

Memories of violence in Cyprus: conflicting
perspectives and dynamics of reconciliation
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ABSTRACT

When remembering violence in their collective past, Cypriot individual and collective perspectives are often based on a representation of violence. Popular thinking within communities and rhetoric of elites can intertwine and conflict. Individuals may in fact remember privately events that do not fit easily within the nationalist narratives forwarded by the community leaderships. In the case of Cyprus and other violent events of the past, we are often not discussing violence at all but the memories of respondents. Research has been conducted on the community memories but not necessarily on the 1963-4 period of inter-communal violence and the international intervention/invasion of 1974. Nor has research assessed the effect such memories have on the reconciliation of communities in the present. Through questionnaires and interviews, this research examines the response of Cypriots regarding political relations and attitudes and how these were perceived to have been affected by violence. This thesis argues that there appear to be two types of violent memories; one that may create divisions between communities, while another may encourage a sense of collective victimhood. Through recollection and transmission, such memories could drive communities apart or together, intentionally or otherwise. Often reconciliation needs to take place before a political solution can be found, although these processes exist in tandem. This thesis illustrates that these foundations may have been laid for reconciliation between Cypriot communities at the grass-roots, which would need to be built upon. For this to result in reconciliation, Cypriot elites need to change their policies in a number of areas for this groundwork to constitute a sound progression towards a sustainable solution.

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