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1

Europeanisation of Malta's Foreign Policy: Defying the Trends or Conforming to Them?

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RÉSUMÉ

L'article commence par une brève discussion de la littérature de l'européanisation suivie par un processus de simple description des changements qui ont eu lieu dans la politique étrangère de Malte d'avant et après l'adhésion. L'analyse porte sur les changements qui ont eu lieu dans la politique étrangère de Malte, petit pays, à la suite des transformations qui ont eu lieu dans le système international depuis que cet Etat a demandé à adhérer à l'UE en 1990. Ainsi sont examinés les changements pouvant être attribués à l'adhésion de Malte à l'UE. Cette partie du document tente de distinguer ce qui peut être imputable aux forces de la mondialisation et ce qui peut être lié à l'européanisation - ou à un mélange des deux. L'article analyse également la politique étrangère de Malte au cours de la crise économique qui secoue l'Europe depuis 2008. Les questions suivantes sont explorées en raison de leur impact significatif sur la sécurité et la politique étrangère de Malte: la neutralité, la migration, la sécurité énergétique et la situation en Libye. La question principale à laquelle cette étude vise à répondre est de savoir comment la crise économique et financière actuelle a eu un impact sur l'européanisation de la politique étrangère de Malte et si il y a des signes de sa dé-européanisation. Pour de nombreux pays d'Europe du Sud, un changement de politique a accompagné leur réponse à la crise, mais des conditions similaires sont absentes dans le cas de Malte. Les changements qui ont eu lieu sont principalement dûs à des modifications dans la configuration politique nationale de Malte et à la nécessité de répondre aux transformations qui ont lieu dans la région méditerranéenne en raison du changement climatique.

ABSTRACT

The article starts with a brief discussion of the Europeanization literature followed by a simple process tracing approach of the changes that have taken place in Malta's foreign policy before and after membership. The analysis focuses on what changes have taken place in Malta's foreign policy, mindful of course of its smallness, as a result of the transformations which have taken place in the international system since Malta applied to join the EU in 1990 and what changes could be attributed to the membership question. This part of the paper tries to

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distinguish what can be attributable to the forces of globalization and what can be linked to Europeanization - or a mixture of both. The article also analyzes Malta's foreign policy during the economic crisis that has gripped Europe since 2008. The following issues are explored because of their significant impact on Malta's security and foreign policy: neutrality, migration, energy security and the situation in Libya. The main question which this study sets out to answer is how the ongoing economic and financial crisis has impacted upon the Europeanisation of Malta's foreign policy and whether there are any signs of its de-Europeanisation. For many southern European states, a shift in policy has accompanied their response to the crisis but similar conditions were absent in the case of Malta. The shifts that have occurred were mainly due to changes in the domestic political configuration in Malta and the need to respond to the transformations taking place in the Mediterranean region as a result of climate change.

Introduction

A common theme in the analysis of the European Union's Common Foreign Security Policy (CFSP) is that its progress is obstructed by the strength of national foreign policies. For this reason the main expectation is that Europeanisation, as shall be defined further on, is likely to have the greatest impact on policies that have been communitarised (placed under the community method): that is to say where member states are obliged to implement them, with a lesser or negligible effect in the domain of foreign policy, particularly where decisions are taken by unanimity and where member states still enjoy a measure of freedom on whether to implement them or not. However, this article is based on the opposite notion that because a small state depends on external 'alliances' for its broadly defined security, EU policies and decision-making institutions such as the inter-governmental CFSP/CSDP (Common Security and Defence Policy), which is credited with impacting the national foreign policy of all states, can have a much more visible effect on small states. In addition, the effect of socialisation and the impact of ideational structures of the CFSP and how these change national foreign policy cannot be overlooked.[1] Lack of space prevents from going deeper into this side of the Europeanisation narrative, although the majority of writers on the Europeanisation of national foreign policy have given it its merited attention. That said, the main question which this article sets out to

answer is how the ongoing economic and financial crisis has impacted upon the Europeanisation of Malta's foreign policy and whether there are any signs of its de-Europeanisation?

