



Indian Council
of World Affairs

60 YEARS OF INDIA-MALTA DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS



INDIAN COUNCIL OF WORLD AFFAIRS

SAPRU HOUSE, NEW DELHI

2025



Valletta Skyline, Malta. Panoramic view from the defensive walls of Mdina.



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Contents

MESSAGE	5
<i>Hon. Dr. S. Jaishankar</i>	
MESSAGE	7
<i>Hon. Dr. Ian Borg</i>	
Foreword	9
<i>Ms. Nutan Kapoor Mahawar</i>	
From Strong Foundations, Towards Shared Prosperity	13
<i>Mr. Christopher Cutajar</i>	
Celebrating 60 Years of India-Malta Diplomatic Relations (1965-2025)	17
<i>H.E. Ms. Gloria Gangte</i>	
Why India Means So Much!	23
<i>H.E. Mr. Reuben Gauci</i>	
India and Malta	
Six Decades of Strengthening Cooperation: A Personal Perspective	27
<i>Amb. Anil Trigunayat</i>	
Settling in, Reaching Out	
Establishing Malta's Presence in India	39
<i>Mr. Wilfred Kenely</i>	
Malta and the Indian Army	45
<i>Sqdn. Ldr. (Retd.) Rana T.S. Chinna</i>	

Malta and India	
A Shared Vision on Women, Peace and Security	63
<i>Ms. Tarniem Mangion Shokry Iskandar</i>	
Historical Links between Malta and India	
A Non-Exhaustive Overview of Indo-Maltese Relations	67
<i>Mr. Ivan Vassallo</i>	
Current Trends in India-Malta Economic Ties	89
<i>Dr. Himani Pant</i>	
Malta and the Santal Tribe of India	
A Hundred Year Mission	95
<i>Ms. Marcette Buttigieg</i>	
Bio-Profiles.	101



MESSAGE

I am delighted that the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA), the High Commission of Malta in New Delhi and the High Commission of India in Malta have brought out this joint publication to commemorate 60 years of India-Malta Diplomatic Relations.

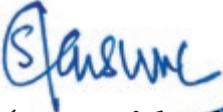
As we celebrate this important milestone, it is an opportunity to reflect upon our shared history and growing partnership. India was one of the first countries to recognise Malta's Independence in 1964, and soon after in 1965, both countries established diplomatic relations. However, our ties date further back, with a shared Commonwealth history, and several military and commercial exchanges enabled by Malta's strategic location in the Mediterranean. During the mid-19th century, Sindhi merchants from north-west India established a presence in Malta, enhancing trade, transport and tourism linkages. Several accounts indicate that the first ever deployment of Indian troops in Europe was in Malta.

Over the last six decades, our countries have developed a robust relationship based on the foundation of shared values and commitment to democracy, multilateralism and international peace. We have worked together in the Non-Aligned Movement. Today, over 100 Indian companies representing diverse sectors have established a business presence in Malta as a gateway to Europe. Indian films have been shot in Malta. The Indian expatriate community in Malta continues to grow, contributing to Malta's economy and society.

Our ties clearly indicate a growing mutual desire to expand the scope of our relationship, especially in sectors like FinTech, health, entertainment, tourism and education, among others.

India's ties with the Mediterranean region are also expanding. The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEEC) launched in September 2023 could serve as a game changer that fosters economic integration, sustainable development, and peace and stability. It will help create resilient supply chains and logistics networks and serve as key driver of trans-continental trade flows. The recently initiated Raisina Mediterranean Dialogue has added a new facet to our relationship with the region. The close relations between India and Malta also contribute positively to the strengthening of the India-EU Strategic Partnership.

This publication, featuring papers from diplomats, historians, and scholars, showcases the breadth of our relations and its potential. I congratulate ICWA for this timely publication, which will benefit scholars and practitioners interested in geopolitics of the Mediterranean region as well as in India-Malta relations and the India-EU Strategic Partnership.


(Dr. S. Jaishankar)



GOVERNMENT OF MALTA
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER
MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
AND TOURISM

A LASTING FRIENDSHIP, A SHARED FUTURE

by Hon. Dr Ian Borg, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Tourism of the Republic of Malta

As we mark sixty years of diplomatic relations between Malta and India, we honour a partnership built on mutual respect, shared democratic values, and a common commitment to peace and prosperity.

This anniversary is not only a tribute to the journey we have taken together but also a reminder of how much more we can achieve in the years ahead. My first official visit to India as Foreign Minister in October 2023 has provided fresh impetus to our growing bilateral ties. From high-level meetings to cultural engagement, I was struck by the depth of our shared interests and the genuine warmth of our cooperation.

Over the past decades, our countries have made significant accomplishments not only bilaterally but also through growing trade, educational links, health and cultural exchanges, and connectivity between our peoples. Multilaterally, we also continue to share converging views on key global issues including climate change, sustainable development, and digital innovation.

Our common membership in the Commonwealth offers an important platform to strengthen dialogue and cooperation. At the same time, Malta's membership in the European Union since 2004 has further enhanced our global engagement. It has opened new avenues for strategic partnerships with the Indo-Pacific region, particularly with India, which remains a vital and trusted partner.

Looking to the future, we do so with optimism and ambition. In a world increasingly shaped by digital transformation and global interconnectedness, Malta and India are well placed to explore new opportunities, working together for the benefit of our citizens and a more inclusive, forward-looking international community.

Hon. Dr. Ian Borg

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FOREWORD

The 60th anniversary of India-Malta diplomatic relations is an important milestone for both the countries. India was among the first countries to recognise the independence of Malta on 21 September 1964. Diplomatic relations were established within six months of Maltese independence on 10 March 1965. In the last six decades since the establishment of diplomatic relations, India-Malta relations have remained cordial and grown at a steady pace. Several high-level visits from both sides, including at the Presidential Vice Presidential as well as Foreign Minister Level have taken place.

To commemorate the 60th anniversary of India-Malta diplomatic relations, ICWA has commissioned this Special Publication in collaboration with the Malta High Commission in India. The proposal for this Publication was first made during the visit of Malta's Permanent Secretary of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Tourism H.E. Mr. Christopher Cutajar's visit to ICWA on 3 October 2023. As agreed to during this meeting, ICWA also organised a panel discussion on the theme "60th Year of India-Malta Diplomatic Relations: Stock-Taking & Way Forward" on 14 May 2024.

The present publication includes articles authored by current and former ambassadors, eminent scholars and military officials.

In his article, H.E. Mr. Christopher Cutajar has emphasized on the promising prospects for enhanced bilateral cooperation in a range of sectors including tourism, blue economy and clean energy.

In her article, High Commissioner of India to Malta Ms. Gloria Gangte has provided an overview of the progress made in the six decades of India-Malta diplomatic relations. She has highlighted that, in the current volatile and uncertain times, India and Malta share similar attitudes and converging interests, which work in their favour for a closer partnership.

Present High Commissioner of Malta to India H.E. Mr. Reuben Gauci has shared a personal account of his journey in India since his arrival in September 2020. He has emphasized the importance of people-to-people contacts between the two countries, which predates independence of both the countries. He has also expressed appreciation for the International Solar Alliance, a collaborative initiative between India and France, which Malta joined in February 2024.

Former Ambassador of India to Malta (2012-16) Amb Anil Trigunayat has shared a personal account of his experience in Malta. He has noted that there are several similarities between India and Malta despite the differences in their size and population. This includes their functioning vibrant democracies, shared commonwealth experiences as well as resilient nature.

Mr Wilfred Kenely, who was Malta's first resident High Commissioner to India in 2007, has written about the steps taken towards solidifying Malta's presence in India following his appointment. He has highlighted the efforts made to establish robust connections in commerce, education, culture, and the arts. He has noted that, over the years, the awareness of Malta within India has expanded which has resulted in growing Indian investments in Malta, as well as an increasing number of Indian nationals working and studying in Malta.

Military Historian Squadron Leader (Retd.) Rana T.S. Chinna has provided an account of Malta and the Indian Army. While tracing the earliest point of contacts between the armies of the two countries in the nineteenth century, he has also provided an account of interactions between the two during the First and Second World Wars.

Mr Ivan Vassallo from the High Commission of Malta to India has written about historical links between India and Malta. He notes that, despite the radically different context and the distance between the two countries, there have been points of contact, especially since the 19th century, when both nations were British colonies. This includes the presence of Indian Army in Malta, the growing Sindhi community in Malta, the Jesuit Santal Mission in India, among others.

Dr Himani Pant from ICWA has provided an overview of current trends in India-Malta economic ties which she notes has played an important role in the steady growth of bilateral ties. She notes that collaborations in digital technologies, healthcare, education and tourism, shipping, financial services carry promising prospects.

A Maltese nurse and missionary who has been living in India since 1979 Ms. Marcette Buttigieg has provided an account of Malta and the Santal Tribe of India for the past 100 years. She notes that the major contribution of the roughly 70 Maltese who worked in the Santal Mission over a period of 100 years has been in

the line of preservation and enhancement of Santali culture and language and in the field of education.

It is clear from the contributions in this Special Publication that India and Malta share a dynamic partnership, which is evolving at a steady pace. Shared interests in trade and technology, growing people to people ties, among others, ensure bright prospects for the relations to grow further in coming years. As the fastest growing economy in the world, India offers several opportunities for Malta. Similarly, as an advanced economy within the European Union and owing to its location in Europe and the Mediterranean, Malta offers several opportunities for India to increase its profile in the region.

ICWA hopes that this Special Publication will contribute towards enhancing awareness about the ties between India and Malta and would be useful for scholars and practitioners with an interest in current trends in Europe and India.

Ms. Nutan Kapoor Mahawar

Acting Director General & Additional Secretary

Indian Council of World Affairs

Sapru House

New Delhi

October 2025



Aerial panoramic view of the beautiful Ghajn Tuffieha Bay, Ghajn Tuffieha Watch Tower and Riviera beach. Ghajn Tuffieha, Malta



From Strong
Foundations,
Towards Shared
Prosperity

Mr. Christopher Cutajar

When our founding diplomats established formal relations between our two nations, just one year after the Maltese flag was first raised on Independence Day, I wonder if they had envisioned how strong our relations would become 60 years on. This sexagenarian milestone gives us the chance to look back at what we have achieved and to look ahead to new opportunities.

Our two nations' extensive bilateral and multilateral cooperation is demonstrated not simply by our growing trade volumes, but also by a good number of initiatives that have been implemented by both the Maltese and Indian sides – initiatives that have contributed to strengthening people-to-people connections that have evolved throughout the course of our relations, leading to an increased interconnectedness between our two cultures.

The friendship between our two nations has stood firm even in times of crisis. Owing to my previous career in the health sector, I recall with satisfaction Malta's donation of oxygen concentrators from Overseas Development Aid funds, which helped to counter those most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and to save as

many lives as possible. Such human compassion is an example of Malta's human empathy and willingness to help those in need, following the stellar example set by India itself and its own contributions to lesser developed countries during the pandemic.

Since assuming this role in 2020, I have given priority to the enhancement of our cooperation in a number of sectors of mutual importance, including clean energy, health, education, the blue economy, tourism, and the IT sector, areas of cooperation in which we can boast that we have had much success. This enhanced cooperation would not have been possible without having well-established means for dialogue and understanding, and I am satisfied to note the numerous exchanges between Indian and Maltese officials at all levels, not simply through our respective diplomatic missions but also through frequent opportunities for high-level inter-governmental dialogue. Prominent examples include the last round of political consultations held between officials from the two Foreign Offices in September 2023 in New Delhi, which among other things, set the stage for the Maltese Deputy Prime Minister's and Minister for Foreign Affairs and

Tourism's successful visit to India in October 2023.

Occasions such as Malta's high-level participation in the *CII India Europe Business and Sustainability Conclave* in February 2024, and in the various formats of the Indian-led *Raisina Dialogue*, provide opportunities to discuss matters of mutual importance, including the enhancement of cooperation between India and Euro-Med region in areas such as trade, climate and maritime affairs. In this breath, I cannot fail to mention another India-led multilateral initiative which has also significantly enhanced cooperation between our two nations on an issue of significant importance: the International Solar Alliance (ISA), which Malta joined in February 2024 during my own visit. The sun is Malta's main natural resource; joining this collaborative organisation was a natural step for us given the ISA's aim of combatting climate change by advancing solar renewable energy technology cooperation between the signatories. With over 100 signatories, I am sure that the ISA will prove instrumental in helping us identify

new innovative projects and avenues for collaboration in the field of solar energy and increase the supply of clean energy, which will benefit not just our two nations, but the entire world. Such initiatives continuously demonstrate India's leadership on a global stage and knack for innovative thinking, which have not only served to strengthen our long-lasting friendship, but also find effective solutions for shared challenges.

