

Malta: A Survivor Nation?

Edward Warrington
Department of Public Policy
University of Malta

Questions in search of answers



- To what extent, if at all, have the people of Malta experienced collective trauma, past or present?
- What are the policy and political implications of such experiences?
- Is there a role for mental health professionals in addressing national policy and the political implications of trauma?

The past:
the drama of war, famine and pestilence ...



The recent past and present: political conflict and cultural trauma



Political, policy implications

- Political appropriation of **collective memory** to shape – or corrode – national identity:
vulnerability ... heroism ... resilience
- Corrosive effects on collective psyche of Maltese subservience to ‘the Other’ – the chronic experience of **powerlessness**: *pika ... gemgem ... blasphemy ... amoral familism*
- Group narratives of **victimhood**: *transfers vendikattivi ... diskriminazzjoni ... korruzzjoni*
- Partisan politics, weak institutional legitimacy, clientelistic policy-making and administration

A role for mental health professionals?

- Political implications of a professional mission: **memory-making, interpretation, representation, campaigning**
- Positive implications: the potential for **healing, reconciliation, empowerment** and a healthy diversity
- Negative implications: nurturing **the cult of victimhood**, promoting dissonance and grievance
- Acknowledge **corrosive patterns and conditions** as well as self-evident trauma.

Photo credits

Siege of Malta - <https://listverse.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Seige-of-MAlta-e1373581541444.jpg>

Gonzi/Mintoff – Maltese Community Council of Victoria - <https://mccv.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Mintoff-with-Archbishop-Michael-Gonzi.jpg>

Ghonnella – *Soulayma's Blog* <https://soulaymaa.files.wordpress.com/2017/01/10b9bd40f4e8552bf08a56c4adf554b6-2.jpg?w=644&h=483>

Tower cranes – *Times of Malta*

Immigrant protests – *Times of Malta*