Europeanisation – A Conceptual Discussion

Europeanisation–and for that matter 'De-Europeanisation' – are dynamic processes with several drivers, which differ in the member states and may change over time. Europeanisation "is no longer a new concept in European Studies and International Relations literature, but it remains fashionable if ill-defined".[2] The literature on Europeanisation has grown rapidly[3] but its expansion in the study of foreign policy has lagged behind.[4] A discussion of Malta's foreign policy is further hampered by a lack of literature. Only a handful of seminal contributions on the subject were identified in the preparation of this article. The aim of this section is not to provide a comprehensive review of the Europeanisation literature, but to focus on the concepts which are most useful in analysing Malta's foreign policy.

A discussion of Malta's foreign policy needs to begin by establishing the meaning of 'foreign policy'. Michael Baun and Dan Marek ask whether member states' EU policies and policies towards fellow member states should be considered as foreign policy, or whether the term 'foreign policy' should be reserved to policies vis-à-vis third, non-member countries.[5] This issue is crucial in the selection of the empirical data. For the purpose of this article, the definition eventually adopted by Michael Baun and Dan Marek is used, namely that both 'intra-EU' relations with other member states and the EU, and extra-EU relations with the rest of the world, are considered as falling within the meaning of national foreign policy.[6] This is justified by the persistent albeit changing sovereignty of member states, their pivotal role in the EU decision-making process and the continuing existence of several types of internal boundaries separating them. Furthermore, also following Michael Baun and Dan Marek's definition, national foreign policy is taken to consist of three elements: i) preferences and interests; ii) institutions and procedures; and iii) strategies and actions.

Reuben Wong observes that the central focus of Europeanisation in its most rudimentary definition is "the penetration of the EU into the politics, institutions and policy-making of member states".[7] But he adds that there are five schools of thought on Europeanisation: national adaptation, national projection, identity reconstruction, modernization and policy isomorphism.[8] A measure of the Europeanisation of a state's foreign policy can be achieved on the basis of the first three criteria.[9] The co-editors of this special edition subscribe to this definition by focusing on: downloading or national adaptation, uploading or national projection (pursuing foreign policy on the EU level), and crossloading which merges the first two strands. Stephan Keukeleire and Tom Delreux add a fourth which is of marginal importance for the core analysis in this article: EU export of its institutions, norms and values and their embedding in third countries.[10] This is important because these norms as laid down in the treaties since the Maastricht Treaty have been reinforced by the Treaty of Lisbon, though their implementation provides a lot of grist for the mill of controversy. For example, as Stelios Stavridis and Charalambos Tsardinidis caution, it is questionable whether the EU and its institutions are themselves adhering to the norms proclaimed and whether a member state which concurs with the median position adopted by the EU in foreign policy is therefore being more or less European.[11]

Daniel Fiott in what must be the first article on the Europeanisation of Malta's foreign policy applies the three conceptual framework which will be used in this article, namely: adaptation of the Maltese national structures including changes in the interpretation of neutrality; uploading key foreign policy issues on to the EU, where immigration is taken as a case study and lastly identity reconstruction.[12] A simplified 'process tracing' approach developed by Theofanis Exadaktylos is then used.[13] This requires employing a temporal framework identifying significant events originating in the EU and their influence on the Europeanisation process in Malta, i.e. identifying the causal link between an EU or EU-originating event that led to a definite change in Malta's foreign policy.

Small State Foreign Policy

When assessing the Europeanisation process of a state it is also important to keep in sight the size of the state, and whether and how it impacts it. The strongest foreign policy driver is similar for all states: security, national identity, the safety and prosperity of its citizens. Classical realists such as Hans Morgenthau defined national power in terms of geography, territorial size, natural resources, industrial capacity, military strength, military leadership, the level of technology attained, population size, national character and national morale (the degree to which a population supports a state's foreign policy) and the quality of its diplomacy.[14] These determinants of power and influence have changed very little over time and in raw terms small states score very low on most of them. Lacking human and material resources, small states have a more limited access to information and the means to pursue their diplomatic goals. Hence a small state in the EU finds the EU institutions and EU policies as a necessary supplement to its national foreign policy. For this reason alone the Europeanisation (downloading) of a small state's national foreign policy is relatively easier when compared to larger states which are able to deploy more of their own resources. However, as Ben Tonra observed the relationship between national foreign policy formulation and the CFSP is reciprocal.[15]