I am certain that what we have achieved thus far will stand the test of time, and that our relations will continue to thrive successfully. Looking forward, Malta remains receptive to enhancing and widening these areas while exploring other fields of cooperation. India's continued economic success – having recently become the fourth-largest economy globally – and growing international presence creates obvious synergies with Malta's own leading multilateral role and economic development journey, and it will be up to us to leverage these synergies in favour of the continued growth of our relationship.



*Skyline from Marsans Harbour at sunset.
The cathedral, Valletta, Malta*

*Gateway of India on the Mumbai harbour with
many jetties on Arabian sea, Mumbai, India*



Celebrating 60 Years of India–Malta Diplomatic Relations (1965–2025)

H.E. Ms. Gloria Gangte



India was one of the first countries to recognize Malta's Independence in 1964 and establish diplomatic relations with it on 10 March 1965. However, India-Malta links pre-date the formal establishment of diplomatic relations. The strategic location of Malta along the maritime routes facilitated trade links centuries ago.

Our shared colonial past brought India and Malta in direct contact. Malta, known as the Nurse of the Mediterranean during World War I (WWI), treated Indian war casualties that landed at its shores but long before that, on 27th May 1878 an Indian Expeditionary Force of more than 5700 soldiers of the Indian Army disembarked in Malta. In fact, this was the first Indian Army deployment in Europe. An Indian memorial stands in honour of soldiers from India at the Pieta Military cemetery where 34 of them are commemorated or buried. These include soldiers, labourers and

members of Gurkha regiment who were cremated at Lazaretto cemetery.

Today, both countries are vibrant democracies, share common values and are members of the Commonwealth. They are committed to effective multilateralism and promoting international peace and security.

Over the years, bilateral relations have been enriched by several exchanges of High-level interactions and visits. These include visits exchanged at the highest levels; that of Presidents, Prime Ministers, Speakers and Representatives of Parliament, Ministers of External Affairs, Ministers of Home Affairs, of Commerce and of Finance, and many others.

Their common membership of various international organizations provides a platform for both countries to not only reinforce their bilateral ties but also share perspectives and work together on contemporary global issues. What stands out in their

Both countries are vibrant democracies, share common values and are members of the Commonwealth. They are committed to effective multilateralism and promoting international peace and security.

journey together is their support for each other on the global stage, in multilateral institutions, and in addressing international challenges like climate change and sustainable development. India regards Malta as a trusted partner and interlocutor in the European Union.

Commercial relations between the two countries have been growing. Strong ties have been forged in the pharmaceutical, healthcare, entertainment and recreation, IT and construction sectors. Indian companies have made substantial investments in the pharmaceutical sector, creating knowledge-based jobs. Maltese companies are also utilizing the vast Indian skilled talent pool in diverse fields in accounting, consulting, finance, gaming industry, back office telecom operations, hospitality and tourism, both onshore as well as offshore.

Malta has gained international recognition as a world-class centre

that has attracted blue-chip banks, fund managers, and investment houses. Being an EU member that speaks English, Indian Companies will find it easier to work with them for EU markets. Collaborations in Fintech including e-payments are being explored.

Although modest, there has been a steady growth in bilateral trade, which has almost doubled since the last five years, reaching \$531.79 million in 2023-24. A large part of Indian exports to Malta has been pharmaceuticals. Other items of exports include petroleum products, wheat, organic chemicals, and ceramics. Malta exports chemicals, integrated circuits, machinery, and paper to India.

Relations between the two countries have been further enriched by the presence of a large number of Indian workers who contribute to the growth of Maltese economy. Their peace loving and hardworking nature has been appreciated by authorities. Today,

People-to-people ties between the two countries are underpinned by the large and growing Indian community in Malta. These connections pre-date Indian & Maltese independence from the British colonial rule.

Indian workers form the largest cohort of foreign workers in Malta.

People-to-people ties between the two countries are underpinned by the large and growing Indian community in Malta. These connections pre-date Indian & Maltese independence from the British colonial rule. The Indians who came to Malta towards the end of the 19th Century established famous textiles and clothing shops that are still etched fondly in the memory of many Maltese. Several Maltese parents have adopted children from India. Even as these children grow up as Maltese nationals, they would retain their ethnic identity. This would further have a positive impact on India- Malta ties in decades to come.

Cinema has served as a powerful medium for showcasing the cultural synergies. Indian filmmakers have been drawn to the picturesque landscapes of Malta to film Bollywood & other regional language films. Some Indian films shot in Malta are Thugs of Hindustan (2018), Bharat (2019), Charas (1976), Samraat (1982), a Tamil film Vinnaihaandi Varuvaayaa (2010) & Starfish Pickle in 2024.

Education and Entertainment sectors have positively contributed to the local economy and have served as an

important tool to enhance people-to-people contacts, thereby making a broader societal connect between the two countries. With affordable quality education, Malta has attracted Indian students in diverse courses. These students will nurture our partnership by forging lasting friendships and bridging cultures. There is scope to enhance cooperation in these areas further. Presence of over 50 Indian restaurants in Malta attest to the appeal of Indian food.

Sports is another area of collaboration between India and Malta. A number of Indians have played in Maltese Indian cricket team. From time to time, Indians have also been recruited in Maltese football and basketball teams.

In today's uncertain and volatile world, it is important that countries and partners who have similar attitudes and converging interests work more closely. A strong India-Malta relations and a strong India-EU collaboration can be a stabilizing factor in a turbulent time. Malta's contribution in fostering international dialogue and promoting peace during its membership of the UNSC and its role as Chair-in-Office of the OSCE has been widely appreciated. There is no doubt that Malta will continue to contribute to global

good as it steers the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group and presides as President of ‘The Council of Europe’ from May-Nov 2025.

As we celebrate the 60th anniversary and our successes, it would be prudent to contemplate ways to enhance our engagement going forward.

Malta’s strategic location (in the Mediterranean and halfway between Europe and Africa), use of English language and its EU membership makes it an ideal location for Indian companies to expand into Europe and neighbouring North African countries. Successful India-Malta collaboration in the pharmaceuticals sector can be replicated in other sectors like Renewable Energy, Information Technology and Financial Services. Cooperation in Maritime industry and Defence training are areas that can be explored for future collaboration. Medical equipment manufacturing, Hospitals and Hospice management also offer positive prospects.

India’s youthful demographics provides a comparative advantage in sectors requiring a large and skilled

workforce. This trend is projected to continue for several decades with India’s median age remaining below 40 in 2050. Demographic unevenness has created demand and supply imbalances across the world. India and Malta can be partners in this regard as well. This would require a focused initiative that customizes human resources for the Maltese market.

Another area of cooperation that is still unexplored is medical tourism. As there are many Indian healthcare workers in Malta, Maltese patients already have a comfort level with Indian healthcare professionals. India, with its world-class hospitals, large pool of skilled and well-trained doctors and nurses and cost-effective treatment offers a good alternative to Maltese patients. This could also help reduce the burden on Malta’s healthcare system.

The sixtieth anniversary of the establishment of our diplomatic relations is an opportune time to renew our efforts at deeper understanding, greater engagement and enhanced cooperation between our two great nations and peoples.



Ministry of External Affairs, Jawaharlal Nehru Bhawan, New Delhi

Why India Means So Much!

H.E. Mr. Reuben Gauci



When I was offered the post of High Commissioner of Malta to India, I don't remember doubting my positive reply for one second. It even struck the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Malta on the other side of the line, who immediately asked me, "Aren't you going to discuss it with your family?" I knew they would say yes, and so they did.

Moving to India in 2020 was not an easy task as COVID19 had just struck. I was at the time posted in Ramallah and I was living with my family in East Jerusalem. I remember visiting my colleague, the Indian Representative in Ramallah at the time, Mr. Sunil Kumar, whom I had the pleasure of knowing for some time already. "You'll love India," he said. "You'll be treated like a prince there." He was right, India does treat Ambassadors, and diplomats in general, with very high regard.

I met India for the first time during the COVID19 pandemic. We arrived late at night on 13 September 2020. One issue which I had pressing upon my arrival was a number of Maltese families who needed to come to India to collect their adopted children. For these families it was literally a question of having their children in another country, separated

from them due to the pandemic. The Indian Authorities were very understanding and they started issuing visas to them after a month or so after my arrival.

COVID19 saw me and other Ambassadors presenting credentials in the situation room of the Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi. Back in Ramallah, my good friend Sunil had told me that he really wished that COVID19 would end before I arrived in India, so that I could enjoy the beauty of the Credentials Ceremony afforded by the Presidential Palace of India. That was not to be as we all know, and on 14 October 2020, I presented Credentials to the then President of India H.E. Ram Nath Kovind in a fanfare less ceremony, which, nonetheless, gave me more time to make a speech than had I been at the Presidential Palace. President Kovind listened attentively via connection with the Presidential Palace.

In the immediate months that followed, I was meeting a number of Maltese families coming to India to pick up their adoptive children. Everything was going smoothly and COVID19 seemed to be fading away. Then came April and May 2021, and the Delta Covid Variant struck India with a force that no-one was expecting.

On the year of the publication of this series of essays, we celebrate the 100th Year of the arrival of Maltese Jesuits in India, who established themselves amongst the Santali Tribe in the Indian States of Odisha, Jharkhand and West Bengal.

A Maltese parent who had arrived in India with his wife to pick up their adoptive daughter caught COVID19 and passed in New Delhi 2 weeks later. I was also COVID stricken, but got COVID19 negative soon enough to be able to assist with this person's cremation and with the repatriation of the spouse and daughter to Malta. Diplomacy is not just ceremonies and receptions, it deals with much more than this, and COVID19 in India has thought me that much, not to mention experiences in previous countries as well.

As we celebrate the 60th Anniversary of Malta -India Diplomatic Relations, I cannot but muse on the fact that relations between countries are the canister of relations held between the people of these countries. During my time as High Commissioner, I have seen many Indian nationals travel to Malta for work purposes, as my country's economy needs them.

This has embellished India- Malta Relations. But Indians have been travelling to Malta since the time of the British Raj, that is before Malta and India became independent and could establish Diplomatic Relations of their own. Maltese have been travelling to India for quite some time as well. On the year of the publication of this series of essays, we celebrate the 100th Year of the arrival of Maltese Jesuits in India, who established themselves amongst the Santali Tribe in the Indian States of Odisha, Jharkhand and West Bengal. Albeit hailing from a male religious Catholic Order, the Maltese Jesuits learned the Santali Language and customs. Even female Maltese served and are still serving in the Santal Mission. During my time in India, I had the pleasure to visit them many times in places like Dumka, Baripada, Bagdogra and Majlispur. Once more emphasizing on the people to people contact which I believe diplomacy should have. Meeting the tribal people

of this marvellous country is indeed a privilege, also taking into account that the current President of India, H.E. Droupadi Murmu is the first Indian President to hail from the tribes of India.

I was honoured to have the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malta come to India on a bilateral visit in October 2023 Hon Ian Borg, and meet with his counterpart Minister of External Affairs of India H.E. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar. Minister Jaishankar is a brilliant Foreign Minister of India, and the country is very lucky to have a person of such calibre and stamina serving it in this position.

I was glad to assist Malta's joining the International Solar Alliance (ISA) in February 2024 during the Permanent Secretary (Foreign Secretary) H.E. Christopher Cutajar's visit to New Delhi, India to participate in the Raisina Dialogue. One cannot but appreciate India's initiative in creating such a treaty along with France, our colleague within the European Union. Thanks to its initiatives, India's footprint in the world is becoming ever more significant, and, as I like to say, no country in today's age can afford not to have good relations with India!

As part of the celebrations of Malta -India Relations, I have given lectures about the subject in universities and other Institutions in this country. The interest and diligence of the students and participants has always impressed me. Criss crossing India, from North to South, from East to West has brought home to me the resilience of the Indian Nation, which is unmatched. India is a country of friendly people and it is very difficult to feel lonely here, as people always want to interact. The many people I have met, have been a living testament to this. I cannot but not mention the particular place in my heart which the local Indian staff at the High Commission have. When my time to leave India comes, I can't bear the thought of saying goodbye to them. This is also why India means so much. The diplomatic life is an interesting one, but it is also a difficult one in the sense that when parting time comes, leaving the place of one's posting becomes a departure from a home away from home. In the past years India became a home away from home, and that perhaps is the greatest reason why, for me and my family, it really means so much!

