THE CHALLENGE OF PEACEBUILDING: CYPRIOT VIEWS ON RECONCILIATION

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Abstract

In the search for a solution to the 'Cyprus problem', the focus of debates and discussions has been on power sharing agreements, land exchanges, right of return, and economics, but there has been little to no focus on reconciliation. In the aftermath of the referendum in which Cypriots were given an historic opportunity to vote on the reunification of the island, this research places the concept of reconciliation at the centre of the debate about the Cyprus problem. Based on data gathered in 2005 through forty interviews with Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot politicians, businessmen, activists, academics, organisational leaders, economists, and members of civil society, this article presents Cypriots' views on reconciliation. Drawing from literature on reconciliation in conflict divided societies as a framework, it will analyse the various perceptions Cypriots hold about the definition of reconciliation, what initiatives can be used to promote reconciliation in Cyprus, the obstacles on the path towards reconciliation, and the sequencing of reconciliatory measures. Overall, this article seeks to present an alternative to strict political engineering projects that characterise the current debate about the Cyprus problem, by encouraging creative approaches to conflict resolution such as truth commissions, revised history curricula, and joint projects that foster mutual understanding and shared commitment to peace.

Historical Context

Located at a strategic crossroad of trade routes in the Mediterranean, the island of Cyprus has been plagued by a series of colonisers, occupiers, and wars. Presently, divided between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, conflicting views of history are used to entrench their respective positions. The Greek Cypriots point to a Hellenic cultural legacy that dates back to 1200 BC while the Turkish Cypriots locate their origins in 1571 when the Ottoman Turks conquered the island (Calotychos, 1998). After an extended period of Ottoman rule, Britain rented Cyprus from 1870-1914, later solidifying its rule in 1925 when Cyprus was declared a Crown Colony. In 1955 the EOKA (National Organisation of Cypriot Fighters), a revolutionary group seeking enosis, reunification with Greece, took up an armed struggle against the

British colonial authority. In an effort to quell the rebellion the British authorised the use of the Turkish-Cypriot police to stifle the independence movement. The British tactic to counter-mobilise Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots to support its colonial rule against the threat of enosis, "set the scene for one of the most intractable conflicts of the twentieth century" (Tocci, 2004, p. 43). In response to Greek-Cypriot demands for unification with Greece, fearing forced assimilation under Greek rule Turkish Cypriots rallied for taksim, or partition of the island.

Cyprus was granted independence in 1960, not as a result of a struggle for liberation on the part of the Cypriots, but rather as a way for Britain to liberate itself of the escalating conflict that had erupted on the island between competing claims from Greek Cypriots for enosis and Turkish-Cypriot demands for taksim or partition of the island. Turkey, Greece, and Britain designed the framework for the newly independent Republic of Cyprus at two peace conferences in Zurich and London in 1959. Cypriot leaders were indirectly involved in the decision-making process only after the agreement had been drafted. The Cyprus problem "was in fact settled on a bilateral basis between Greece and Turkey under British directorship" (Joseph, 1997, p. 20).

Three treaties, the Treaty of Establishment, the Treaty of Alliance, and the Treaty of Guarantee, set up the framework for the independence of Cyprus. The power sharing arrangement established in the 1960 Constitution did not meet the demands of both sides, but each accepted it as a transitional step towards a more favourable solution. The Greek Cypriots complained about Turkish privileges and over-representation, while Turkish Cypriots felt that the regulations were necessary to protect their rights against the majority. President Makarios had unwillingly approved the Constitution, but with the hope to change it once implemented. In an attempt to address some of its problems, President Makarios proposed thirteen amendments to the Constitution that would have essentially turned the Turkish Cypriots into a minority without the protections provided in the original plan (ibid., p. 28). The Turkish Cypriots and Turkey refused the thirteen amendments and became even more suspicious of Greek-Cypriot intentions to regain majoritarian control. With tensions high and the political system unworkable, intercommunal fighting broke out in 1963 placing Cyprus back on the list of unresolved ethnic conflicts.