The first generation of writers on small state tended to emphasize that smallness leads to a stronger degree of economic openness in international trade. David Vital pessimistically argued that small states are particularly vulnerable to external economic pressures and that "short of outright military conflict, the weakest spot in the small power's armour is the economic one".[16] More optimistically, Michael Handel referred to some economically successful weak states who were able to transform themselves from mere 'pushovers' to relatively successful foreign policy entrepreneurs. Handel argued that small states can mitigate the negative effects of external economic pressure by diversifying their exports and markets-adding that they should certainly avoid conducting their trade with only one state, "especially not with a great power".[17] Peter Katzenstein adds a deterministic twist to the argument: focusing on some small European states with open

economies. He claims that fear of retaliation forces them to reject protectionist strategies for these would lead to higher prices of intermediate goods. He argues that this is supported by all the elites and mass publics in these small states whatever their political persuasion and economic interests.[18] For him, this was the main reason why small European states support liberal trade policies. Another dimension is added to this by Alberto Alesina and Enrico Spolaore, "Openness to trade, and more generally international economic integration, is related to the size of countries. In a world of trade barriers the size of a country determines the size of its market. However, with completely free trade and economic integration, market size and country size are not correlated. Therefore small countries can prosper in a world of free trade but cannot in a world where economies have to be self-sufficient".[19] Free trade becomes more crucial when one considers that economies of scale (and diversity in consumption) are the main drivers of international trade (Paul Krugman's new trade theory).

However, openness also renders small states more vulnerable to exogenous shocks and hampers their efforts at maintaining internal macroeconomic and external trade/Capital balances, two factors which are helpful in allowing them to strengthen their resilience to exogenous shocks. In addition, as Lawrence Schembri has observed, since small states need to specialize to achieve economies of scale they normally produce a limited range of goods and services and are thus dependent on trade to obtain critical imports in exchange for a narrow set of exports. They also rely more on foreign investment and capital flows. "This openness, in terms of both trade and capital flows, renders small states vulnerable to adverse external shocks, thus hindering their ability to maintain external balance. These shocks may also disturb their internal balance as adjustment to external imbalances often requires shifts in domestic aggregate demand".[20]

Examples of small state economic success (e.g. Switzerland, Singapore and Luxembourg) seem to indicate that small state vulnerability is overstated. The Global Competitiveness Report's *Competitiveness Index 2012-13* shows that the top four positions are occupied by small

countries.[21] Small states seem to be better at adapting to adverse economic conditions than larger states. Peter Katzenstein observes that "since the end of World War II, processes of economic growth and decline as well as of industrial obsolescence and rejuvenation have occurred faster in the small industrial states than in large ones. Political leaders of small states with open economies are thus accustomed to accept as normal rates of economic change and dislocation that elites in large countries regard as intolerably high".[22] The question here is whether Katzenstein's observation applies only to some small states or whether it can be considered as a 'law like' theory applicable to all. Lino Briguglio has referred to the 'Singapore Paradox'[23] (or apparent paradox?) i.e. that although Singapore is small, highly exposed to exogenous shocks and lacks natural resources, it has managed to achieve very high rates of economic growth and wealth by strengthening its economic resilience.[24] But Lino Briguglio emphasizes that not all small states react to risks in the same way and some more than others (like Singapore) deliberately choose policies to nurture their resilience to inherent vulnerability. Lino Briguglio discusses four policy scenarios for small states: 'best case', 'worst case', 'self-made' and 'prodigal son': corresponding respectively to those who have few vulnerabilities but adopt resilience-building policies, those who compound their weaknesses by the wrong policy choices, those who have inherent vulnerabilities but are prudent policy entrepreneurs and those who have few vulnerabilities but endanger their own stability by wasteful policies.[25] Andrew F. Cooper and Timothy M. Shaw observe that notwithstanding their vulnerability, small states have shown a capacity to strengthen their resilience through various means.[26] The prudent small state searches for ways to augment its resilience to shock by alliance, bilateral or multilateral with their accompanying advantages and dangers[27] in a given international context where bi-polarity appears to favour them more than multi-polarity.[28] Godfrey Baldacchino points to "the ability of small states to exploit their smaller size in a variety of ways to achieve their intended, even if unlikely policy outcomes" and that they achieve results mostly in diplomatic "adventures" that are essentially bilateral, when they hold the moral high ground, when they manage to use this to whip up domestic support for their policy and

when the issue is essentially financial/economic.[29] Pessimistically, Godfey Baldacchino has less faith in multilateralism, claiming that despite their number on the world stage, small states have been less successful in achieving their collective aims notwithstanding the sympathy generated by their plight.[30]