India and Malta

Six Decades of Strengthening Cooperation: A Personal Perspective

Amb. Anil Trigunayat



For me personally Malta came as a blessing in disguise. I was posted to Libya in the immediate aftermath of killing of Gaddafi (2011) when the country was in a total turmoil. India abstained on UNSC Resolution 1973. This was erroneously construed by the revolutionaries as support to Gaddafi courtesy western narratives. Hence, my main job became to correct the image deficit for India at the grassroots level. But I was also concurrently accredited to Republic of Malta, which hitherto has been seen mainly as a R&R (Rest and Recreation) place. Hence bilateral interactions were somewhat limited. But for me it also became a major opportunity and I seriously pursued and found exceptional interest in India and for updating our interactions in a concerted manner. They loved Indian culture, craft and cuisine. Some of the Ministers were keen that Indian film industry could use their beautiful locations for film shooting. We successfully persuaded Bollywood and some southern film producers. Other related shootings also became a common place in this beautiful and historic country. Food and Film Festivals created greater interest among the Maltese people.

But the main challenge was to create sufficient interest back home so that we could restart our institutionalized cooperation especially in the politico-economic domain.

As soon as PM Dr Joesph Muscat was elected, I wanted an Indian dignitary to be the first one to meet him. Fortunately, I was able to persuade Minister of State (External Affairs) Ms. Preneet Kaur to take time off from her ongoing election campaign and visit Malta even if for two days which became an important turning point in our relationship. I also thought and recommended for a consistent relationship. It would be good to restart our Resident Diplomatic Mission in Malta since they already had an Ambassador in India. Fortunately, we reopened our Mission a few years later.

MALTA'S STRATEGIC LOCATION

Given its vantage point in the Phoenician crossroads of Mediterranean shipping line, Malta has historically played the role of a strategic vantage post for trade and naval campaigns through the Mediterranean history. It can rightly boast of hosting the remarkable temples which are six thousand

Malta's foreign policy essentially aims at harnessing its geopolitical relevance to maximize political and economic benefits. As a small country and a historic meeting place for reconciliation and dialogue, Malta also seeks to project European Union's friendly face towards its neighbours to the south of the Mediterranean and the closeness and understanding with Libya, Tunisia and the other Arab world countries.

years old marvels of geometry and architecture. UK formally acquired the possession of Malta in 1814 and the island staunchly supported UK through the World Wars and remains in the Commonwealth after its independence in 1964. This was also the most bombed nation during the 2nd World War given its strategic location in the Mediterranean. But it has risen like a phoenix.

The country has become a freight transit shipment point, financial centre, ICT and R&D hub and a favoured tourist destination. Hence, though one of the smallest countries in the world, Malta enjoys the status of being a vocal EU member as well as a Commonwealth country. Malta hosted CHOGM 2005 and acted as Chair-in-Office until CHOGM 2007 as well as in later years. The 2015 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, also known as CHOGM

2015 was the 24th Meeting of the Heads of Government of the Commonwealth of Nations. It was held in Malta from 27 to 29 November. Since Mauritius could not host it, the then Chair Sri Lankan President handed over the baton to Malta. For the first time in Commonwealth history, the Commonwealth Foundation organised a debate between the candidates as part of the Commonwealth People's Forum. India was represented by Smt Sushma Swaraj, the late Indian Minister of External Affairs.

Malta's foreign policy essentially aims at harnessing its geopolitical relevance to maximize political and economic benefits. As a small country and a historic meeting place for reconciliation and dialogue, Malta also seeks to project European Union's friendly face towards its neighbours to the south of the Mediterranean and the closeness

and understanding with Libya, Tunisia and the other Arab world countries.

Malta also seeks to be a trusted interlocutor for them and a voice sensitive to the Arab realities within the European Union that is reflected in 5+5 EU Maghreb Summit interactions, where it plays a crucial role. Hence, the strength and relevance in multilateral and regional context feeds its strength and relevance in bilateral relations and vice-versa. It also gives Malta guaranteed participation in plethora of trade agreements giving greater access to North African countries and Middle Eastern markets. Malta also focuses its special attention on new major emerging economies such as India and China.

Malta is a unique country for its strategic location and access to several hotspots including Libya- and leveraged these at least since the times of Gaddafi era sanctions and Arab spring when I was the High Commissioner. It's also a melting pot of cultures and peoples despite its small size. You can visit 6000 years old Maltese temples standing tall. It is a part of EU and Commonwealth both of which are important for us. In the EU, Malta has offered us to project India's view points as well as on the

EU-FTA which is currently under negotiation, while becoming a pedestal for Indian companies especially in pharmaceuticals sector for the EU markets. They have a competitive attraction for English language education which is gaining ground. It's a high tech and innovative country and an easy partner for us as India evolves into a major innovator. Aurobindo Pharma is an exceptional story.

In this context, the visit of Prime Minister of Malta Dr. Joseph Muscat, accompanied by Minister for the Economy, Investment and Small Business of Malta Dr. Christian Cardona and a large business delegation from Malta to attend the Vibrant Gujarat Summit on 18-20 January 2019, was an important one. PM Muscat also met Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the margins of the Summit.

■ INDIA AND MALTA

India and Malta enjoy friendly and cordial relations. India was one of the first countries to recognize independence of Malta in 1964 and established diplomatic relations with it in 1965. The High Commission was reopened in Malta in Jan 2017 and the resident High Commissioner of

Both India and Malta have shared British legacy and are members of the Commonwealth. India was one of the first countries to have recognized Malta in 1964. Until Malta joined the EU, we both were part of the Non-Aligned Movement.

India took charge in Jan 2018. Malta opened its High Commission in New Delhi in July 2007 with a resident High Commissioner posted there. It also has Honorary Consuls in Kolkata, Chennai, and Mumbai-which confirm the importance that both sides attach to the bilateral relationship as well as to deal constructively with global and regional challenges.

There are several similarities between our two countries despite our size and population. Both countries take great pride in their democratic credentials. Both have an ancient civilization and have suffered and gained resilience through foreign interventions and colonialism over a period of time yet emerged stronger. Both India and Malta have shared British legacy and are members of the Commonwealth. India was one of the first countries to have recognized Malta in 1964. Until Malta joined the EU, we both were part of the Non-Aligned Movement.

However, with the EU emerging as India's largest trade, investment and strategic partner over the years, interactions with Malta have become far more significant. However, I must add that our relations go beyond a century and even before the two countries achieved their independence. According to some evidence, in 1878 the British Government sent over 7000 Indian troops to Malta which was the first time that Indian army was deployed in Europe. Malta also continued to act as a major transit point for colonial troop movements from India due to its strategic location in the Mediterranean.

Yet another dimension of our close cooperation comes from the presence of hundreds of Indians especially enterprising Sindhis who have been here for a long time and have very well integrated in the Maltese society. In fact the Malta National Archives, reportedly, had some 88 records

pertaining to 10 Indian firms that were present in Malta from 1887 to 1928. Some of those families are present even today and have become successful living bridges between the two countries. I am very happy to see that they are successfully pioneering and deepening Indo-Maltese cooperation.

India and Malta relations are growing at a steady pace. If we can work together, we can certainly grow faster. Both our economies are complimentary and technology based. We need to bolster our relationship with far more substantive cooperation on the economic, scientific and technological, human resource development fronts. They can take the advantage of India's highly skilled professionals in the field of IT, financial services, health, pharmaceuticals, transport, freight and tourism.

India today is one of the main sources of affordable generic drugs in the world. Malta can consider greater collaboration in this sector. We can also cooperate in the use of the ancient sciences of yoga and ayurveda to promote wellness. Malta may like to take advantage of India's advancement in affordable, quality healthcare facilities.

In fact their Minister for Active Ageing Jo Etienne Abela attended the Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh (FRCSEd) Conference in October 2022. During his extended stay, the discussions were held on licensing in the pharmaceutical and medical devices industry and Malta's potential to become a Mediterranean hub for surgery education. He led a team of representatives from Malta Medicines Authority and Malta Enterprises to visit Torrents Pharma in Ahmedabad and Aurobindo Pharma in Hyderabad. This collaboration has significant potential.

India and Malta held the 3rd round of FOC (Foreign Office Consultations) on 29 September 2023 in New Delhi. The FOC provided an opportunity for reviewing bilateral engagements and exchanging views on regional and global issues of mutual interest, including developments in our respective neighbourhoods, EU, Ukraine conflict, G20 outcomes under India's Presidency, cooperation in multilateral fora, and UNSC reforms. Both sides also discussed furthering relations in sectors such as trade and investments, consular, migration, skill development, health & pharma sector and cultural linkages.

We have a robust institutional mechanism and collaborative matrix which should be fully utilized. It would be good to have a ministerial level Joint Commission in order to energize the institutional matrix that we have. In 1992, during the visit of Maltese President to India, an Agreement on Economic, Scientific & Technical Cooperation was signed. Article 5 of Agreement provides for meeting of the Joint Commission. In this context, the signing of three Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) namely; (i) MoU on Maritime Cooperation between Ministry of Shipping, India and Ministry of Transport, Infrastructure and Capital Projects, Malta; (ii) MoU on Mutual Cooperation between the Foreign Service Institute, India and The Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies, University of Malta, and (iii) MoU in the field of Tourism Cooperation between India and Malta mark a good beginning in creating a modern, enabling framework for enhancing relations between our countries.

Movement of businessmen and professionals given the focus and nature of our economies is a key ingredient for upgrading ties in strategic domain. Easier facilitation

of visa procedure promotes people-to-people contact and business.

Our governments should work towards facilitating easy mobility of professionals on both sides. I strongly believe that this will certainly go a long way in further strengthening the ties and accelerate progress and growth in both our countries. Migration and Mobility Agreement, as has been signed by India with several European countries, could position Malta as a spring board for Indian professionals in the region.

The Foreign Office Consultations held in 2023 provided an opportunity for reviewing bilateral engagements and exchanging views on regional and global issues of mutual interest, including developments in our respective neighbourhoods, EU, Ukraine conflict, G20 outcomes under India's Presidency, cooperation in multilateral fora, and UNSC reforms. Both sides also discussed furthering relations in sectors such as trade and investments, consular, migration, skill development, health & pharma sector and cultural linkages.

We also have had some differing perceptions on certain important issues i.e.

I had extensive discussions with the then PM Joseph Muscat, who understood our point of view and was amenable to support India's prospective UNSC membership as and when it came up. Malta is a small State and it may be more interested in the expansion of non-permanent members' category.

UNSC Reforms -Malta was a Coffee Club country and has its own rather conservative approach to UN reforms. But they have changed. I had extensive discussions with the then PM Joseph Muscat, who understood our point of view and was amenable to support India's prospective UNSC membership as and when it came up. Malta is a small State and it may be more interested in the expansion of non-permanent members' category. Malta believes that expansion should not only include countries with global influence but also States with rich heritage and contribution to maintenance of international peace and security. However, with the new government in power we took it up and reiterated our request and sought their more objective understanding. There was significant appreciation and understanding which was further discussed during the visit of then Foreign Minister George Vella (who

rose to become the President) to India who had detailed discussions with Salman Khursheed in 2013 on the sidelines of ASEM Summit in this regard. It was work in progress.

In Malta-India relationship, the trade, technology and investment combine effortlessly. Despite its small size, Malta has emerged as an important hub of innovation and transit trade. Main items of India's exports to Malta in 2022 were in the category of pharmaceutical products, petroleum products, wheat, organic chemicals, and ceramic products. The main items of India's imports from Malta during this period were in the category of organic and inorganic chemicals, integrated circuits, machinery, and sorted/recovered paper.

Trade is below potential at about 300mn Euros. Even though it has grown some ten times during the last decade, it has good capacity to

grow even more as India strategizes into the mediterranean and North Africa. Investments are a key to enhance the stakeholdership and needs to be pursued. There are significant opportunities for enhancing investments in ICT and R&D and other service and sunrise sectors including AI & Robotics, biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, etc. Indian company Aurobindo Pharma had made an initial investment of Euro 5 million in Malta and a Maltese company Tolly had made an investment in India worth \$ 7 million in Uttarakhand in the cosmetics sector. However, Tolly had to shut down due to certain issues but the reasons for such closure and withdrawal need to be examined dispassionately for addressing through the Ease of Doing Business in India matrix. We should encourage such ventures. Malta has the potential to be a hub like Dubai for the Mediterranean and North African countries and could be explored. Likewise, even though high level exchanges are there but we may perhaps find a way to enhance the frequency.

Indian community has grown from 350-400, mainly Sindhis, to about 12000 now. A good sign of P2P connect. Perhaps, Malta was one of the few

countries where Malta Post issued Commemorative Stamps on the occasion of 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi twice. This was the second occasion that Malta Post issued commemorative stamp on Mahatma Gandhi, the earlier being in 1969, i.e. on the occasion of 100th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.