In the early 1970s, as plans were being discussed for an intercommunal arrangement to grant autonomy to the Turkish Cypriots', hope for peace emerged. In 1974, however, the fascist Greek military junta staged a coup to overthrow President Makarios in an effort to gain control of the island and reunite it with Greece. In order to protect Turkish Cypriots, Turkey intervened militarily and gained control of 38 per cent of the island. The Turkish-Cypriot leader, Rauf Denktash,

drafted a constitution and declared the birth of the 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC)' in 1983 (Hadjipavlou and Trigeorgis, 1993, p. 344). However, only Turkey recognises the 'TRNC' as a legitimate state. As a result of this unresolved conflict, Cyprus has been de facto divided since 1974 by what is known as the Green Line. The 80 per cent of Cypriots that are of Greek descent live in the southern part of the island while the 18 per cent of Cypriots that are of Turkish descent live in the northern part. Movement across this line was restricted until 23 April 2003 when the Green Line was partially opened, allowing Cypriots to move across the island on a daily basis.

Peacebuilding Efforts
Since 1964 the United Nations (UN) has been actively working to find a solution to the 'Cyprus problem'. Despite its numerous efforts at convening talks and drafting proposals, it has been argued that "the UN has achieved peacekeeping but not peacemaking" (Camp, 1998, p. 136). In the early 1990s, the European Union (EU) emerged as another actor in the Cyprus conflict. In July 1990, when the Republic of Cyprus applied for EU membership, it was hoped that in conjunction with continued UN mediation, the EU accession process would "help bring the communities on the island closer together" (Commission, 1993, para. 4). Following the culmination of years of negotiation, the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, in 2002, presented a set of proposals which became known as the Annan Plan for the reunification of Cyprus. After a series of revisions, the final version of the plan, referred to as the Annan Plan V, was unveiled on 31 March 2004.

The Annan Plan called for the establishment of the United Republic of Cyprus with a Greek-Cypriot constituent state and Turkish-Cypriot constituent state linked by a federal government. In an effort to foster peacebuilding, Article 11 of the Annan Plan called for an independent reconciliation commission to "promote understanding, tolerance, and mutual respect between Greek and Turkish Cypriots" but it did not specify how that would be done, nor did the Constitution grant the Federal government sufficient powers to implement a successful commission (Rotberg, 2003). In comparison to the articles of the Annan Plan relating to refugees, property, and power sharing, Article 11 was very brief and received relatively little attention from the media and politicians.

After several revisions and negotiations with both Turkish-Cypriot and Greek-Cypriot leaders, on 24 April 2004 Cypriots were asked to vote on the Annan Plan. With the pressure of EU accession looming, the settlement was presented on 31 March 2004 giving Cypriots three weeks to decide and vote on a "plan that was to shape the lives of future generations and amend the losses of the past" (Evriviades, 2005). The Turkish Cypriots endorsed the Annan Plan V by 67 per cent whereas the Greek Cypriots rejected it by 76 per cent. From the Greek-Cypriot perspective,

the plan satisfied almost all of the Turkish-Cypriot demands but Greek Cypriots viewed the plan as undemocratic, unworkable, and permanently entrenching the division between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. As a result of the lack of support for the Annan Plan from the Greek-Cypriot community, Cyprus entered the European Union on 1 May 2004 divided and without a solution.

Theoretical Underpinnings of Reconciliation

Both in the time leading up to the referendum and in the time that has elapsed since then, there has been little to no dialogue or debate regarding the concept of reconciliation in Cyprus. When asked about whether the reconciliation commission suggested in Article 11 of the Annan Plan figured prominently in the media debates leading up to the referendum, one Turkish Cypriot responded "it was actually a joke to talk about the reconciliation commission … reconciliation is not something people really talk about or that people have in their agendas as a priority" (Yucel, 2005). With the failure of the Annan Plan, however, some Cypriots are beginning to perceive reconciliation as something that should be given greater priority.

Before looking at Cypriot perceptions of reconciliation it is helpful to explore the theoretical debates around this concept and establish a framework from which to analyse reconciliation in Cyprus, especially with regard to the definition of reconciliation, the mechanisms of reconciliation, and the sequencing of reconciliatory initiatives. Although 'reconciliatory measures' such as truth commissions, reparations, and apologies have been employed since the middle of the twentieth century (see Kritz, 1995), it is only in recent years that academics from a wide range of disciplines have focused on developing theories of reconciliation that can be applied to large-scale internal or international conflicts. Previously a concept restricted to the interpersonal sphere, academics now face the challenge of creating a body of theory that can guide the implementation of reconciliation in the national and international sphere.