The arguments on the economic prerogatives of small states can be transposed to the political/security domain. Small states face different security threats and foreign policy challenges depending on the size of their territory and extent (archipelagic states extend over large areas of the ocean e.g. Seychelles, Maldives, etc.), population which also determines their ability to exercise adequate control over their territory including territorial waters, geographical location, geo-strategic relevance, the quality of their neighbours ('contented' versus revolutionary states, peaceful or aggressive, etc.), internal cohesion and the possibilities it offers to external meddling in their internal affairs, the risks they take in foreign policy and the quality of their safeguards as a result of bilateral or multilateral alliances with more powerful states.

Domestic Politics

As Derek Beach observes, "the effect that the system-level context has on state foreign policy goals varies with the level of power of a given state and the nature of the international system".[31] He further argues that the logic of survival dictates that small states are more likely than larger ones to bend to systemic constraints. This does not close the door completely on the effects of other variables, such as domestic politics which as Jeanne A. K. Hey and Michael Handle observe cannot be wholly brushed aside and in certain circumstances can exercise crucial influence.[32]

In a Europeanisation process, national elites, civil societies, organized opposition parties, trade unions and interest groups, collectively or individually, can not only influence the small state's foreign policy, but they can also act as 'veto points' in the implementation of EU policies at national level. Further, as the enlargement process has shown time

and again in many cases, domestic political and social forces determine whether a small state actually joins the EU or not. For example, this is most evident with the referendums on EU membership in Iceland, Norway and Malta.[33]

Malta, the EU and Europeanisation

The discussion of small state theories in the previous sections is henceforth applied to Malta. Since acquiring independence in 1964, Malta has sought to integrate itself in the EU, a goal which was finally achieved in 2004, in order to strengthen its security – through access to a wider market, more Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), output and jobs, increased aid, shelter from the Cold War rivalries and the ambitions of more powerful neighbours. The domestic debate on EU membership polarised and divided Maltese society in the 1990s[34] but the political rhetoric that characterised the debate masked the fact that the differences between the two positions adopted by Malta's main political parties, membership or a deeper free trade area, were not as radical as they sounded – although the two visions led to quite different end-points. Extended to the realm of foreign policy, membership implied the maximum constraint namely that Malta would have to merge a fair share of its foreign policy in the CFSP, while the free trade area proposal implied more autonomy in national foreign policy and safeguards for Malta's constitutionally defined neutrality status. The choice is more complex than stated here, for by successfully uploading its foreign policy objectives onto the EU, Malta stood to attain more power in achieving its aims. At the same time, greater independence from the EU deprives Malta from the economic and political alliances that it requires to fend off pressures from more powerful states while the status of neutrality without guarantees from more powerful countries will lead to compromises.

Turning to the specificities of the Europeanisation of Malta's foreign policy, two issues are identified as being the core ones in Malta's foreign policy, namely neutrality and migration. In addition, two other issues are explored because of their significant impact on Malta's

security and foreign policy: energy security and the situation in Libya. It is important to stress that the configuration of domestic political power, weighed by public opinion and significant electoral support levels for the two main political parties each of which has the support of half of the electorate, significantly determine and condition Malta's Europeanisation process. The Nationalist Party, in government from 1987 to 2013, save for a short spell between 1996-1998, has traditionally favoured EU membership. It was a Nationalist government which applied for membership in 1990, led Malta in the EU in 2004, in the Schengen Agreement in 2007 and European Monetary Union (EMU) in 2008. The Europeanisation process started before membership with the reforms that Malta had to introduce to join the EU and continued after membership. The policy restructuring and reorientation necessitated by EU membership also included alignment with European Political Cooperation (EPC) which later developed, following the Maastricht Treaty, into the CFSP. The government had however to take into consideration (i) Malta's Constitutional entrenched neutrality and (ii) the main opposition Labour Party's (LP) strong opposition to any changes in the status of neutrality. For its part, while in opposition the LP had to take into account that more than half the Maltese population favoured membership and for this reason its foreign policy proposals had to pragmatically accept a share of Europeanisation. One of its 1996-98 proposals on a free trade area with the EU proposed a protocol "on security in the heart of the Mediterranean on drug trafficking, terrorism, illegal immigration and money-laundering etc. Political cooperation between the Brussels authorities and the Maltese government and between the Maltese and European Parliaments".[35]

Malta's 1990 membership application led to some member states expressing reservations on whether neutrality would be a series obstacle to her membership commitments. In the September 1992, Malta had indicated its readiness to participate fully in the CFSP. A year later the CFSP went into effect with the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty. The 1993 Commission Opinion on the membership application notes Malta's stand. In 1995, three neutral

states namely Austria, Finland and Sweden, joined the EU and this somewhat eased further the reservations on Malta.