■ **EVACUATION OF INDIANS**

Given its proximity and usually good relations with regimes and political actors in Libya, Malta has acquired a reputation of being a 'go to' country in the event of regional troubles which are not too infrequent. Since the "Arab Spring", forced regime changes, often violently, left an internal chaos, especially in Libya, when it became incumbent to evacuate over 18000 Indians through various means and routes. Malta was more than happy to render assistance to Indians being evacuated through its territory. Somehow, I had a hunch that we might have to manage at least one more major evacuation since General Haftar was trying to exert his authority in Benghazi by military force. Several Indians had returned and were contributing to the best of their capability under very trying

circumstances. However, situation remained precarious and unstable. Hence, during my farewell call on PM Muscat (2014), who I had befriended over time, while profusely thanking him for their earlier cooperation, I broached that we may have to count on his generosity once again, if the evacuation became imminent since the situation was deteriorating in a divided Libya. He knew the developments in Libya better than any other leader and he immediately assured me of fullest support of his government and security agencies.

I had just reached my next posting Jordan, when I got a call from the Ministry that I may have to go back to Libya as situation had suddenly deteriorated and we had to evacuate some four hundred Indians from Benghazi. I was ready to go there but I knew I could do it more efficiently from Malta and hence spoke to Late Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj, who appreciated the logic and my connections in Malta and Libya and gave me a go ahead. My visa was still valid and I arrived in Malta and Ministry helped put up an excellent team of young officers some of whom were probationers or as now days called Officer Trainees, including

a young and brave lady officer. In consultation with our resourceful Honorary Consul Johann Cuishcerri and my contacts in Benghazi we hired a fast boat with an Italian Captain. Not many would have taken that risk. A team of five officers including the lady officer embarked on the night journey so that they could finalize the evacuation before the deadline to bomb the port areas by Haftar next day at 12PM. Fortunately, despite some glitches, I constantly communicated with my friends from the Libyan army, police and customs with whom I continued to coordinate through one of the longest nights, while remaining in touch with the saviour team which eventually helped bring back 430 Indians safely before the bombing deadline. For my brave colleagues, it was indeed a great achievement and a well learnt lesson for future and successful execution of such tasks for which we are never fully prepared.

However, on the way back my colleague called to say that she had overheard that some passengers were planning to run away and seek asylum in Malta. It was worrying and that had to be prevented at all costs, lest all the trust and confidence and credibility that the Maltese

government had placed in me would have been evaporated in no time. Even for future cooperation it would have become extremely difficult to convince our gracious hosts. Hence, I sounded out the Police Commissioner and they meticulously moved each accounted pax straight to the airport where an Air India plane had arrived to take them back home. However, the Maltese had requested if we could also evacuate couple of their citizens from Libya and we were happy to do that. But only

one priest eventually could board the ship. I felt quite embarrassed when our Maltese friends so profusely thanked me. When I left Malta again, I had only surmised that, hopefully I would come back only for tourism and to meet my friends in this beautiful country.

Malta does suffer from a small country syndrome while it intends to continue to punch above its weight. Hence, we must engage as best as we can for mutual benefit, security, development and a better world order.



View from above of the domes of churches and roofs with church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and St. Paul's Anglican Pro-Cathedral, Valletta, Capital city of Malta

Settling in, Reaching Out

Establishing Malta's Presence in India

Mr. Wilfred Kenely



On the morning of Friday, September 3, 2010, I boarded a flight from Indira Gandhi International Airport in New Delhi, that was to take me back to Malta for good. It marked the conclusion of my tenure as the first High Commissioner of Malta to India. More importantly, it was the end of a life-changing experience on a scale I never imagined possible.

Three years and three months earlier, on July 4, 2007, I had landed in New Delhi with just two pieces of luggage and a reservation at the Taj Mahal Hotel on Man Singh Road, New Delhi. I had embarked on a mission entrusted to me by the Government of Malta: “Go and set up an Embassy in India and serve as our first High Commissioner.” These were the instructions given by Dr. Michael Frendo, then Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malta. “The decision to open a High Commission in India has been taken by my government, and it is time to implement it. We need to strengthen our commercial, diplomatic, cultural and educational ties with India. Are you ready to go to India to see this through?” At that time I held the position of Director General of the Federation of Industry and we were busy supporting local industries to

adapt to the new EU reality. And here I was being asked to leave everything and go and start a new venture in India. It was probably the toughest decision of my life. It was to be the start of an extraordinary journey.

In my bags, I carried my letters of credence, handed to me by the then President of the Republic of Malta, H.E. Dr. Edward Fenech Adami, and a cherished photo of my daughter Maria, who was yet to turn eighteen that summer. Apart from the very cordial and accommodating staff from India’s Ministry of External Affairs, there was no one to greet me. It was a clean slate, and I had to start building this project from ground zero.

My first official appointment came a few weeks after my arrival. On 19 July 2007, I proudly presented my letter of credence to the President of India, H.E. Abdul Kalam, a truly remarkable human being. A nuclear scientist, visionary, and above all, a people’s person. It was a proud moment for me, but more importantly it was a historic moment for Malta. From that day onward, the Maltese flag flew in Delhi, although it took another two months for it to fly high from the roof of the first High Commission of Malta, situated in Panshcheel Park.

This marked the beginning of a new era in diplomatic relations between India and Malta. Malta and India had first established diplomatic relations 42 years earlier, following Malta's independence in 1964.

It was a tall order, and we were expected to deliver quick results. Malta was still adjusting to its new reality as a European Union member state. We were preparing to adopt the Euro the following year, and significant changes were underway. Meanwhile, India was being recognized as a global powerhouse with a vibrant, rapidly growing economy. Countries and businesses were flocking to India in droves, and we had to act swiftly to carve out a niche for Malta. For me, this meant building networks, forging connections, identifying key players, and understanding India's commercial, educational, cultural, and administrative environments. It was time to immerse myself in one of

the world's most dynamic economies and establish links with Malta. At the same time, I needed to set up the High Commission – a physical base from which I could operate, and a small team of local members of staff to assist me.

By October of 2007 we were working from the new premises. A small but highly dedicated team, made up of young and dynamic people who put their energies into making this project a success. It would not have been possible to achieve so much in such a little time without the help of such wonderful individuals. Pooja, Santosh, Megha, I thank you heartily.

We worked tirelessly over the next three years to build and strengthen the relationship between Malta and India across various sectors. Despite being a one-diplomat mission throughout my tenure, we achieved significant milestones, thanks in no small part to the support from Valletta. By the time I left, we had established robust

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connections in commerce, education, culture, and the arts. Indian students began looking to the University of Malta for their education. The booming Indian film industry started considering Malta as a potential location for their projects. Meanwhile, Maltese businesspeople began exploring India as a valuable partner for their operations.

In November 2009, the High Commission hosted and coordinated a Maltese business delegation jointly represented by members of the Malta Chamber of Commerce and Enterprise, and Malta Enterprise. It was the first of its kind and included two business seminars with local entrepreneurs – one in Mumbai and one in New Delhi, and a number of business-to-business meetings organized and facilitated by the High Commission.

As a European Union member state, Malta actively participated in the Heads of Missions (HOMs) meetings of the EU, focusing on key agenda items of the time, such as the EU-India free trade agreement and the EU-India joint action plan.

Another critical task was identifying suitable individuals to serve as Honorary Consuls in key Indian regions. Mr. T.P. Shantakumar

was appointed Honorary Consul in Chennai, representing Malta in southeastern India with admirable dedication. Similarly, Mr. Ashok Kumar Jhunjhunwala was appointed Honorary Consul in Kolkata, and Mrs. Chandra Ruia later took on the role in Maharashtra. All three continue to carry the Maltese flag with pride.

On a personal level, I will never forget my three years in India, a country that made me feel at home. I am immensely grateful for the hospitality and friendship shown to me by countless Indians – from members of staff to captains of industry, from casual acquaintances to lifelong friends. I had the opportunity to visit cities, towns, and villages across this vast country, and I was consistently met with respect and warmth. India introduced me to its rich art, music, and diverse cuisine. It welcomed me into its homes and made me feel like one of its own. For this, I will always be grateful. This is why, after leaving in 2010, I have continued to return and will do so for as long as I can.

The developments over the past 18 years since my arrival in New Delhi in 2007 are remarkable. Relations between Malta and India have grown from strength to strength,

and awareness of Malta within Indian communities has expanded exponentially. Today, as we celebrate the 60th anniversary of diplomatic ties between our countries, we see growing Indian investments in Malta, as well

as an increasing number of Indian nationals working and studying in Malta. At the same time, more Maltese citizens are visiting India, both as tourists and as business partners. The future indeed looks bright.



The old cannons in Valleta, Malta

Malta and the Indian Army

Sqdn. Ldr. (Retd.) Rana T.S. Chinna

■ INTRODUCTION

The Indian Army of today has its roots in the colonial period when it functioned as the “sword arm” of the British Raj. By virtue of the subcontinent’s geostrategic location, although it was not mandated to do so, the Indian Army had for long acted as an Imperial fire brigade. Its soldiers had seen service in China, Africa, Afghanistan and the North West and North East Frontiers of India in numerous campaigns in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The one Imperial campaign that it was not asked to take a part in during this period was the Boer War in 1899-1901. This was labelled as a “white man’s war” and no Indian soldiers were deployed in South Africa in a combatant role, although a large number of cavalrymen and grooms and syces accompanied the horses supplied from India, into the field. Indeed, it was not till the outbreak of the “Great War” in the autumn of 1914, that Indian troops were to take the field in Europe, against a European enemy.

It is often thought that the Indian Expeditionary Force that landed at

Marseilles in September/October 1914 was the first deployment of Indian troops on European soil. This perception is however not correct. The first occasion that Indian soldiers were sent to Europe was in 1878; when a force consisting of six battalions of infantry, two regiments of cavalry and four companies of Sappers and Miners was despatched from India to Malta in preparation for a possible war against Imperial Russia. This was the first time that Indian troops served west of Suez. They were pieces on the global chessboard in the Great Powers’ game that revolved around the “Eastern Question” and the then ongoing slow dissolution of the grand old Ottoman Empire.¹

■ BACKGROUND

Geopolitics in the 1870s was dominated by British concerns over Russian expansion in Central Asia and their fear that Russian advances towards Afghanistan would ultimately threaten the security of their Indian empire.

In India, an aggressive military lobby led by the then Quartermaster General of the Indian Army, Colonel (later Field

1 V. Longer, *Red Coats to Olive Green: A History of the Indian Army, 1600-1974*, New Delhi, Allied Publishers, 1974, pp. 114-115, and; Byron Farwell, *Armies of the Raj - From the Great Indian Mutiny to Independence: 1858-1947*, London: Viking, 1990, p. 75.

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Marshal Lord) Frederick Roberts, was propagating the 'Forward Policy' in Afghanistan. They had their chance when the new Governor-General, Lord Edward Lytton took charge of Indian affairs in 1876. Lytton came to India with instructions to act in Afghanistan according to the Forward Policy, although opinion in London and in India was divided over this. The Foreign Secretary, Lord Salisbury had cautioned Lytton before his departure, "...You should never trust experts. If you believe the doctors, nothing is wholesome; if you believe the theologians, nothing is innocent; if you believe the soldiers, nothing is safe."²

While events of the "Great Game" were being played out along India's northern frontier, the spectre of the Anglo-Russian rivalry was also casting its shadow elsewhere further afield to the west.

The Russo-Turkish War of 1878 which saw the Russians at the gates of Constantinople, brought Britain and Russia dangerously close to war. The Treaty of San Stefano between Russia and Turkey which envisaged, *inter alia*, the creation of a new Bulgarian state

with a seaport on the Aegean Sea was entirely unacceptable to the British. Britain refused to accept the Treaty, on the grounds that it would extend Russian influence over the whole of South-Eastern Europe. When Turkey itself asserted that it had been coerced into signing the treaty, the British government mobilised its reserves, and sent them to occupy Cyprus; while simultaneously despatching a contingent of Indian troops to Malta to be held in readiness for action in Turkey against the Russians, should the need arise.³

The Indian expedition was despatched following the agreement reached between Great Britain and Turkey on 4 June 1878 which became known as 'The Cyprus Convention'. Under the terms of the treaty, Britain agreed to come to the aid of Turkey should that country be attacked.

In return, Turkey agreed to assign the island of Cyprus to be occupied and administered by the British. Accordingly, a force of British and Indian troops were to be assembled on the island of Malta. Although the Treaty was not signed until June, orders

2 Lt Gen SL Menezes, *Fidelity and Honour: The Indian Army – From the Seventeenth to the Twenty-first Century*, New Delhi: Viking, 1993, pp.195-196.

3 Official, *Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India*, Vol VI. *Expeditions Overseas*, Calcutta: Superintendent Govt Printing, India, 1911, p. 21; Lt Gen SL Menezes, *Fidelity and Honour*, p.196.

for the preparation and embarkation of the Indian contingent were issued as early as April 1878.