One of the main obstacles towards developing a body of theory on reconciliation in post-conflict settings is the lack of a clear definition of the terminology. Within peace and conflict research, reconciliation has been understood as "a process of relationship building across divisions, as a transformation of existing relationships, as well as a creation of new relationships after the horrors of war" (Ericson, 2001, p. 27). Other scholars emphasise the spiritual dimension of forgiveness and affirm that, "healing and reconciliation in violent ethnic and religious conflicts depend on a process of transactional contrition and forgiveness between aggressors and victims which is indispensable to the establishment of a new relationship based on mutual acceptance and reasonable trust" (Montville, 1993, p. 112). Equating reconciliation with forgiveness, however, is a contested area in the

development of the theory on reconciliation. Another way to conceive of reconciliation is as a process of acknowledgment of one's own suffering as well as that of the other and a willingness to reweave relations. In other words, "to reconcile does not mean to forget or even to forgive, but it means to remember without deliberating pain, bitterness, revenge, fear, or guilt and to co-exist and work for the peaceful handling of continuing differences" (Du Plessis, 2004, p. 197). In between vengeance and forgiveness, reconciliation opens a space for the acknowledgment of past wrongs and the mutual agreement to move towards a more positive future (Minow, 1998).

These various definitions of reconciliation implicitly refer to it either as a process or a goal. In describing reconciliation as an outcome, Bar-Tal and Bennink advance a notion of a reconciled society as one in which there is "mutual recognition and acceptance, invested interests and goals in developing peaceful relations, mutual trust, positive attitudes as well as sensitivity and consideration for the other party's needs and interests" (2004, p. 16). This definition presents an ideal society, which arguably does not exist. Reconciliation as a goal is an ideal state. Especially in large-scale conflicts "full reconciliation in all its aspects is improbable" (Kreisberg, 1999, p. 10). In this sense it is helpful to understand reconciliation as a process that moves towards a goal that will never fully be achieved, but a goal that serves as a model of social harmony. While it is possible to distinguish between more or less reconciled societies based on factors such as inter-group relations, openness of debate in the public sphere, legitimacy of the state, and general civic activity, the "processes of reconciliation are complex and unending … changes in the reconciliation achieved between peoples occurs years, decades, or even centuries after an intercommunal accommodation has been reached" (ibid., p. 1). There are steps that can be taken to advance reconciliation while being mindful that the outcome of a truly reconciled society is an ideal to strive towards. In the case of Cyprus where divisions have been deeply entrenched over the past thirty to forty years, it is important to emphasise reconciliation as a process so that people develop realistic expectations and have patience when reconciliation is not immediately achieved.

The types of actions that can be used to promote reconciliation are as complex and varied as the definition of the word itself. Examples of some initiatives include: truth commissions, reports, trials, writing common history, reparations such as the building of monuments or financial compensation for the victims, public ceremonies, exhumations, reburials, workshops, and support groups. While the action itself is important, the context in which that action is carried out and who initiates it are even more important. Therefore, if Cypriots decide to undertake some form of truth commission, it is important to acknowledge that "language, however eloquent, alone cannot provide [reconciliation]. The words must be received, officially

acknowledged, and incorporated into the history of the renewed state" (Phelps, 2004, p. 103). Thus it is essential for those in power to acknowledge the abuses of the past and to support the process of reconciliation in order for it to take root on the national level.

Timing is another question raised by the various definitions of reconciliation. Several scholars define reconciliation as a process that begins after the cessation of violence. Among them Whittaker describes reconciliation as "a process that takes place after conflict resolution and often takes longer than bringing the conflict to an end" (Brown and Poremski, 2005, p. viii). Requiring the cessation of hostilities as a pre-requisite for reconciliation limits the scope of possible reconciliatory initiatives. Kreisberg, a critic of this view, argues that, "actions that foster reconciliation need not await the ending of a conflict" (1999, p. 9). In some cases, it may be impossible to achieve a formal settlement of the conflict without some form of rapprochement or reconciliation. The process of reconciliation can thus be understood as containing various phases, which can be divided into pre-settlement and post-settlement. In the pre-settlement phase, "reconciliation begins with the transformation of an enemy into a future neighbour by helping the parties imagine that coexistence is possible" (Ross, 2004, p. 200). The core of the reconciliation process will take place after the formal end of the conflict, but reconciliatory initiatives have a very important role to play in creating a space in which a settlement of the conflict can be negotiated.

