created the labour movement of Cyprus and PEO itself" (Tombazos interview). The PEO has been politically attached to AKEL since the party's founding in 1941. Because it represents broad economic interests, the PEO enjoys considerable autonomy and flexibility: 'politically and ideologically there is an informal acknowledgement that the party directs the popular movement. In social and labour issues, though, the role of PEO is important. It is not a one- but a two-way relationship' (PEO general secretary Kyritsis, personal interview).[10] The PEO's relationship with the popular movement has offered AKEL significant organisational advantages in communicating party messages to society, recording voter preferences and recruiting candidates (Ellinas and Katsourides, 2013 forthcoming).

While SEK is generally more cautious, it has nevertheless declared its political affiliation on various occasions: in the 2008 presidential elections SEK asked members to vote for DISY candidate, Ioannis

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[10] Interview with Pambis Kyritsis, General Secretary of PEO and Member of the Secretariat of the AKEL's Politburo, June 2012. The interview was given to the author and A. Ellinas (see note 6).

Kasoulides,[11] and in 2013 SEK supported DISY's president N. Anastasiades.[12] Matsas (interview) explained their stance: 'SEK always votes, in either round of the elections, for the candidate who is not supported by the left'. The main difference between the two unions is that PEO officials and paid staff are free to run for any party or public post, whilst SEK forbids this, except for municipal or community offices. SEK does not officially participate in DISY bodies adds Tornaritis (interview).

Officials from both unions (Tombazos and Matsas interviews) agree that all parties respect the PEO and SEK and listen to their positions. Although both unions approach all political parties when they want to advance legislation amendments or other demands, they admit that AKEL generally favours PEO and DISY will pay more heed to SEK. There are no direct links between SEK and any political party (Matsas interview), while the Secretary General of PEO belongs to the seven-member Secretariat of AKEL. Moreover, a number of PEO officials participate in the Central Committee and other district organs of AKEL. In the latest party congress in 2010, 15 of the 105 members elected in the central committee were salaried employees of PEO. This organisational overlap gives AKEL an efficient mechanism to transmit political decisions to PEO. At the same time it points to a form of overlapping leadership and membership beyond political and ideological affiliation. SEK, on the other hand, maintains close relations with a number of first-class cadres of DISY and uses these relations to advance policy goals (Matsas interview).

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[11] SEK Press Release 18 February 2008.
[12] SEK Press Release 13 February 2013.

With regard to the way of placing demands both unions favour collective bargaining. However, they both also feel that labour relations now, in the post-EU-accession period, lean toward deregulation of the labour market and private contracts. They both concur that employer associations are becoming more aggressive. Strikes have not been much used in recent years (Table 6)—a fact that Matsas (interview) attributes to a Cypriot ethos that does not like conflictual situations as well as to workers' desire to keep their jobs. This could well change, due to Cyprus's recent acceptance of the EU memorandum of understanding.

TABLE 6: Number of strikes

YEAR	Number of Work stoppages
1998	20
1999	21
2000	6
2001	25
2002	23
2003	18
2004	13
2005	25
2006	10
2007	8
2008	8
2009	6
2010	4
2011	57

Source: Labour Statistics (2011), Statistical Service of Cyprus, Series II, Report No. 30, Ministry of Finance, Nicosia.

In fact, a change in attitude was already evident in 2011 where the number of strikes increased significantly in relation to previous years. The low incidence of strikes might also be interpreted as the unions' inability to mobilise workers to strike in protest, so that they were forced to re-direct their efforts through political channels. This would confirm Pizzorno's thesis (cited in Hyman and McCormick, 2010, p. 319) that 'what unions traded in the political arena was consent, or at least abstention, from militant opposition to government policy'. The power of the TUs in previous years was "rewarded" by the state and the employers with consent to union's demands. It is anticipated that the new nature of labour relations will change this pattern, resulting in an escalation of tension and a decline in the unions' status. In fact, SEK already admits that the TUs are not as powerful as they once were (Matsas interview).