THE MALTA EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

The force which was despatched from India was designated the Malta Expeditionary Force, and was placed under the command of Major General J. Ross, C.B. It consisted of the following units:

Units

- M Battery, 1st Brigade, Royal Artillery
- F Battery, 2nd Brigade, Royal Artillery
- 9th Bengal Cavalry
- 1st Bombay Cavalry
- 2 Companies (Queen's Own) Madras Sappers and Miners
- 2 Companies, Bombay Sappers and Miners
- 2nd (PWO) Goorkha Regiment (The Sirmoor Rifles)
- 13th (The Shekhawattee) Bengal Native Infantry
- 31st Bengal Native Infantry
- 25th Madras Native Infantry
- 9th Bombay Native Infantry
- 26th Bombay Native Infantry

All units, with the exception of 25th Madras Native Infantry, embarked at Bombay (now Mumbai), whilst the 25th Native Infantry embarked at Cananore.

According to embarkation records, apart from weapons and stores, the actual numbers embarked were:

- European Officers 105
- Indian Officers 126
- European soldiers 342
- Indian Army soldiers 5,557
- Followers 2,340
- Total embarked 8,470

In addition, 1,384 horses and 526 ponies were also despatched to accompany the Malta Expeditionary Force.⁴

In order to bring units up to full strength, volunteers of similar class composition were called for. Those who volunteered were required to be men of good character and medically fit for field service. In addition, the regiments that provided volunteers were permitted to recruit up to their full establishment. Officers and men from the units nominated for the expedition who were on furlough were recalled and their travelling expenses paid by the State. All those embarking

⁴ Official, Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India, Vol VI., p. 24.

were required to be in possession of Regulation Field Service kit and, in addition, a free issue was made to each man consisting of various additional items of clothing and kit.⁵

The point about “class composition” in the preceding para refers to the peculiar composition of the Indian Army at that time. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the British in India formulated the “martial races” theory⁶ under which only certain ethnic or religious groups (classes) were considered eligible to bear arms on the basis of their perceived hardiness or value as soldiers due to their martial ardour and bearing. The “martial races” theory restricted recruitment to a narrow demographic base and was based upon a combination of Victorian social Darwinism and indigenous caste hierarchies and had as much to do with the ornamentalist vision and self-image of the European colonial elite as it had to do with the way they imagined their colonial subjects. By this the British determined which ethnic groups and sub-groups were competent to bear arms in the service

of the Raj. This was similar in some ways to the French system of dividing their subject people into *races guerrières* and *races non-guerrières*.

Paradoxically, this racially engendered viewpoint also generated considerable debate in England at the time regarding the desirability of employing Indian troops to fight against Britain’s European enemies, following the despatch of the Indian contingent to Malta. In his excellent article ‘Malta and The Indian Army Debate of 1878’, Michael S Healey examines this issue in detail⁷:

The selection and actual deployment of Indian troops to Europe in 1878 and, indeed, throughout the history of British rule in India was complicated by factors beyond mere bureaucratic wrangling over strategic realities and spending priorities. The politics of ‘race’ was always a consideration, usually manifested in an anxiety over European prestige and supremacy. Decision makers and observers debated

5 Alan Harfield, *The Indian Army of the Empress 1861-1903*, Turnbridge Wells: Spellmont, 1990, p.48

6 Lord Roberts, referred to previously as one of the main proponents of the ‘Forward Policy’ vis-à-vis Afghanistan and Russia, and who later became the C-in-C of the Indian Army, was one of the chief advocates of the martial races theory as well.

7 Michael S Healey, ‘Malta and The Indian Army Debate of 1878’ in *Durbar, Journal of the Military Historical Society*, Volume 32, No. 4 (2015), pp. 38-46.

the extent to which Britain should or could rely on non-European colonial soldiers to fight its wars against other European powers. In addition to political considerations, several ostensibly 'practical' factors, including adherence to the martial races theory, a lack of officers, a relatively low level of military effectiveness and the fear of the possible effects of a cold climate on Indian soldiers, limited the usefulness of Indian troops as part of the British Empire's order of battle. All of these seemingly pragmatic considerations directly related to prevailing British perceptions of race and stereotypes⁸

The Malta Expeditionary Force left India on twelve steamers which towed fifteen sailing ships provided by the Government of India. The force disembarked at Malta's Grand Harbour on 27th May 1878, with many of the units being accommodated in barracks. Some were moved to the glaxis outside Portes des Bombes while others occupied a tented

camp at the Lazaretto⁹ outside Fort Manoel. The 'G' Company (Queen's Own) Madras Sappers and Miners were immediately tasked to make new roads and provide additional cover for the troops in the camp at Mriehel, on the road to San Anton.¹⁰

Early in the morning on 30th May, the Mounted troops took part in an impressive parade at Floriana for the Governor, Sir Charles van Straubenzee GCB. The force along with the Malta Division was again paraded on 15th June for HRH the Duke of Cambridge, Commander-in-Chief of the British Army, who had arrived in Malta the previous day. All the troops in Malta were again inspected by the C-in-C on 17th June. Following the inspection the Duke spoke highly of the contingent in a very complimentary order: "Their uniform, good conduct and smartness reflect the greatest credit on all ranks. Their steadiness under arms and drill and the excellent state of their camps leave nothing to be desired."¹¹

A special performance of the Malta Garrison Races was held on 16th July

8 Ibid., p.39

9 The Lazaretto served as quarantine accommodation for ships, and cargo arriving from abroad. It also served as an isolation hospital. Indian casualties who died in Malta during WW1 were cremated in the cemetery at Lazaretto.

10 Denis A Darmanin, 'The Indian Army in Malta', in *Treasures of Malta* 42, Summer 2008, pp.68-69, https://www.academia.edu/83490870/The_Indian_Army_in_Malta accessed on 30 Aug 2024.

11 V. Longer, *Red Coats to Olive Green*, p.115.

Despite the relatively short time that the Indian troops stayed in Malta, they still left behind numerous traces of their presence on the island. These were in the form of wall-paintings or murals, depicting their dress, and other daily routines

with most events given Indian titles. One particular event was the Sowars Pony Race with participants from officers of the Indian cavalry regiments. The Indian Contingent departed from Malta for Cyprus, its original destination on 18th July, disembarking on 23rd July; its advance party of Madras Sappers and Miners having arrived at Larnaka on 16th July. During its stay at Malta, the contingent made a very good impression by its good behaviour, and was much liked by the Maltese.

In Cyprus, the troops were accommodated in temporary camps before proceeding to garrison the main towns of the island, these being Nicosia, the capital, inland; Limassol and Paphos in the south; Famagusta on the east coast; and Kyrenia on the northern coast.¹²

TRACES OF THE INDIAN SOLDIERS IN MALTA

Despite the relatively short time that the Indian troops stayed in Malta, they still left behind numerous traces of their presence on the island. These were in the form of wall-paintings or murals, depicting their dress, and other daily routines and are very well documented by Denis Darmanin in his 2008 article “The Indian Army in Malta”, on which the information in this section is largely based:

One such painting is in the old Officers Mess at the ex-Main Guard at Palace Square. The mural, which is numbered as 150 shows an Indian cavalryman wearing a blue tunic and white trousers, the uniform of the 1st Bombay Cavalry. The murals in this hall were restored by the renowned Maltese artist Chev Envin Cremona in 1942, when serving as a Sapper in the Royal

¹² Alan Harfield, *The Indian Army of the Empress*, p.49

Engineers. About five years ago, the house known as Dar San Frangisk¹³ situated at Msida Heights in Msida and belonging to the Licari family was being restored and under the various layers of whitewash and paint, another set of murals was discovered. These also showed Indian soldiers in various daily routines such as military drill, cooking, eating, sport and sentry picquets. On the lintel of the main hall were remnants of the effigy of Kali, the Hindu goddess of death, clutching of a bloodied knife and standing over a victim.¹⁴

Although the Indians were not engaged in any active operations, the contingent suffered some casualties from fever which was prevalent both in Malta and Cyprus. Two men of the Madras Sappers and Miners had died while in Malta and were buried in a military grave on the grounds of the Pembroke Rifle Ranges within the St Andrew's, St Patrick's and St George's Barracks

complex.¹⁵ The inscription of the headstone read:

IN MEMORIAM

**THIS STONE MARKS THE
PLACE OF INTERMENT OF
TWO MEN OF THE INDIAN
EXPEDITIONARY FORCE WHO
DIED 22 JULY 1878**

Denis Dermanin notes that the grave was maintained for many years by the British Forces until their departure in 1979, when the land became the property of the Maltese government. This area was later granted as a home ownership scheme which led to neglect and considerable damage being caused to the grave. Despite attempts by the local volunteer conservationist body *Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna*, the grave was destroyed and the only monument of the Victorian Indian Army in Malta and possibly even in Europe, was lost forever.¹⁶

In the event, no fighting actually occurred against Russia and the crisis subsided. The main part of the Malta

13 It is possible that this house and adjoining grounds served as an HQ, Officers' Mess or even as a place of worship.

14 Denis A Darmanin, 'The Indian Army in Malta', pp.70-71. For photographic evidence of the Indian contingent in Malta, see: Sean weir, "1st Bombay Light Cavalry Cartes-de-Visite: Malta 1878" in Durbar, Journal of the Indian Military Historical Society, Vol 31, No. 2, Summer 2014, pp. 55-59.

15 Denis A Darmanin, 'The Indian Army in Malta', p.71.

16 Ibid., p.71.; and Denis A Darmanin 'The Indian Army in Malta', in Durbar, Journal of the Military Historical Society (MHS), 192, Vol 48, May 1998, p.200



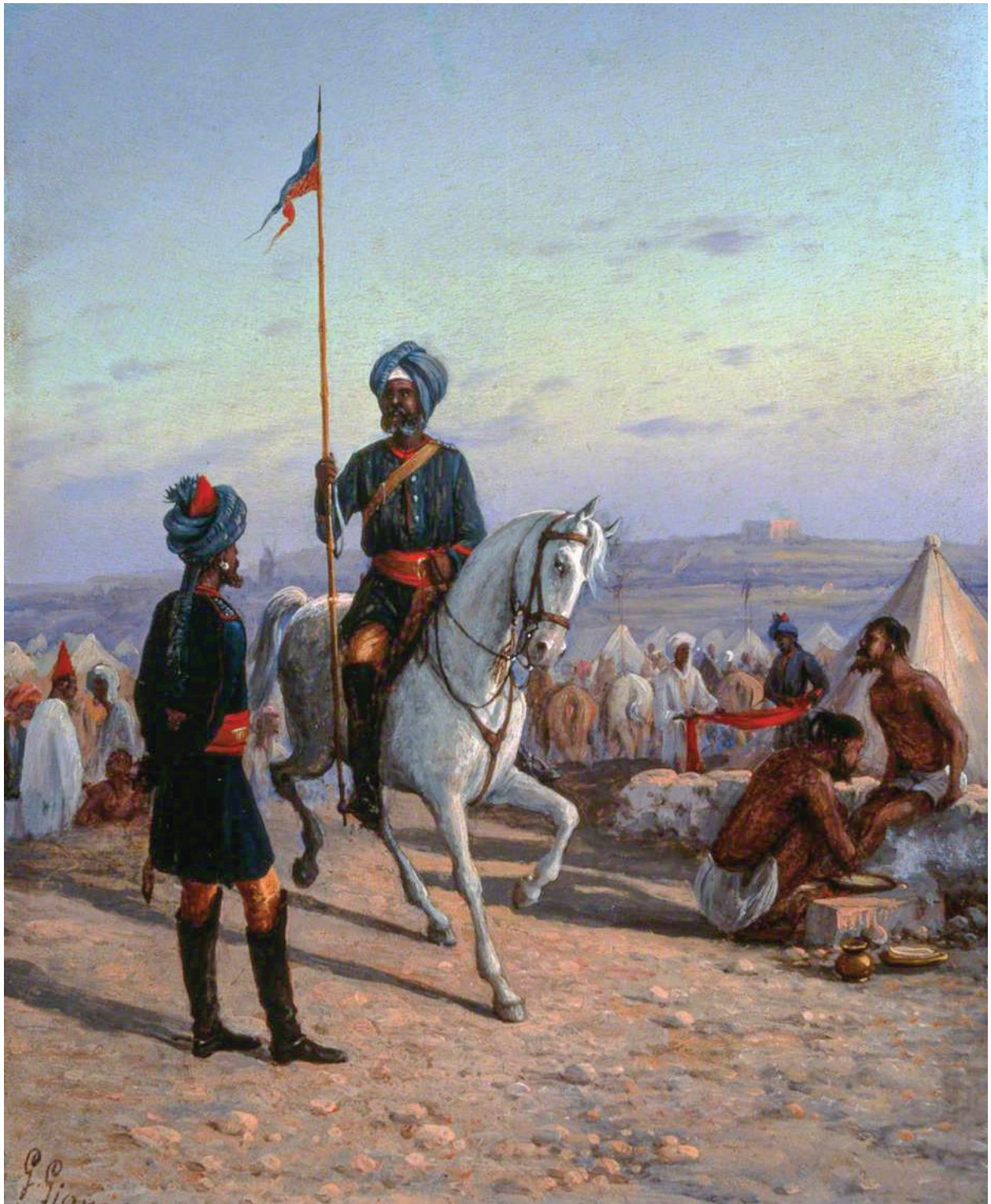
Indian Cavalrymen of the 1st Bombay Light Cavalry, photographed at Valletta, Malta, 1878



Portrait of two Cavalrymen
Indian Cavalrymen of the 1st Bombay Light Cavalry, photographed at Valletta, Malta, 1878



A bugler of the 25th Madras Native Infantry, photographed at Valletta, Malta, 1878.