The growing belief that reconciliation is necessary in order "to cement peaceful relations between rival sides to an intractable conflict" raises the question of what role reconciliation can play in the Cyprus peace process (Bar-Tal and Bennink, 2004, p. 36). Debates about the definition of reconciliation, the tools that can be used to promote reconciliation, and the timing of reconciliatory measures, surfaced throughout the course of interviews conducted in Cyprus in the summer of 2005. Closer analysis reveals that a clarification and honest reckoning with past abuses and violence is essential to promoting peace in Cyprus.

Methodology

Over the course of two months, June through August 2005, Cypriots from different social sectors and from both the Turkish-Cypriot and Greek-Cypriot communities were interviewed about their views on reconciliation. Dr Maria Hadjipavlou, the facilitator of this research project and a long time scholar and activist in the field of conflict resolution in Cyprus, identified a list of key people to interview. The guiding principle in the selection of interviewees was to identify an equal number of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots who could speak about their views on reconciliation. The sample of forty Cypriots that were interviewed is not representative of the

average Cypriot but rather is focused on Cypriots who have been participants in bi-communal activities and who are in positions to influence change within Cyprus. The interviewees included politicians, academics, leaders of non-governmental organisations, economists, and members of civil society. The interviews were conducted in English and most of those interviewed were influential members of their communities either locally or nationally. Their political views covered the spectrum from supporters to opponents of the Annan Plan. Each person was asked a set of open-ended questions about reconciliation, possible tools to promote reconciliation, the timing, and challenges of pursuing reconciliation in Cyprus. Based on forty interviews, this research aims to provide a glimpse into the perceptions of reconciliation in Cyprus. Overall, this study intends to serve as a starting point for greater discussion on theories of reconciliation and how they can be incorporated into peacebuilding efforts in Cyprus.

Cypriots Speak: Interview Analysis

Based on an analysis of the interviews conducted with forty Cypriots, this section presents some of the main trends or debates among those interviewed as they relate to the definition of reconciliation, tools or mechanisms to be used to promote reconciliation, and the sequencing of reconciliatory initiatives.

The Cyprus Problem

This research is based on the premise that there is a conflict in Cyprus, although latent and non-violent, it is a conflict nonetheless. In other words, there is a division that needs to be reconciled or resolved. This conflict is often referred to as the 'Cyprus problem'. While this term is widely used, there are a variety of conflicting perceptions about what the Cyprus problem actually involves. For some Greek Cypriots the Cyprus problem begins in 1974 with the Turkish invasion of Cyprus. For many Turkish Cypriots the Cyprus problem stems from the first struggles for enosis led by the Greek Cypriots in the early 1950s. For those Greek Cypriots that view the problem as a result of the Turkish invasion, they believe that once the military pulls out of Cyprus, the conflict will be resolved. This view, however, angers many Turkish Cypriots who have memories of intercommunal fighting in the 1960s and fears of domination by the Greek-Cypriot majority. Reconciliation, as described in the following sections, has a role to play in clarifying the origins of the Cyprus problem and working towards its resolution.

Definitions of Reconciliation

While there is disagreement over the origin of the Cyprus problem, there was a significant level of consensus about the term 'reconciliation'. Overall, the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot definitions of reconciliation were very similar, focusing primarily on understanding, dialogue, and acknowledgement. While a few

interviewees included some element of forgiveness in their definition of reconciliation, most definitions presented by Cypriots from both the Greek and Turkish communities were similar to the definition put forward by Martha Minow and Willemien Du Plessis. In this sense reconciliation, according to those interviewed, is understood in social/political terms rather than in spiritual terms. The emphasis was on creating dialogue and mutual understanding about the past, acknowledging the harm done on both sides, and moving forward. Whereas in some countries people tend to have negative perceptions of reconciliation as an evasion of justice, on the whole Cypriots viewed reconciliation as something positive.

In some contexts, reconciliation is closely linked with justice involving trials and punishment for perpetrators. In Cyprus, however, retributive justice is not one of the pressing concerns that surfaces in people's reflections on reconciliation. The definitions of reconciliation echoed three main themes: the need to understand the past, an acknowledgement of mutual suffering, and a commitment to forward looking approaches based on cooperation and mutual respect.