At the eighth meeting of the EU-Malta Association Council held in Luxembourg on 12 June 1995 a 'structured dialogue' started with Malta comprising regular meetings on CFSP issues involving political directors; experts on issues such as human rights, disarmament, security, the OSCE, planning, terrorism and the UN; Malta's alignment with the Union's declarations; the association of Malta with the Union's démarches and with joint actions; cooperation within international organisations and during international conferences; the appointment of an associate Maltese European correspondent; regular talks between the EU and Maltese diplomatic missions in third countries; matters of interest to the Mediterranean.[36] The structured dialogue was interrupted in 1996 when Malta suspended its membership application, but resumed in 1999 after the application's reactivation.[37] These frequent and multiple contacts at various levels of the CFSP between Maltese diplomats and their European counterparts, must have led to 'socialization' of norms and methods, a topic that requires separate and detailed analysis.

Malta also joined NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) in 1995, from which it suspended itself in 1996 and rejoined it in 2008. A Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs was established in the Maltese Parliament in 1995 in line with an effort to introduce permanent committees in the national parliament and to foster a bipartisan dialogue on foreign policy. This initiative put the Maltese Parliament on a par with other EU national parliaments and the European Parliament.

As to Malta's neutrality, developments in international politics and economic pressure from domestic sources also began to undermine its definition as found in the Constitution. The end of the Cold War and the meltdown of the Non-aligned Movement particularly following Yugoslavia's descent into civil war, shifted the ground from under the rigidly defined neutrality in the Maltese Constitution which states that Malta is "a neutral state actively pursuing peace, security and social progress among all nations by adhering to a policy of non-alignment

and refusing to participate in any military alliance".[38] Furthermore, as Maltese shipyards were completing their third decade of economic problems (they relied heavily on state aid), the government was forced to disregard another part of the definition of neutrality in the Constitution wherein it is stated that in accordance with the principles of non-alignment, the shipyards "will be denied to the military vessels of the two superpowers".[39] In December 1999, the Malta and the USA signed an agreement enabling the dock yards to bid for repair and alteration of auxiliary vessels of the US Sixth Fleet. This was followed by similar agreements in later years.

On Malta's insistence, the 2003 Accession Treaty includes Declaration 35 on neutrality which refers to the 1992 Memorandum. In this Declaration, Malta reaffirms its full commitment to the CFSP, while noting that "any decision to move to a common defence would have to be taken by unanimous decision of the European Council adopted by the Member States in accordance with their respective constitutional requirements".[40]

In 2004, the EU established the European Defence Agency (EDA) and Malta joined it. The LP pledged withdrawal, once in government, but later changed its position. In 2005, Malta ratified the Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe, but while voting in favour the LP attached some reservations, partly based on Declaration 35, underlining that it was voting in favour of the Constitutional Treaty on the understanding that "The EU Constitutional Treaty does not prejudice Malta's Constitutional neutrality. Malta will not in any matter be legally bound by any commitment to reciprocal defence or common defence".[41] The Lisbon Treaty was also unanimously ratified by the Maltese Parliament in 2008 and the LP maintained the same qualifications.

After the 2008 election, Malta reactivated its participation in NATO's PfP and started participating in ESDP (CSDP) missions. In September two members of the Armed Forces of Malta (AFM) were deployed in the ESDP Monitoring Mission in Georgia, the first time Malta participated in an ESDP mission. In April 2010, a twelve-member AFM contingent was deployed as a Vessel Protection Detachment (VPD)

aboard a Dutch vessel with the NAVFOR mission 'Atlanta' off the coast of Somalia. Earlier, an AFM officer was also deployed at the mission's Operational HQ in Northwood. In April, AFM officers began to participate in the Uganda-based EU Training Mission for Somalia, together with Irish officers. In 2011, an AFM officer was seconded to the EUFOR Libya Operational Headquarters (OHQ) when it opened in Rome, while another Maltese Officer in the EU Military Staff (EUMS), was also deployed to the OHQ. Military officers are also deployed in EU Council bodies such as EU Military Committee (EUMC) and EUMS. Apart from these EU missions, Malta has participated in some OSCE and UN missions, such as UNIFIL in Southern Lebanon, together with the Italian contingent, and deployments in the Balkans under the Dayton accords.