10th (duke of Cambridge's Own) Bengal Lancers in Malta, 1878

Oil on millboard signed and dated lower left by Giuseppe Gianni (1829-85), 1878, 31cm h x 26 cm w.

Courtesy: National Army Museum UK, 6707-38.

Only one Squadron of the 10th Bengal Lancers was present in Malta, serving with the 9th Bengal Cavalry. These regiments had both been raised in 1857, and in 1921 were amalgamated to form the 4th Duke of Cambridge's Own Hodson's Horse (now 4 Horse)



Indian Army Camp, Malta, 1878

Oil on canvas signed and dated lower right by Giuseppe Gianni (1829-85), 1878, 42.6cm h x 66.7cm w.

Courtesy: National Army Museum, UK, 6306-42-5

Within a year of declaring war on Turkey in April 1877, the Russians had inflicted a crushing defeat on the Ottomans who had then been obliged to sign the Treaty of San Stenfano (3 March 1878), by which they recognised the independence of Montenegro, Serbia and Rumania, together with Russian control over Bulgaria, Ardahan, Kars, Batum and Bayazid. Fearful that this might be the prelude to a further increase in Russian influence in Central Asia, the British Government dispatched a force from India to Malta, consisting of two regiments of cavalry and six of infantry, with supporting artillery and sappers and miners. The troops, commanded by Major-General (later Gen Sir) John Ross (1829-1905) arrived in May 1878, and left two months later.

During the First World War, Malta served as an important hospital base, and the names listed on the Indian memorial in the Pieta Military Cemetery, Malta, reflect the fact that Indian soldiers injured/wounded on the Western Front, as well as at Gallipoli, had been treated and cremated/buried here.

Expeditionary Force re-embarked in the latter part of August from Cyprus and returned to India. The force was commended by the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Garnet Wolseley, for the good work carried out. The Sappers and Miners remained in Cyprus until the end of October and before embarking, were thanked for their work, which had been difficult and undertaken often in severe weather conditions.

MALTESE OFFICERS IN THE INDIAN ARMY

There had been, over the years, a number of Maltese officers who served in India, either with the Indian Army, or as part of the British Army in India. These have been very well documented by Denis Dermanin¹⁷ and include Capt Rinaldo Sceberras, killed on 21st December 1845 while attempting to capture a Sikh standard during the Battle of Ferozeshah; Dr Emanuel MD Bonavia, Bengal Medical Service, the first Maltese Indian Army Officer; Lt Col Alfred Montanaro, Bengal Staff Corps; Col John Mary Camilleri, Indian Staff Corps; Col Alfred J Caruana, 13th Rajputs; Lt Col Albert D Enriquez,

Bengal Staff Corps; Maj Ernest B Carbonaro, Bengal Staff Corps; Col Walter Hugh Crichton (Critien), Indian Medical Service; Lt Edward J Semini; Lt Joseph Ardoino. Apart from these officers Dermanin notes a long list of Maltese officers who served in India.¹⁸

MALTA, WW I & WW II AND INDIAN SOLDIERS

By virtue of its geostrategic location, Malta remained essential to British control of the Mediterranean in both world wars. The island is situated on the southern coast of Sicily and has been strategically important to military powers on the Mediterranean littoral since Roman times.

During the First World War, Malta served as an important hospital base, and the names listed on the Indian memorial in the Pieta Military Cemetery, Malta, reflect the fact that Indian soldiers injured/wounded on the Western Front, as well as at Gallipoli, had been treated and cremated/buried here. With 28 hospitals and convalescence camps located on the island, Malta

17 Denis A Darmanin, *Journal of the Military Historical Society*, May 1998, pp.201-202; also: Denis Darmanin, *A Maltese Officer's Death in India*, MHS, Vol 260, 2015, pp. 203-206

18 Ibid.

earned the nickname of ‘Nurse of the Mediterranean’ during the Great War. Indian casualties from Gallipoli that are mentioned here instead of at the Helles memorial indicates that they died during hospital treatment of wounds or disease in Malta rather than being killed in action in the Dardanelles. Members of various Indian Labour Corps including the 69th Garo Labour Company, with recruits from Garo Christians of the Meghalaya Hills, are also commemorated here. These Labour Companies were positioned in the south of France as a part of the extensive Indian Labour Corps deployment on the Western Front during the Great War.

Members of the Labour Corps who were wounded or otherwise became casualties were invalided to Malta for treatment, and those who died in hospital are buried here or were cremated at the Lazaretto Cemetery. Interestingly, cremation was banned on the Island after the British left but legalised in 2019. Apart from the Garo Labour Company other labour corps from Bihar and the United Provinces also have men buried here. A number

of burials from the Indian forces from both the Western Front and Gallipoli were also made at the Turkish Military Cemetery, Marsa.¹⁹

Records indicate that Hindus and Sikhs were cremated with proper funeral rites while Muslims and Christians were buried.

During World War II, Malta suffered heavily during German and Italian bombing raids in the early phases of the war. Indian personnel are named and commemorated in the Capuccini Naval Cemetery and at the Turkish Military Cemetery at Marsa. These include three Indian merchant seaman killed when their ship the SS *Burdwan* was damaged by enemy air attack in the Mediterranean in *June 1942*, and had to be sunk later by British forces.

The Malta Memorial commemorates more than 23,000 airmen from around the Commonwealth who died while on combat missions in the air war over the Mediterranean, North and West Africa, and parts of Southern Europe and who have no known grave. In total, there are 38 Indian servicemen buried/commemorated in Malta.²⁰

19 <http://www.researchingww1.co.uk/indian-memorial-at-pieta-military-cemetery> accessed 03 Sep 2024 and; <http://bit.ly/4cPnQH1> ; <https://www.cwgc.org/our-work/blog/visit-commonwealth-war-graves-in-malta/> both accessed 03 Sep 2024.

20 Acknowledgements: The USI-NAM British-Indian Military Heritage Partnership, and the National Army Museum UK, for kind permission to use the colour scans of paintings of Indian soldiers at Malta, held in their collections. I am grateful to Sean Weir for providing the 3 photographs of Indian soldiers in Malta for use in this article.



*Traditional eyed colorful boats Luzzu and Parish Church of Our Lady of Pompei
in the Harbor of Mediterranean fishing village Marsaxlokk, Malta*

Malta and India

A Shared Vision on Women, Peace and Security

Ms. Tarniem Mangion Shokry Iskandar

INTRODUCTION

Serving in India as a Maltese diplomat has provided a unique opportunity to explore the shared priorities and common values between our two countries in the field of peace, security and gender equality. While Malta and India differ in size, geography, and historical context, both nations have demonstrated a strong commitment to the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, which was initiated through United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 in 2000.²¹ This resolution acknowledged the disproportionate impact of conflict on women and girls and affirms their vital role in peacebuilding and conflict resolution processes.

This article reflects on my experiences and observations regarding the individual contributions of Malta and India to the WPS framework, while also highlighting areas of convergence, mutual learning, and potential collaboration—from multilateral engagements to grassroots dialogue.

MALTA'S ROLE IN ADVANCING WPS

As a Deputy Head of Mission at the Maltese High Commission in New

Delhi, I take pride in our country's proactive stance on WPS. Malta's commitment is enshrined in its National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security, launched in 2020.²² The NAP centres on the core pillars of participation, protection, prevention, and relief and recovery. It provides a strategic framework for ensuring that gender equality is embedded in peace and security policies both domestically and internationally.

As a member of the European Union and a strong proponent of multilateral diplomacy, Malta has also championed the EU's Strategic Approach to WPS. During our current term on the UN Security Council (2023-2024), we have actively promoted the WPS agenda.

I believe that Malta's Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York, Ambassador H.E. Vanessa Frazier eloquently captured Malta's philosophy, when she stated:

"We must invest in women not only as victims of conflict, but as agents of change and resilience".

In practical terms, Malta also contributes to the operationalisation of WPS through financial support to UN

21 United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, S/RES/1325 (2000) (UN Official Document)

22 Ministry for Foreign and European Affairs and Trade, Malta's National Action Plan on WPS (2020).

Women²³ and by promoting gender-responsive training within EU and UN peacekeeping missions.

INDIA'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO WPS

Serving in New Delhi has allowed me to observe India's impressive record in advancing women's roles in peace and security. India is one of the largest troop-contributing countries to UN peacekeeping operations and has made historic contributions to gender inclusion in this field. Most notably, in 2007, India deployed the first all-female Formed Police Unit to Liberia, which quickly became a global symbol of empowerment and security sector reform.²⁴

India's Centre for UN Peacekeeping (CUNPK) in New Delhi has played a key role in delivering gender-sensitive training for peacekeepers.²⁵ Although India has not yet adopted a formal National Action Plan on WPS, its international and regional engagements reflect a strong de facto commitment.²⁶ Through its

participation in platforms such as the Commonwealth and BRICS, India has consistently underscored gender inclusion and peacebuilding as central to sustainable development.²⁷ India has been an active supporter of UN Women.

DIPLOMATIC SYNERGY - MALTA AND INDIA ON THE GLOBAL STAGE

Our two nations have found common ground in multilateral forums when advocating for including peace and security frameworks. During the 76th and 77th sessions of the UN General Assembly, both Malta and India emphasized the importance of inclusive governance in peace processes.

In 2023, both countries expressed support for the UN Women's Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action.²⁸ This initiative, which convenes stakeholders from governments, civil society, and the private sector, underscored our shared

23 UN Women, Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action (2023).

24 Ministry of External Affairs, India, Press Releases and Briefings (2022-2024).

25 Centre for UN Peacekeeping (CUNPK), India.

26 Ministry of External Affairs, India, Press Releases and Briefings (2022-2024).

27 Commonwealth Secretariat, Women in Leadership and Peacebuilding Initiatives (2022).

28 UN Women – Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action (2023)

commitment to advancing the WPS agenda globally.

Another promising area of cooperation lies in the intersection of gender, climate, and security. As members of the International Solar Alliance (ISA), Malta and India are exploring how women's leadership in renewable energy can contribute to peacebuilding in fragile regions. This multidimensional approach offers fertile ground for bilateral initiatives.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND GRASSROOTS ENGAGEMENT

One of the most impactful aspects of WPS implementation comes from the work of civil society. In both Malta and India, NGOs play a crucial role in empowering women, promoting legal advocacy, and supporting conflict resolution. In Malta, the Women's Rights Foundation stands at the forefront of such efforts.

Grassroots organisations for women empowerment are active in India too.

There is significant potential for fostering South-South collaboration through the exchange of knowledge and experiences between Maltese and Indian women peacebuilders. I

envision the possibility of convening a Mediterranean-South Asia Women Peacebuilders' Forum under the Commonwealth or the EU-India Strategic Partnership. Such platforms could amplify the voices of women mediators, youth activists, and grassroots leaders.

CONCLUSION

Being part of Malta's representation in India has allowed me to witness the deep resonance between our nations' values and visions for a more peaceful and gender-inclusive world. Despite geographical distance and differing historical trajectories, Malta and India are united by a shared understanding that women must be at the centre of peace and security processes-not only for reasons of justice, but also for effectiveness and sustainability.

Through deeper policy dialogue, multilateral coordination, and civil society partnerships, Malta and India can continue to lead by example on the global stage. In the face of intersecting global crises-from pandemics to climate-induced displacement – the active inclusion of women in peace and security is not a choice; it is a necessity.

Historical Links between Malta and India

A Non-Exhaustive
Overview of Indo-
Maltese Relations

Mr. Ivan Vassallo

INTRODUCTION

Malta and India are certainly two very different states with very different cultures and histories. Malta is an insular microstate and member of the European Union while India is a state of sub-continental size with diverse languages, cultures and lifestyles. Yet, despite the radically different context and the distance between the two countries, there have been points of contact, especially since the 19th century, when both nations were British colonies.

In this paper we will go through these historical points of contact and links to build a non-exhaustive foundation of a history of Indo-Maltese relations.