Almost everyone interviewed touched on the need to understand the past in order to move towards reconciliation. According to Katie Clerides, a Greek-Cypriot member of parliament, reconciliation involves, "understanding the roots of conflict" (2005). This sentiment was echoed by a representative of the Turkish Cypriot Chamber of Commerce who defined reconciliation as a state of being that calls upon one "to be able to understand what happened in the past. To be able to understand the past from the other point of view as well and to put this together to understand it, accept it, acknowledge it and to move on" (Beyatli, 2005). Therefore, one of the first steps in the process of reconciliation involves a re-examination of the past.

Once there is a common understanding of each community's views about the past, according to those interviewed, reconciliation involves an acknowledgement of the other. Another representative of the Turkish Cypriot Chamber of Commerce explained that, "reconciliation means that first of all you have to understand what are the needs and interests and what are the perceptions of the other side. Once you analyse that properly, you should strive towards empathy" (Damdelen, 2005). The need for acknowledgement was echoed by a Greek-Cypriot social anthropologist who explained that, "reconciliation means coming to terms with the injustices and pain that you may have caused the other, accepting and respecting the others, and of course asking them to also acknowledge their own violence against you" (Papadakis, 2005). While this acknowledgment is important, Nicos Anastasiou, a Greek-Cypriot leader of a bicommunal youth organisation realises that this process will not be easy and requires a significant amount of courage. In his view, "reconciliation may mean being existentially brave enough to understand

and acknowledge that our side, whatever it might be, has also done terrible things" (Anastasiou, 2005). Thus, once the past is understood, both sides need to be open to acknowledge the suffering of the other and in this way break out of a pattern of self-victimisation, and open a space in which to see the 'other' as human.

The third element of reconciliation expressed in the interviews with Greek and Turkish Cypriots, emphasises the need for future cooperation and forward looking measures. Focusing on the future, a Greek-Cypriot political science professor at the University of Cyprus believes that "reconciliation means both can live together, interact, and look at each other as citizens of the same country without placing too much emphasis on what divides them, but rather what unites them" (Joseph, 2005). From a similar perspective, a Turkish-Cypriot politician emphasised that "reconciliation means accepting to come to terms with each other, accepting to restrain some of your demands in exchange for peaceful harmonious coexistence. To reconcile we have to forgive a lot of things and focus on the benefits that the future can bring" (Nami, 2005). Summing up the focus on past, present, and future, a Turkish-Cypriot banker explains that, "reconciliation is perhaps acknowledging that two parties have hurt each other in the past, it is a decision to acknowledge this and at the same time to show sincere willingness to put differences aside and start to work together again for a common good" (Besimler, 2005).

Overall, what is striking about the definitions of reconciliation presented by both Greek and Turkish Cypriots is the similarity and relative consensus about what reconciliation entails. While each person emphasised slightly different angles of reconciliation, in general they tended to focus on knowledge about the past, understanding and acknowledging each others suffering, and getting past differences for the benefit of future cooperation.

Mechanisms for Promoting Reconciliation
Based on the provision for a reconciliation commission envisioned in Article 11 of the Annan Plan, Cypriots were asked to comment on their perceptions of such a commission and on what other tools or mechanisms could be used to promote reconciliation in Cyprus. While there were different views about whether or not a reconciliation commission, as envisioned in Article 11 of the Annan Plan would be useful or necessary in Cyprus, there was a general consensus that education would be a crucial tool in working towards reconciliation in Cyprus. In addition to a commission and educational reforms, seminars in the workplace, and economic cooperation were put forward as other tools to promote reconciliation.

There was no clear consensus over whether or not a reconciliation commission as suggested in Article 11 of the Annan Plan would be the most effective tool for promoting reconciliation in Cyprus. Responses ranged from a priori endorsement

as stated by a Greek-Cypriot cable television news editor, "I think a reconciliation commission would be good for both sides" (Kotzamani, 2005), to questionable support as expressed by a Turkish-Cypriot PhD candidate, who said, "of course [a reconciliation commission] would be useful, but I don't think it is extremely necessary, but I guess that [it] could be useful to have a true account of history, because everybody has their own version" (Latif, 2005). Others, such as a Greek Cypriot involved in bi-communal work who has requested to remain anonymous, doubted whether a commission was the best method of promoting reconciliation at all, "there is definitely a need for reconciliation. I do not know how effective [a] reconciliation commission is; I don't know" (2005). Echoing this ambivalence over the value of a commission, a Turkish-Cypriot intellectual commented that, "some kind of reconciliation committee has to be established; but as I say, without the committee a lot of reconciliation can be done" (Hatay, 2005).