Immigration

The arrival of substantive numbers of 'boat people' or 'mixed' migrants from North Africa began in 2002 (prior to membership). Irregular immigration began to be treated by Malta as a security issue mainly due to public concern. It fell within the foreign policy domain, since it comprised co-operation/relations with neighbouring states such as Italy, Libya and Tunisia, but its 'internal' EU policy dimension, particularly the effort to engage the EU's attention also received an impetus from the Ministry for Justice and Home Affairs (2008-13) and the Ministry for Home Affairs and Security (2013 onwards). Malta expects the EU to provide material aid to repatriate migrants who are denied international protection and to support those who are allowed to stay in Malta. The issue has often led to crises with Italy over responsibility for rescue at sea. Malta lobbied for sharing of responsibility for migrants by the rest of the EU member states on the principle of solidarity. A proposal to this effect was first launched by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in June 2007. Malta also wants a reform of the Dublin II regulation by which member states assume responsibility for the migrants who arrive on their borders.

In September 2008, Malta threatened to block agreement on a new EU Pact on Immigration and Asylum unless her demands were met.[42]

The issue was also pursued in the European Parliament, where the Parliament's Rapporteur on immigration was a Maltese MEP. In 2009, the Council approved a project for the coordination of voluntary measures for internal reallocation of beneficiaries of international protection present in the Member States exposed to specific and disproportionate pressures starting with a pilot project for Malta (EUREMA). The following year the EU agreed to set up the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) which began operating in Malta in 2011.[43] Malta favours the 'supranationalisation' of EU immigration policy – which has already been largely supranationalised. EUREMA was renewed in 2011 following a Commission proposal which highlighted the challenges being faced by all the EU Mediterranean countries.[44]

In the 2013 national election, as in the 2008 one, immigration emerged as one of the main campaign issues, with LP tilting towards push-back, but once in government the policy had to be ditched following EU, local and international criticism at which point Malta returned once again to the path of co-operation. On 25 October 2013, a joint proposal agreed by Malta, Italy and Greece during a meeting between the Maltese Prime Minister Joseph Muscat, the Italian Prime Minister Enrico Letta and Greek Prime Minister Antonis Samaras who visited both Italy and Malta on 21 October, was supported by France, Spain, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus and Slovenia.[45] This initiative took place after the 'Tragedy of Lampedusa' of 3 October, in which an estimated 350 migrants lost their lives when their boat capsised. The 'Lampedusa Tragedy" effect also led to the establishment of the Commission-led 'Task Force for the Mediterranean' and in December, Commissioner Cecilia Malmström issued a Communication outlining measures to deal with five issues: trafficking, smuggling and organised crime, legal ways for migrants to access Europe and cooperation with Third Countries.[46] That same month Italy set up the maritime operation 'Mare Nostrum' mainly to rescue migrants at sea. This mission was discontinued in October 2014 and replaced by a FRONTEX mission 'Triton' which did not however have the same coverage as 'Mare Nostrum'. The pressure on the EU increased in later months as a result of more losses of migrants at sea until finally following the extraordinary European Council of 23 April

2015, the European Commission published its proposal for a European Agenda on Migration.[47] This proposal comprised a number of initiatives summarised here: tripling the capacities and assets for the FRONTEX joint operations Triton and Poseidon in 2015 and 2016; activating the emergency mechanism under Article 78(3) TFEU to propose a temporary distribution mechanism for persons in clear need of international protection; a permanent EU system for relocation in emergency - situations of mass influxes - by the end of 2015; an EU-wide resettlement scheme to offer 20.000 places distributed in all member states to displaced persons in clear need of international protection; a possible Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) operation in the Mediterranean to dismantle traffickers' networks; measures to reduce the incentives for irregular migration; improved border management, a common asylum policy and a new regular migration policy.[48] What is significant and symbolic is that the new EU initiative owes a lot to the '(Jean Claude) Juncker's Five Point Plan on Immigration' announced in Malta by the Commission President on 23 April 2014, as the EPP's *Spitzenkandidaten*.[49] A further proposal on relocation of asylum seekers from Greece and Italy to the other member states (excluding the UK and Ireland), proposes the allocation to Malta of 175 persons from Italy and 117 from Greece out of a total of 40.000.[50] At the time of writing this article (June 2015) there was severe disagreement among key member states on how this plan was to be implemented.