Finally, credit should also be given to various researchers who conducted specific research on this matter amongst other, Prof. Mark Anthony Falzon, Prof. Joseph A. Pirota, Mr. Denis Darmanin, the National Archives of Malta (particularly the Chief Archivist Dr Charles Farrugia and Mr. Melvin Caruana) and many others. A word of thanks should also be given to High Commissioner H.E. Reuben Gauci for the trust and support given, Ambassador Trigunayat, the Indian Council for World Affairs and Deputy Head of Mission Tarniem Mangion

Iskandar for the assistance and patience in the writing of this paper.

THE FORTRESS COLONY AND THE JEWEL IN THE CROWN OF EMPIRE – RINALDO SCEBERRAS AND EMANUEL BONAVIA.

When Malta became a British colony, the military role of Malta became a priority in Britain's military policy. The British military presence on the island will inevitably take an overarching presence in the economic life of Malta becoming the main employer even after Independence well into 1979 when the British military left Malta. This especially because the British had found Malta which was devastated by two years of insurrection against French rule and decimated by plague in 1813.

In this context members of prominent families in Malta would take the opportunity to work in the British military throughout the Empire. Amongst the first contacts between India and Malta, there were the presence of two Maltese in the British army, namely: Rinaldo Sceberras and Emanuele Bonavia.

Members of prominent families in Malta would take the opportunity to work in the British military throughout the Empire. Amongst the first contacts between India and Malta, there were the presence of two Maltese in the British army, namely: Rinaldo Sceberras and Emanuele Bonavia.

The first is Rinaldo Sceberras, the son of Camillo Sceberras, a Maltese nobleman and supporter of the French revolutionary army. Camillo, who lived in exile in Milan as a cavalry officer for Napoleon's Kingdom of Italy for most of his life, would only return to Malta after Napoleon's defeat and exile to Saint Helena. He would become an active liberal campaigner for Malta's constitutional development to autonomy (which will be achieved by his grandson Sir Filippo Sceberras) and press freedom which will be achieved in 1836.

Rinaldo, despite his father's political background, managed to carve out a career himself in the British Army as noted by researcher Denis Darmanin.²⁹ His career took him from the Ionian Islands (in modern-day Greece) to Ireland and then to Australia. India

however would be the climax and bring his career to an untimely end in the Battle of Ferozeshah (modern day Ferozepur) during Anglo-Sikh war of 1845-48. Mr. Denis Darmanin notes that Rinaldo was the very first of the British soldiers to have captured the standard of the Sikh army and was killed almost immediately.

Darmanin quotes an eyewitness of the battle stating:

"I saw with surprise a large body of Sikhs all clad in chain armour, rise from the ground and attack our people hand to hand. Captain Sceberras seized the [Sikh] standard and immediately fell. Captain Best next rushed to it but was also cut down. Sergeant Browne, a young married man next took it and shared a similar fate. The touch of that standard

²⁹ <https://timesofmalta.com/article/A-Maltese-officer-s-death-in-India.548394>



A photograph of Dr Bonavia from the J. Paul Getty Museum

seemed fatal but no sooner was it down, than another seized it....”³⁰

The captured standard now stands in the Lichfield Cathedral in the North Midlands. A monument to Sceberras still stands and can be admired at the Upper Barracca Gardens in Valletta.

The second person is Emmanuele Bonavia. Bonavia was a son of a prominent Maltese family which made a name for themselves during British rule. As noted in the India Office list of 1893 Emmanuele Bonavia was both a member of the British Army and a medical doctor and surgeon.

He had participated in the Siege of Lucknow and would have a career in the medical and cultural ervation of Uttar Pradesh. In fact, Dr Bonavia would become the first “superintendent of museum, observatory, and agrihorticultural society’s garden.”³¹ Furthermore he would become “principal of medical school at Balrampur”³² and superintendent of prisons in Oudh and Faizabad.³³

Dr Bonavia would also engage in the writing of scientific publications such as a study on “The Cultivated Oranges and Lemons of India and Ceylon” (1838) and “Studies in the evolution of animals” (1895). Correspondence of Bonavia is also registered with eminent scientist and social activists such as Charles Darwin³⁴ and Allan Octavian Hume, the latter of which would be together with Annie Besant amongst the main British advocates for Indian Home Rule.

THE INDIAN ARMY IN MALTA

The British Empire got advantage of the steady decline of the Ottoman Empire and the volatile situation in the Eastern Mediterranean. As a result of the Great Eastern Crisis, the British gained administrative control of Cyprus whilst remaining nominally an Ottoman territory until the First World War. As a result, the British gained control of all major choke holds and stepping stones in the Mediterranean, Gibraltar, Malta, the Suez Canal and Cyprus.

30 Ibid

31 H.M. Stationery Office, The India Office List, (India 1893) 207

32 Ibid

33 Ibid

34 https://darwin-online.org.uk/converted/Ancillary/1868_Bonavia_A2887.html



Engraving from *The Graphic Newspaper* showing Indian soldiers and Maltese women in Valletta.

To prepare the administration for this new addition to the British Empire, the British brought several regiments from India which had to stop over for some months in Malta between May and July 1878. Military historian Denis Darmanin has written extensively of this Indian presence in Malta both in newspaper articles on the Times of Malta and other publications. He notes that regiments of the “Malta Expeditionary force” from all over India were brought for a total of 8023 persons in two detachments.³⁵ Regiments included:

“25th Madras Native Infantry, 31st Bengal Native Infantry, Gorkha Regiment (or The Sirmoor Rifles), Bengal 13th The Shekhawatee, Bengal Native Infantry and towing Oriflamme (3rd and 5th Companies, Bombay Sappers and Miners.”³⁶

Darmanin also notes that the colourful presence of the Indian regiments in Malta were preserved in various artistic forms. Amongst these he notes that there is a mural of “an Indian cavalry *Sowar*” in the former Officers Mess of the Main Guard which is now within

the office of the Attorney General of Malta.³⁷ Darmanin also mentions a number of work by Italian artist Girolamo Gianni who depicted the lives of the Indian troops in Malta and were published on *The Illustrated London News* and *The Graphic*.

A few of these soldiers however died in Malta before they could arrive to Cyprus. Darmanin notes that a grave was erected on the grounds of the former Rifle Ranges in the then Pembroke Encampment, regrettably these were removed to pave way for the construction of residential areas in the 1980-90s.


THE SINDHI COMMUNITY IN MALTA

An Indian presence which characterised Malta in the late 19th and early 20th century was the Sindhi Community. Most of them were from Hyderabad, Sind, and came to Malta before the partition of the British Raj into India and Pakistan. Prof. Mark Anthony Falzon from the University of Malta has recently published a study on the Sindhis and their prowess in

35 Denis Darmanin, Denis A Darmanin reminds us that this year happens to be the 130th anniversary of the date when Indian soldiers of the British Raj first set foot on Malta, *Treasures of Malta*, No.42 – Summer 2008, volume 14, issue 3

36 Ibid

37 Denis Darmanin, *British Army Murals At The Main Guard*, (Heritage Malta, 2025)



An Indian presence which characterised Malta in the late 19th and early 20th century was the Sindhi Community. Most of them were from Hyderabad, Sind, and came to Malta before the partition of the British Raj into India and Pakistan.

business and commerce titled ‘The Sindhis. Selling Anything, Anywhere’.

In his study, Prof. Falzon notes that amongst the earlier records of the Sindhi community in Malta goes back to 1887. This was a request to the colonial authorities by the Pohoomull Brothers, ‘for the release from customs of “one case containing Oriental goods and some fancy weapons as knives and daggers.”’³⁸ Falzon notes that the Sindhi companies in Malta would work mainly as ‘an import-export business’³⁹ and in this respect Malta was an attraction to the Sindhis, especially after the opening of the Suez Canal.

In this respect in the National Archives of Malta one can find a number of Sindhi passport applications in Malta from the colonial period. Most of the applicants hailed from Hyderabad which is now outside the Republic of India. A quick search in at the archives’ online database corroborates Prof Falzon’s statement whereby Malta would be a base for various travels in the Mediterranean and beyond.⁴⁰

One particular passport application⁴¹ which I found was of a 48 year old

businessman called Ghaushandas Dharmdas who worked in Malta as a businessman. The passport application was signed by Augusto Bartolo on the 31st July 1915, Bartolo would become one of the leading colonialist politicians and a future judge in the Maltese courts. The application was requesting a passport for the applicant to travel back to India through Alexandria, Egypt. Another document related to the same Mr. Dharmdas was a ‘document of identity’ issued earlier on at the beginning of 1915 and which was stamped by the Italian consulate in Mumbai to allow him to visit Italy during his business trip in Malta between April and July of the same year.

These documents shed a light on the extent of the commercial activity of this community in Malta. Falzon goes on to expand the network of these merchants in Malta where in Valletta, the:

‘... best shops were located in Strada Reale (now Republic Street) ... There were secondary shops on the thoroughfares that connected Strada Reale to the harbour, and especially in

38 Falzon, 38-39

39 Falzon, 39

40 Falzon, 38

41 NAM

997

Date



DECLARATION TO BE MADE BY APPLICANT FOR PASSPORT.

I, the Undersigned, (a) Valletta, 24 July 1915, hereby declare that I am at present residing at Valletta, St. Paul's

For a Male or Female or Widow (to be struck out in other cases). Particulars of Applicant's birth to follow. (b) British-born subject having been born at Hydrabad, India on the 25th day of August 1817.

and not having lost the status of British Subject (how acquired), and I hereby apply for a Passport for the purpose of travelling to India, via Alexandria.

I further declare that I have no Passport already in my possession (if, other than that which I annex hereto for cancellation).

AND I, the Undersigned, (c) St. Andrew's, Valletta hereby declare that to the best of my personal knowledge and belief the above made Declaration of the said Shankar Churn Das is true, and that I can from my personal knowledge of him vouch him as a fit and proper person to receive a Passport.

Signed August Balth

7 Declaration of Applicant, Age 44 years, Profession Business, Height 5 feet 7 inches, Eyes dark-brown, Nose straight, aquiline, Mouth medium, Chin rather pointed, Colour of Hair grey, Complexion fair, Any special peculiarities teeth out, 2 or 3 appear on the tongue, Name in full Shankar Churn Das, Address St. Andrew's, Valletta, Mr. Shankar Churn Das, Mrs. Shankar Churn Das, M.D.



IMPORTANT

Applicants and persons recommending them are warned that should any of the statements contained in their respective applications prove to be untrue, they will render themselves liable to prosecution.

Passport application of Indian British Subject in Malta. Courtesy National Archives of Malta.

997

Form
Application for certificate of identity.

- 1. Name of applicant Ghanshamdas.
- 2. Father's name and caste Dharmdas, Hindu.
- 3. Residence Hyderabad Sind.
- 4. Age of applicant. 46 years
- 5. Nationality of applicant British Indian Subject by birth.
- 6. Social and pecuniary status of
of father(or guardian) His brother is a Sind work mer-
chant.
- 7. Date of probable departure of
applicant from India 8th April 1915
- 8. Object of applicant's visit to For trade.
Malta

(Signature of applicant)

Ghanshamdas
Ghanshamdas



ansuf
Collector and District Magistrate,
Hyderabad(Sind).



1915.



Visto al R^o Consolato d'Italia.

Bombay 8 Aprile 1915
Il R^o Console Reggente
[Signature]

Certificate of Identity of Indian British subject endorsed by the Italian Consulate in Mumbai, Courtesy National Archives of Malta

Another point of convergence between Malta and India is the post First World War grievances which riddled various parts of the British Empire.

The Amritsar Massacre and the Sette Giugno riots, though separated by three months and having different roots, would end up with similar deadly over-reactions from the British military.

places such as Ta' Liesse, where most travellers came ashore.⁴²

Following independence, the community would keep around 45 families living fully integrated within the Maltese context. Furthermore, following Idi Amin's expulsion of the Indian Community, Malta was one of the main stopovers for these Sindhis. This could certainly be an attraction for prospective history students studying the history of the Indian diaspora.

THE AMRITSAR MASSACRE AND THE SETTE GIUGNO

Another point of convergence between Malta and India is the post First World War grievances which riddled various parts of the British Empire. This included other tumultuous events such as Ireland's War of Independence and the Egyptian revolution. Prof. Joseph Pirotta in his study "1919 Consequences of Imperial Conceit. Four case studies." Pirotta notes the heavy-handedness towards subject people's concerns by the British Military and Administration following victory in the First World War. The Amritsar Massacre and the Sette Giugno riots, though separated

by three months and having different roots, would end up with similar deadly over-reactions from the British military.