If there were to be a reconciliation commission in Cyprus, several of those interviewed emphasised the need for political support. As a Turkish-Cypriot businessman explained, "[a reconciliation commission] is needed, it is a must," adding with a note of caution, "of course for this you need commitment from the state level" (Atai, 2005). Not only would such a commission not be effective without political support, many warned that it may prove counterproductive. According to a Greek-Cypriot member of parliament, "for such a commission to really produce results it needs to be backed by the political will of both sides to find an agreement. If it is used only as an excuse for divisionary tactics in other fields, then I can't see how it would serve. If it is an expression of a general will and it is backed politically then it can work. Otherwise, every step it takes without political backing it could create more tension and more conflict" (Mavrou, 2005). While political support is seen as essential, some of those interviewed expressed ambivalence over political involvement. In their view, a commission would need to be supported by the state but remain independent from it. A Turkish-Cypriot professor expressed that, "I think it is a very useful tool, but it depends on what sort of a committee could be built. If the members of this committee are going to be appointed by Mr Papadopoulos or by Mr Talat, that will do more harm than good" (Azgin, 2005).

Very few Cypriots expressed clear recommendations for the specific mandate of a possible reconciliation commission. The few that did, however, did not advocate for naming of perpetrators or for retributive punishment. According to Katie Clerides, since Cyprus is such a small island, punishment for past crimes is not necessary and could even be harmful. The truth telling aspect of a commission would be important, but she says, "I don't think it would be good to try to say that people should be punished after all these years, but I think the story telling aspect could be important". In terms of naming names, she answered that "I am not sure how helpful that is in a small society. But it is important for Greek Cypriots to know

that Turkish Cypriots were rounded up and slaughtered by Greek Cypriots and vice versa" (Clerides, 2005).

Beyond a specific reconciliation commission as described in the Annan Plan, several Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots suggested other tools that could perhaps be even more effective in promoting reconciliation. Some of the suggestions included an official apology from representatives of both sides, training seminars in the workplace to prepare people to eventually work together in the federal government, informative media campaigns, and economic cooperation across the Green Line. However, the most frequently citied tool for promoting reconciliation was education, and more specifically history education. According to a Greek Cypriot who spoke on condition of anonymity, "education is the most powerful tool on earth. If education did that much damage to this island, then it must be education which will correct it. [We need to] rewrite the history books in such a way that they would recognise the problems but also give reasons for the problems in a rational way to give people a perspective that is more rational" (2005). A Turkish-Cypriot intellectual agreed that the educational system of both sides of the island has been more destructive than constructive. As a result, one of the first steps in a process of reconciliation needs to be to provide correct information. In his view, "getting rid of myths on both sides is very important in order to achieve a healthy relationship between the two communities. All this victimisation and demonisation has to be stopped" (Hatay, 2005).

In order to overcome these myths and victimisation the majority of people interviewed focused on the role of schools and teachers. According to a Greek-Cypriot professor of social anthropology, Cypriots need to "develop a different approach to history; a more multi-perspective approach where history is not just one truth that the students have to learn, but that they have to do their own research and have a critical understanding of the notion of history" (Papadakis, 2005). He expressed a need to reform the way in which history is taught, but also to adjust the way in which certain dates and anniversaries are celebrated. National commemorations currently work to further entrench divisions. The 20th of July, for example, the day that marks the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974, is celebrated with fireworks on the Turkish-Cypriot side and solemn reflection on the Greek-Cypriot side.

In addition to history lessons, a Turkish-Cypriot professor stressed the importance of the language in the process of reconciliation. In his view it is essential to have Greek language lessons in Turkish schools, and Turkish language lessons in Greek schools because "knowledge of language can help to understand the culture and the way of thinking of the 'other' side, thus enabling individuals to the feel empathy towards the other" (Azgin, 2005). Additional research on this subject

shows that overall, in the educational system, there is a need to "develop pedagogies that construct citizenship education which accepts difference and the notion of hybrid identities by relaxing the emphasis on separate identities" (Zembylas and Karahasan, 2006, p. 25).

Two members of the media, one Greek Cypriot and the other Turkish Cypriot both advocated for using the media as a means to overcome the misinformation people have about the past and about the other community. "We should start through the media, giving the right information, not propaganda, and information so that you can understand the other side … we need to open the communication channels between both sides," argues Hüseyin Gürsan, the director of BRT, a Turkish-Cypriot state owned television station (Gürsan, 2005). A Greek-Cypriot member of parliament and director of a radio station, agreed that "the owners of media have a large role to play in this process because of the influence they yield" (Hatzi Georgiou, 2005).