Energy Security

The financial crisis has barely affected Malta and for this reason public opinion is still supportive of the EU, particularly since the only two parties in the national parliament, i.e. the governing Labour Party and the Opposition Nationalist Party both embrace EU membership. The pressure to try to resolve difficult problems domestically by a shift in foreign policy towards non-EU states is non-existent. Hence although one cannot perceive a marked shift or De-Europeanisation, this does not mean that Malta is not seeking to strengthen relations with non-EU states. After a failed bid to conclude favourable energy agreements with Libya, Malta started shifting its attention beyond the EU. Two

important events mark this. The first is an agreement reached with Shanghai Electric of the People's Republic of China in December 2014 opening the way for substantive investment by a Chinese state company in Malta's energy sector, while at the same time strengthening the financial situation of Malta's main energy and sole electricity supplier EneMalta.[51] Shanghai Electric obtained 33% equity stake in EneMalta. The agreement, involving two state corporations was the fruit of a direct China-Malta entente and is more than just a commercial agreement. Similarly, in order to improve the energy situation, Malta has been increasingly turning towards Azerbaijan. In fact two days after the signing of the agreement with Shanghai Electric, the Prime Minister and Energy Minister visited Azerbaijan and there have been frequent other visits since then. Malta's Auditor General has questioned unfavourable hedging agreements for the purchase of crude oil made in 2014 with SOCAR Trading SA, an Azerbaijani company.[52]

Libya

In the case of Libya, Malta has had strong neighbourly relations with the country dating back to the mid-1960s. When the 2011 Libyan revolution started, Malta broke with the Gaddafi regime in Tripoli after some hesitancies and supported the Benghazi based National Transitional Council (NTC). Malta became the centre of operations for international efforts to evacuate foreign nationals, estimated to have number more than 12.000 from the stricken country. In line with its status of neutrality it refused to allow NATO fighters to operate from Malta to enforce a no fly zone over Libya. Following the collapse of the regime, Malta concluded a number of agreements with the new Tripoli government on visas, the provision of medical care and the training of the new Libyan national army. The sacking of the government of Ali Zeidan in March 2014 led to the creation of two governments in Libya and also to two diplomatic representations vying for recognition in Malta. In the meantime the chaotic situation in Libya led to the closure of the Maltese embassy in Tripoli, to the repatriation of practically all Maltese citizens working in the country and the curtailment of most Maltese-led economic activity and investments.

On Libya, Malta supports the international community in recognising the Tobrouk administration as the legitimate representative of the country and favours a peaceful political solution to the problem. Clearly, Malta has every interest in seeing the problem resolved for this also affects the mass movement of people across the central Mediterranean. However, in this case it is fully aware that the magnitude of the problem of stabilising Libya obviates a UN initiative and a joint EU effort. Malta supports EU proposals for a CSDP mission to destroy people smuggling networks, but up to the time of writing it was not clear whether it would deploy military personnel in this mission. The issue of neutrality could become a stumbling block in this case.

National Adaptation, Projection and Identity Reconstruction

Beginning with identity reconstruction, the long-view shows that Malta has gradually shifted ground on the central pillars of its foreign policy as they existed from 1970-1987. These were based mainly on non-alignment, neutrality and an almost exclusive Mediterranean focus while maintaining economic ties with the EU. But from 1987 onwards policy shifted radically towards Europe for two main reasons: the governing Nationalist Party had historically espoused European values while the country needed to adopt EU policies and norms in preparation for membership. Alignment with the CFSP started from the early stages as testified in the 1992 Government memorandum. When Malta eventually joined the EU, the Labour Party – the main proponent and orthodox defender of neutrality – shifted its policy on membership. This made it easier for Malta to integrate itself in the CFSP-CSDP. The Labour Party's pragmatic shift was due to domestic pressures: it risked being punished by voters if it kept up its opposition to membership. In addition, other processes were at work: the changing nature of neutrality and non-alignment after the end of the Cold War.

