

Small States: International Relations and Diplomacy

Malta

Omar Grech
Godfrey Baldacchino

Small States International Relations and Diplomacy: Historical Background

- **Historical Background (involvement in diplomatic matters)**

- Malta's diplomatic corps was established in 1964 upon independence using (largely) personnel from the existing civil service
- First important initiative taken in UN GA in 1967 which called for oceans to be considered as common heritage, leading to UN Convention on Law of the Sea

- **How scale, limited resources and dependence on larger/ 'kin' states affect Malta's international relations**

- Limited resources means Malta had to focus its efforts
- 1-person diplomatic missions and maximization of resources
- Being relevant in specific areas/arenas (maritime/Mediterranean/ EU-Southern Med dialogue).

Small States International Relations and Diplomacy – Priorities / focus of Foreign Policy

- **Main aspects, priorities & goals of Malta's foreign policy and diplomacy**
 - Maximize benefits of EU membership and other organisations (ex Commonwealth)
 - Mediterranean focus to enhance stability, peace and prosperity
 - Maritime Affairs focus as an island state
 - Trade/Investment Promotion especially with newly emerging markets
 - Nurture links with Diaspora (AUS, CAN, UK, US)

Small States International Relations and Diplomacy: Institutions/Agencies

- **Main state institutions/ actors of Malta's foreign policy:**

- Government through Cabinet

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade Promotion (MFTP)

- Malta based personnel: 123 diplomats (as at September 2019)

- Overseas missions: 37

- **Non-institutionalized actors that Malta uses in its foreign policy (e.g. NGOs)**

- MFTP delivers most of its ODA through NGOs active in sub-Saharan Africa (both secular and religious NGOs)

Small States International Relations and Diplomacy: Bilateral Relations

- **Focus in specific geographic areas and why:**
 - Mediterranean focus, especially Southern Mediterranean (geopolitics)
 - Italy, UK, France, Germany, USA, China, Russia (regional & global powers)
 - Commonwealth Membership & Leadership (colonial legacy)
 - More recently Gulf and Sub-Saharan Africa (trade and migration)

Small States International Relations and Diplomacy: Multilateral Relations

- **Multilateral Relations:**

- UN membership since independence (1964)
- EU membership since 2004
- Commonwealth since independence
- '5+5' and other Mediterranean groupings

- **Criteria used for choosing allies and alliances:**

- Variable alliances, depending on parallel interests
- Historical good relations

Small States: International Relations and Diplomacy: Diplomatic Types

- **Does Malta use public / cultural / economic diplomacy?**
- **How does the country's size feature in these?**
 - Scholarships as part of ODA commitment
 - Religious presence in Central & Latin America / Africa / Philippines
 - Discrete individuals at work (Honorary Consuls)

Small States International Relations and Diplomacy - Societal Beliefs

- **Maltese public opinion about foreign policy? (Success? Orientations?)**
 - Force for good
- **Does public opinion influence foreign policy? Any examples?**
 - Not really, except in dealing with migrants
- **How issues relating to scale, limited resources, dependence on larger/ other 'kin' state and ownership/control of media outlets affect foreign policy**
 - Boils down to discrete individuals

Small States International Relations and Diplomacy: Challenges

- **Main challenges for Malta in foreign policy and diplomacy:**
 - Managing migratory flows across the Mediterranean
 - Maintaining balanced relations with USA, Russia and China
 - Increasing investment flows
 - Promoting stability in the region (especially Tunisia and Libya)