While Cypriots had various suggestions for tools to promote reconciliation, especially education, very few people had a clear understanding of what role a reconciliation commission could or should play. Some envision it as a type of court to resolve disputes. Others, including a Greek-Cypriot professor of political science, saw it as a technical committee, saying that "a technical committee, for example, would give advice and coordinate how schools of the two sides could share some activities, coordinate and facilitate some educational activities; in that sense it could be good" (Joseph, 2005). But on the whole those interviewed were not very familiar with other truth commissions and how such a truth commission could work in the context of Cyprus. Most people thought it would be a positive step towards reconciliation, but were not very clear in its mandate or specific activities. This reveals either a lack of knowledge about truth commissions or, and most likely, it reveals a lack of preparedness or need for a reconciliation commission at this time. In this context, alternative measures should be explored and implemented where possible.

If there is another referendum in Cyprus or another proposed plan for its reunification, most Cypriots agreed that more work needs to be done to build trust and a platform for common dialogue between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. The various mechanisms suggested by those interviewed could be used to promote greater reconciliation, but what was highlighted as crucial for any such reconciliation to take root was the idea that future efforts be undertaken on a wider and more public dimension. As one Turkish-Cypriot businessman involved in bi-communal activities commented, "the number of people who went through the workshops prior to the opening of the gates does not exceed the hundreds, maybe one thousand" (Besimler, 2005). Now that the Green Line is open, efforts at

reconciliation need to extend beyond select individuals and should be more public. In the past, due to restrictions created by the closed demarcation line, many bi-communal workshops were conducted with a select few and in secret. "The fact that a lot of this work was done quietly with not a lot of publicity proved to its disadvantage because there was an attempt to present it as something being done in secret involving only a chosen few," explained a Greek-Cypriot member of parliament (Mavrou, 2005). With the benefit of the open Green Line and lifted restrictions there should be greater emphasis on common projects, direct communication between the two sides, and clear information about any future proposals. It will be crucial to dispel myths and equip people with knowledge about plans for reunification so that they can make an informed decision about the future of Cyprus.

Sequencing of Reconciliation Initiatives
Based on the variety of tools suggested, Cypriots reflected on the relative timing of such mechanisms. According to theories of reconciliation put forward by Louis Kreisberg, reconciliatory tools can be used before a conflict has ended. With the failure of the Annan Plan, one could argue that in Cyprus, a settlement will not be reached until the process of reconciliation has started to take hold among key members of society. Overall, the Cypriots interviewed expressed a variety of views about the sequencing of reconciliation.

There were those who agreed with Whittaker's theory that reconciliation takes place after the conflict has ended. In the words of a Greek-Cypriot news editor, "I don't think there can be a reconciliation commission if there is no solution. I think the results of the committee would be questioned by both sides if there is no solution." Furthermore, in her view, "reconciliation will come if we resolve the problems relating to economics, safety, and property" (Kotzamani, 2005). A professor at the University of Cyprus, agrees that after there is a settlement then reconciliation can begin. He stated that, "of course a reconciliation commission is a good idea, but it is the tenth step of the one-hundredth step. We have to do many things before that. We have to have a political will for reconciliation. Our leadership should tell us and give us the green light to go on and do something. Everybody is expecting some agreement. As soon as this agreement is there many things will happen, one of which is the reconciliation committee" (Georgiou, 2005).

Departing from a strict definition of the sequencing of reconciliatory measures, there were several Greek and Turkish Cypriots who believed work towards a settlement and towards reconciliation can be undertaken simultaneously. A representative of the Turkish Cypriot Chamber of Commerce expressed this view in saying, "I think they have to be together. We have to work on reconciliation as well. Now if there is a settlement, I don't think it would work very well unless there is a

very good process of reconciliation" (Beyatli, 2005). Implicit in this comment is a belief that reconciliation may in fact help lay the groundwork for a solution to the Cyprus problem.