The CFSP/CSDP allows sufficient space for the participation of neutral states like Malta. But should the EU eventually move to a common defence, then Malta may need to change its constitution

which would require a two-thirds parliamentary majority. The NP and LP both agree on the need to amend the definition of neutrality as enshrined in the Constitution, but so far they have avoided any concrete step in this direction.[53]

One crucial element that affects Malta's foreign policy namely its small size, limited resources and weakness were not changed by EU membership. One of the major attractions of the EU for small states is that it helps them address some of these shortfalls. This can either be considered as a case of instrumentalisation of or uploading on the EU. It is most apparent in the case of immigration: Malta managed to successfully upload the issue onto the EU permitting it to take initiatives which modified the Union's agenda.[54] Malta achieved this in alliance with other EU member states (notably Italy, Greece, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Spain, France, Croatia and Slovenia). A permanent responsibility sharing mechanism has not been created as yet, but in the current proposals being discussed in the EU institutions under the broader heading of migration policy, the first 'timid' steps have been taken through the proposal of a limited relocation key.

EUREMA has functioned reasonably well and there is a strong possibility according to some.[55] Smallness works in Malta's favour in this case because its needs can be accommodated at relatively negligible costs. Several countries have responded positively by accepting to relocate immigrants in their countries. UNHCR Data shows that between 2005 and October 2012, 1.740 refugees have been relocated in foreign countries, 1.056 of them in the USA, the rest in Europe (including the EU) and elsewhere. The USA resettlement programme thus served Malta's interests much better than the EU's. According to the UNHCR Office in Malta, 412 were re-settled in 2013 mostly in the USA and in the first months of 2014, the USA had already accepted 170.

On the Libyan issue, Malta is aware that only a big player such as the EU stands a chance of making a strong impact on the situation there. It has therefore joined the EU efforts and supported its policy lines and initiatives while ensuring that it does not become entangled in any military role which would jeopardise its neutrality. Since the 1970s, Maltese governments have successfully tried to put Libya's

mind at peace that Malta would not be used as a spring board for military attacks against it.

On energy security which arguably has a less 'high politics' profile, Malta seems to have shifted positions since the election of 2013 by steering an independent course to ensure energy security. The agreement involving Shanghai Electric is an example. The other consists of the overtures being made to Azerbaijan on which the information is not yet complete. Malta's manoeuvring over energy security shows too clearly that while it has been Europeanising, uploading and downloading, it has not completely refuted its readiness to charter a different course when its interests dictated this.

Conclusions

This study has shown how Malta has transformed its identity from a neutral-non-aligned state to an active EU member state, fully embracing the EU's CFSP/CSDP. Several external and internal factors have worked to facilitate this transformation. But then historically, Malta was never united behind neutrality and non-alignment.[56] The Maltese always considered themselves European, and pro-western sentiments were always very strong among them with very few identifying more with their southern neighbours (though relations with them were always strong) than with their northern European ones. Hence the Europeanisation of Malta's foreign policy coincides with 'world views' of the majority of the political elite and the public. This of course raises the issue as to the source of Europeanisation and the extent to which Europe has been instrumentalised to recast Malta's overall foreign policy orientation.

The effect of the Euro crisis has not influenced the direction of Malta's foreign policy or Europeanisation. It must be kept in mind that the recession has hardly touched Malta while unrest in the Mediterranean Arab states has positively impacted its crucial tourism sector. From 2004-2014, it was only in 2009 that Malta experienced a negative GDP growth (in real terms). For the rest of the years the rate of growth was positive.[57] It is estimated to have reached 3.5 per cent in 2014. This is the main

factor which influences the positive public sentiment in favour of the EU. According to the latest Eurobarometer, 47 per cent of the Maltese have a total positive image of the EU (EU-28 is 39%) and 8 per cent have a total negative image (EU-28 is 22%).[58] This positive sentiment has on the other hand reduced the pressure on the national government to shift its policies from Europe. There are of course other 'drivers' of this Euro-centric line: given Malta's smallness (economic and political) the EU is the power it wants to lean on to address its many weaknesses and insecurities as discussed above. When it ventures out of this 'comfort zone' it does so to address national challenges such as energy security. The crunch may come when these external ties and commitments bring her into conflict with fellow-EU member states' interests and dispositions – say on EU policy towards China or Azerbaijan. How will Malta navigate such conflictual demands?

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