

# Small States: Conflict Resolution (CR)

**Malta**

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# Small States & Conflict Resolution - Historical Background

- **Conflict in Historical Perspective**

Pre-Independence: Language question (1880s - ), Integration vs Independence (1954-64)

Post-independence: Pro-West versus Non-Alignment (1970s); Polarization of Party Politics (especially 1982-4); For and Against EU Membership (2003 Referendum); Divorce Referendum (2011).

- **Scale, limited resources, vulnerability, dependence on larger/ 'kin' states: Expertise/commitment to conflict resolution:**

Neutrality enshrined in constitution, Mediterranean-centric foreign policy, role in ending Cold war: 1989 Bush-Gorbachev summit, 'building bridges', 'politics of persuasion', use of cultural/linguistic affinities.

# Small States & Conflict Resolution: Major current conflicts & issues

- **Main current issues of conflict**

Internal (migration management/integration; development vs environment)

Regional (migration management at EU level, with disputes particularly with Italy in recent years)

- **Political, institutional, cultural aspects of conflict and their resolution**

Identity politics, definition of progress and protection of cultural/environmental heritage

Institutional players: political parties, NGOs, religious institutions, media

# Small States & CR: Defining the nature and resolution of conflict

- **How are conflicts defined and by whom? Who are the actors?**

The conflict around migration is defined by 3 main narratives: (i) invasion/loss of national identity (ii) solidarity/human rights (iii) shared responsibility.

Media, politicians, NGOs and Church leaders contribute to the various narratives

The conflict around the environment is defined by 2 main narratives: (i) progress/ development and (ii) loss / deterioration in quality of life

Building lobby, politicians, environmental NGOs lead these narratives.

- **Views about the nature of conflict(s) and their resolution**

Different parties see resolution in terms of a 'zero-sum' game with clear winners and losers.

# Small States & Conflict Resolution: Institutional mechanisms

- **Main state institutions/ actors in Malta dealing with CR:**

Judicial, quasi-judicial, non-judicial agencies in Malta, include the law courts (plus various tribunals), Ombudsman system, Malta Mediation Centre, Malta Arbitration Centre, Malta Council for Economic & Social Development

- **The state and state-related institutions for CR:**

Courts: 23 judges, 22 magistrates

Ombudsman: Ombudsman, Commissioner for Health, Commissioner for Education, Commissioner for Environment and Planning (<http://ombudsman.org.mt/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/organ-EN.jpg>)

MCESD: 17 members appointed by trade unions, employers, government, civil society

Malta Mediation Centre: 5 member Board, Registrar, list of accredited mediators

## Small States & Conflict Resolution: Institutions/Agencies

- **International institutional and arbitration mechanisms used by your country for CR e.g. UN, EU mechanisms, Council of Europe, International Courts?**

Malta v Libya, ICJ (Judgement: 1985)

EU mechanisms with respect to migration management

- **Other external institutional mechanisms and actors involved, e.g. friendly or traditional allies or neutral powers:**

Move from reliance on former coloniser (UK) and closest European neighbour (Italy) to variable alliances in EU, depending on subject matter

# Small States & CR – Bilateral & multilateral relations

- **How do bilateral and multilateral relations affect CR in Malta?**

Until migration challenges strained relations, Malta's multilateral efforts (ex joining EU) were aided by Italy in various respects

Relations with UK were also critical in Foreign Policy for many decades

Malta made efforts to maintain strong links with Tunisia and Libya

- **How participation or relations or neutrality vis-à-vis multilateral and transnational organisations affect conflict resolution, management or transformation of conflict:**

Malta historically placed a premium on Mediterranean relations.

Palestinian – Israeli conflict: inalienable rights of the Palestinian people; UN Rapporteur

'No peace in Europe without peace in the Mediterranean': Malta's CSCE/OSCE paradigm

# Small States & CR- Societal beliefs & public opinion

- **Maltese public opinion on the conflicts and their resolution (success? orientations?)**

Public opinion overall not very concerned with foreign policy/ international relations

PO impacts on internal/societal conflicts as political parties often follow rather than lead PO

Issue of media ownership with political parties having a key role in media landscape



# Small States & CR: Challenges & Learning

- **Main challenges facing Malta in conflict resolution:**

- Internal: what does it mean to be Maltese in today's world?

- External: Move from traditional role of bridge between Europe and North Africa to a more complex role within the EU, the Mediterranean region and more broadly (relations with sub-Saharan Africa, USA, China)

- Role as Southern Flank of EU in a volatile landscape with reference to post-Gaddafi Libya and post-Renzi Italy

- **What is there to learn for CR for other contexts from your country's role, knowhow and experience?**

Need to minimize/avoid politicization of public institutions

Need to nourish a culture of CR and avoid 'zero-sum' mentality