From the perspective that efforts towards reconciliation are helpful at any stage of the conflict, several Cypriots advocated that work should begin as soon as possible. When asked when a reconciliation commission should be established, a Turkish-Cypriot businessman responded, "Now! Yesterday! Now if there is a political will" (Atai, 2005). The sense that now is even too late was echoed by a Turkish-Cypriot member of parliament who explained that, "I think it would be a very good idea to establish such a commission or committee, today or even yesterday. And maybe this could help us to have some kind of dialogue" (Nami, 2005). Emphasising the importance of beginning the process of reconciliation, a Greek-Cypriot professor of social anthropology stresses the fact that while a commission might not be possible at the moment, many other mechanisms are available. "I think it would be important for it to start early, but it doesn't have to be a commission, it could also be different, like the project I am working on about history education" (Papadakis, 2005). Most of the Cypriots interviewed identified a need to pursue reconciliation, but there was no clear consensus on the relationship between reconciliation and peacebuilding. The question of sequencing applies particularly to a large scale endeavour such as a reconciliation commission. With regard to other tools, such as workshops and information campaigns, Cypriots generally agreed that these could be undertaken at any point in the peacebuilding process.

The timing of reconciliatory initiatives emerged as a key uncertainty among the Cypriots interviewed. This uncertainty calls for greater research in order to identify greater consensus, but it also opens up the space for creativity and flexibility. While there was no consensus on particular sequencing, there was a relative degree of openness to a variety of options. In this way, with the proper framing and presentation, it seems that efforts at reconciliation can be undertaken at various points along the path towards the reunification of Cyprus.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Through a series of interviews, Cypriots from both the Greek and Turkish communities expressed the view that reconciliation requires an examination of the past, acknowledgement of harm done on both sides, and a willingness to work towards a common future. Eleni Mavrou, a Greek-Cypriot member of parliament captures these three elements in saying:

> Reconciliation means facing our past. It involves accepting the mistakes done
> by the other side and accepting that both sides have suffered in one way or

another and through this process facing the future. It means understanding that we cannot continue living in the past so we should concentrate on the possibility, the capability of creating something together for the future. In the political realm, it means a dialogue that should lead to an agreement on the future constitutional, territorial, settlement of the Cyprus problem (Mavrou, 2005).

Judging from the responses given by Cypriots of both sides, breaking down historical myths and reforming the education system should be the focus of reconciliatory initiatives. Rather than a South African-style Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Cyprus needs an historical clarification committee that would give voice to the various versions of the past, expose distortions of the common history and make recommendations for educational reform. Considering the lack of political will identified by most people interviewed, an official reconciliation commission is not possible at the moment, however, these Cypriots suggested several other viable initiatives to serve as tools for promoting reconciliation. These initiatives can serve as essential steps in setting the stage for the eventual resolution of the Cyprus problem.

National and international organisations and governments interested in promoting peace in Cyprus should follow these recommendations that emerged from interviews conducted in 2005:

1) Encourage greater discussion about reconciliation between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots and the creation of initiatives that can help foster reconciliation;
2) Define reconciliation as an ongoing process in order to avoid unrealistic expectations;
3) Establish a committee to clarify and present various perspectives on the 'Cyprus Problem' with the goal of promoting understanding and mutual acknowledgement;
4) Lobby for an official apology for past human rights violations to be given by officials on both sides of the conflict;
5) Develop and implement training seminars in the workplace, especially at the governmental level, to prepare people to work together if the island is reunified;
6) Promote economic cooperation across the Green Line and encourage joint business ventures between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots;
7) Initiate a media campaign promoting information about reconciliation and different perspectives on the Cyprus problem; and most importantly,
8) Focus on education, reforming the history curriculum and promoting history education that encourages critical thinking and honest exploration of the past from a variety of perspectives.

Overall, the Cypriots interviewed believe that a reconciliation commission as

discussed in the Annan Plan could be useful, but many people stressed the fact that beyond a commission there were many other mechanisms that could be used to begin the process of reconciliation. While it is debatable which measures Cypriots see as most favourable, there was a general consensus on the need for reconciliation. A Turkish-Cypriot professor of political science highlights the need for reconciliatory mechanisms saying that, "such activities are needed in Cyprus because there are particular groups, which are promoting hostility between the two communities. A counter-activity at the eve of peace is necessary in order to create appropriate conditions for peacebuilding" (Vural, 2005). It is unrealistic to wait until political negotiations resume in order to initiate reconciliatory measures. The process of reconciliation needs to begin immediately so that it can lay the groundwork for open dialogue, trust building, and understanding which are all essential to the success of any settlement of the Cyprus problem.

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(Interviewees who wished to remain anonymous have not been listed here)