In Cyprus there is a reciprocal influence between the trade unions and the parties, with the parties influencing trade unions on political issues, and the unions influencing the parties on labour and trade union matters. However, AKEL exerts a stronger influence over the PEO than DISY does over SEK (Kolokasides interview). And while the connection seems relatively strong for both actors, especially for the PEO and AKEL, in fact no direct economic affiliation exists. The same applies for DISY and SEK (Tornaritis interview). The unions do not allocate their support across the party system but seem to hold exclusive relations with their respective parties.

We can now draw some preliminary conclusions on the relationship between the TUs and the two political parties under consideration. The

relationships between the two groups are clearly fashioned by certain factors: institutional, structural, historical, etc. It is also evident in recent years that their relationships have been steadily weakened, with the TUs losing more heavily. The parties remain more or less in control of the political process and governments and therefore posses more actual power. However, this could change fundamentally as a result of the signing of the MOA.

The parties' pursuit of voters in competitive elections and the TUs' goal to influence political decisions also deserve special attention. The cost-benefit question (see Allern, 2010) provides a key for understanding the two actors' relationships i.e., both actors will pursue a close relationship when this benefits them both, or will be more independent when the context changes. However, electoral considerations cannot capture the complexity governing their relationships. Ideological and historical legacies cannot be discarded altogether; this is clearer with regard to AKEL. Despite the pluralistic nature of the relationships between parties and the TUs, some relationships, such as that between AKEL and PEO, remain strong, while DISY has a less clear relationship with SEK. However, both unions seem locked into old identities derived from their traditional ideological and political allegiances. The TUs, for their part, employ lobbying practices to advance their interests and views on the political parties- without discrimination. This practice corresponds with Katz and Mair's (1995, p. 23) argument that interest groups prefer more room for manoeuvre and do not want to run the risk of being tainted by association with particular parties.

The relationship between the PEO and AKEL resembles the Leninist model presented in section 2.1 with the party having clearly the pole position. The DISY -- SEK relationship seems more flexible with no overt alliance, although. Their ideological affinity and political allegiance are quite clear.

7. Conclusions

The ties between CSOs and political parties are significant in Cyprus, where historically there has been a strong party system that embraced many societal activities and institutions. This was certainly the scenario for the first wave of Cypriot CSOs, most of which were established under the auspices of the two political blocks. The second wave of CSOs is characterised by a different, more cautious relationship with the political parties, which, of course, has an impact on the parties' positions. This newer relationship does not preclude CSOs from lobbying for their causes, but it means that all parties are lobbied irrespective of political agenda. This new scenario also involves the TUs, clearly the most influential of the CSOs. The direction of the influence between parties and TUs seems to vary significantly and this makes generalisations difficult. Nevertheless, it does not seem to be a one-way relationship. TU forums are usually open for all political parties and most appeal to all political parties, despite the privileged relationships they maintain with their ideological party allies.

Despite the developments analysed in the article that signal the beginning of party crisis and dealignment, political parties in the Republic of Cyprus remain extremely influential (CIVICUS, 2011, p. 58).

Greek Cypriots tend to think almost everything is a political cause and so therefore it is the duty of politicians to deal with almost all issues facing society. Political power, as exercised by the state and political parties, therefore assumes a hegemonic role, controlling not only the economy but also society at large. The TUs appear to be experiencing similar problems but are probably in a more disadvantageous position. Their actual power is diminishing and the MOA has inflicted powerful changes in areas previously governed by the collective agreements.

The strong historical bonds between parties and TUs do not necessarily guarantee their continuation. The relationships and alliances between parties and TUs are not on autopilot. They evolve according to the strategies pursued by both set of actors as well as other forces operating outside their control (e.g., the EU). The Cypriot political parties do not seem to approach the issue in a uniform way: AKEL continues to place prominence on a more or less controlled network of auxiliary organisations, whereas DISY abides by a more flexible and maybe disguised relationship.

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