One must note that Malta and India had a similar constitutional status at the time. In the former case the 1887 constitution which allowed elected members in the Council of Government had been withdrawn in 1903 following agitation caused by administrative overreach by local Imperialist administrator (and Maltese nobleman) Sir Gerald Strickland-Bologna. On the other hand, Pirotta notes how the Indian political class, then under direct British Administration had been attracted to the British cause in 1917 by Edwin Montagu (then Secretary of State for India) with the promise of 'the gradual development of self-governing institutions, with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible government in India ...'⁴³

However, the hopes of Home Rule in the aftermath of the First World War were promptly dashed with the introduction of the Rowlatt Act. The Act enabled the arbitrary arrest of Indian subjects suspected of seditious activities. Pirotta notes that the act

42 Falzon, 40

43 Pirotta, 231

allowed censorship and the arrest of large numbers of suspects without trial in Punjab and Bengal.⁴⁴ Peaceful protests against the arbitrary arrests in Amritsar would lead to the Jallianwala Bagh massacre which protests brought into the forefront Mahatma Gandhi and other future leaders which brought about India's independence three decades later.

In his study Pirotta notes that the Maltese islands at the end of the First World War were:

“... gripped by the Spanish influenza pandemic and deep disappointment that scarcity, high prices and inedible bread were not in the past, as well as fear that thousands of Admiralty and War Office employees would be redundant without industries to absorb them.”⁴⁵

These deep-rooted concerns together with the convening of a National Assembly to discuss a proposal for Malta's self-government would quickly deteriorate into riots. The worker's anger was expressed against the pro-colonial wheat merchants who were considered by the crowd to be profiteering on the Maltese people's

plight. This would lead to the shooting by British soldiers opening fire on the protesters killing four and with a further two dying the following days.

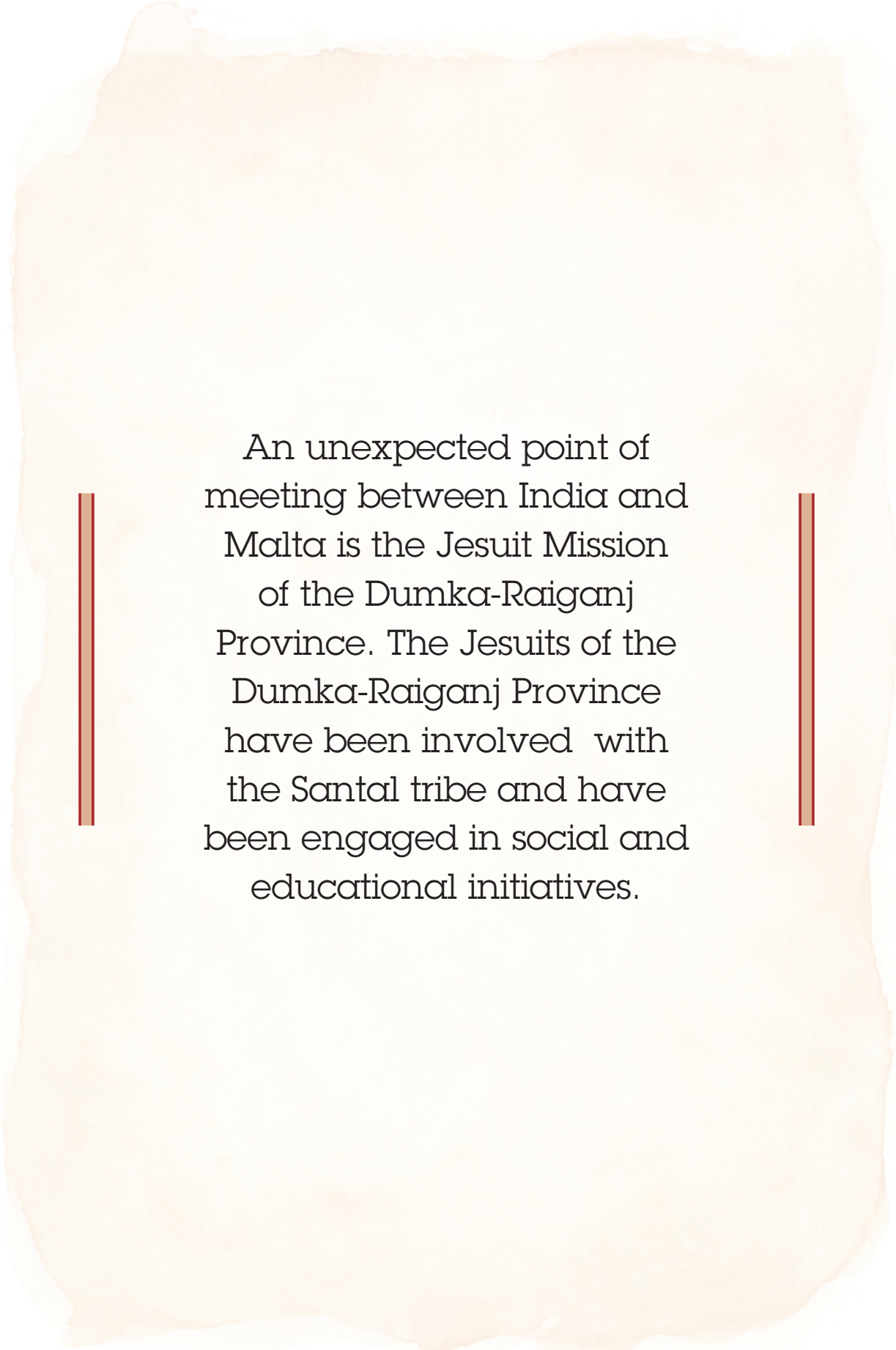
The incident would lead the new Governor to take the initiative to increase the expenditure in employment and subsidies for the Maltese. However, following pressure from London to avoid further social expenditure in Malta, Home Rule was granted in 1921 with the enactment of a constitution which allowed elections with limited male suffrage and a bicameral parliamentary system.

RUZAR BRIFFA – MALTESE POET AND A DOCTOR IN INDIA

Ruzar Briffa was a Maltese dermatologist and poet. He is mainly known for his support to the strengthening of the Maltese Language. He qualified as a doctor in 1931 and proceeded to specialise the study of skin diseases. In 1938, he was appointed Leprosy Control Officer in Malta, and gained experience in the treatment of leprosy by studying at the

44 Pirotta, 232

45 Pirotta, 495-496



An unexpected point of meeting between India and Malta is the Jesuit Mission of the Dumka-Raiganj Province. The Jesuits of the Dumka-Raiganj Province have been involved with the Santal tribe and have been engaged in social and educational initiatives.

Calcutta School of Tropical Medicine and visiting various leprosaria in India. Despite his fame is linked to the poem “Jum ir-rebh” whereby he remembered the spontaneous singing of Malta’s national anthem after it was not sung in an international football game, two poems connected to his stay in India survive, namely; “Anonima” a romantic poem to his future wife who were living on two separate continents at the time and “Fl-Indja” which relates to the dismay at the plight of Indian leprosy patients.

THE JESUIT SANTAL MISSION⁴⁶

An unexpected point of meeting between India and Malta is the Jesuit Mission of the Dumka-Raiganj Province. The Jesuits of the Dumka-Raiganj Province have been involved with the Santal tribe and have been engaged in social and educational initiatives.

Fr. Anthony Debono S.J. from Rabat in Gozo, Malta was one of the pioneers of the Santal Mission of the Society of Jesus in Dumka-Raiganj Province together with other founders were Father Benjamin Cauchi S.J., Fr. Grech

Cumbo S.J. and Fr. Giuseppe Cordaro S.J.. Fr Debono arrived in India just a year after taking up his vows and engaged in learning the Santal language in Dinajpur.

Fr. P. A. Chacko, SJ notes that Fr Debono’s ‘familiarity with the Santali language was an easy tool to attract the local community.’ Fr. Debono welcomed the tribes people with a generous heart. In the process, he had a discerning eye to delve into their social and economic concerns.

This led to further Maltese Jesuits to travel and settle in Dumka and open schools in the diocese. In this respect up to a few years ago two Maltese born Jesuits still lived in the mission Fr Joseph Gauci Sacco S.J. (who passed away in June 2023) and Fr Paul Aquilina S.J., together with Ms. Marcette Buttigieg and a Maltese nun Sr Emanuel Borg.

On 14 February 2023, High Commissioner of Malta to India H.E. Reuben Gauci travelled from New Delhi to Majlispur, West Bengal in order to be present for the unveiling of a commemorative monument to Fr. Anthony Debono S.J.

⁴⁶ <https://www.jesuits.global/2023/02/13/missionary-of-the-santal-tribes-fr-anthony-debono/>



High Commissioner Gauci presiding the inauguration to the monument to Fr Debono SJ.

THE AFTERMATH OF INDEPENDENCE

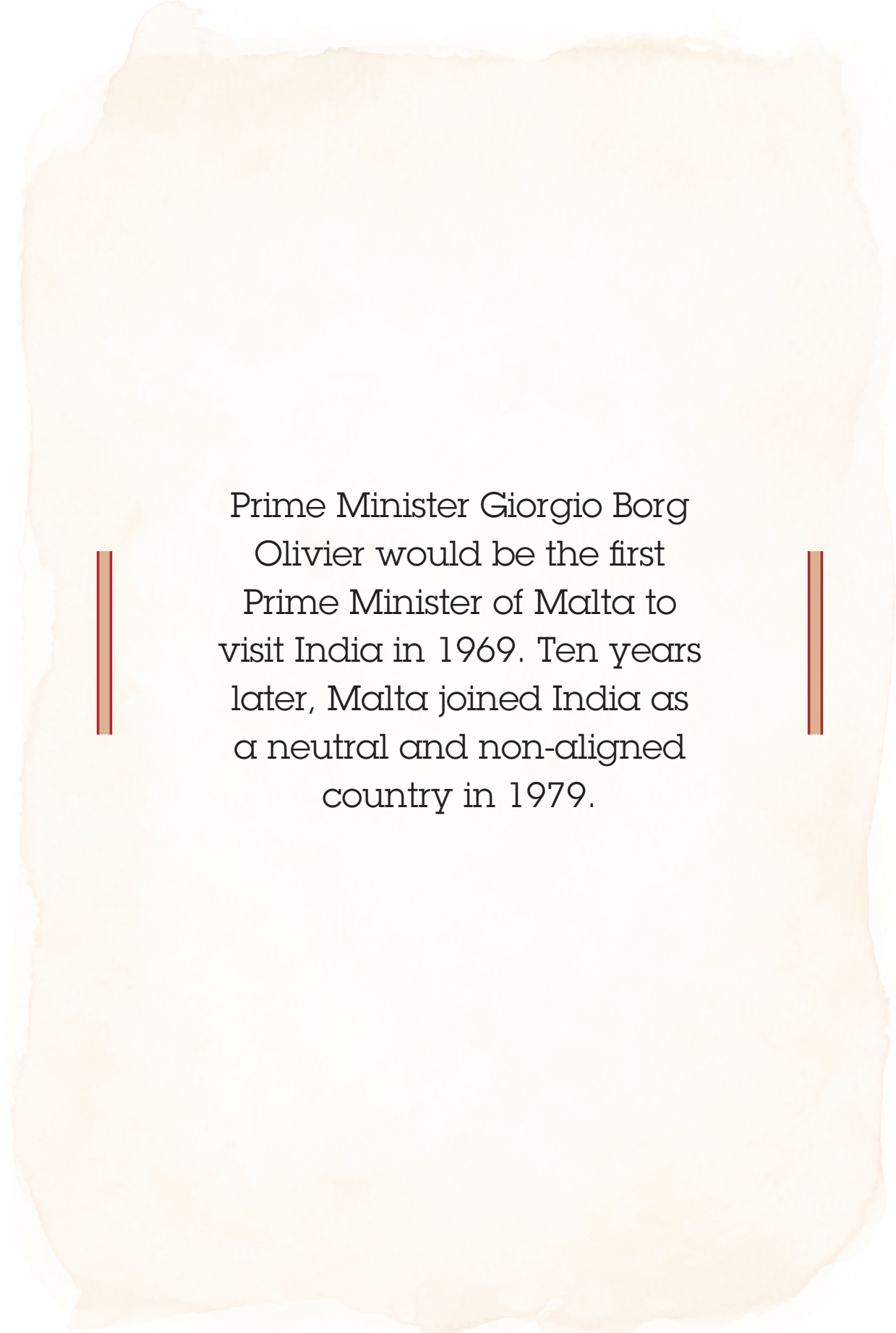
Following Malta's independence, diplomatic relations between Malta and India started in earnest. Prime Minister Giorgio Borg Olivier would be

the first Prime Minister of Malta to visit India in 1969. Ten years later, Malta joined India as a neutral and non-aligned country in 1979.

Whilst there were no Maltese diplomatic missions in India opened before the early 2000s, India was



Courtesy Meeting of the Indian High Commissioner with President Anton Buttigieg (Courtesy National Archives of Malta)



Prime Minister Giorgio Borg
Olivier would be the first
Prime Minister of Malta to
visit India in 1969. Ten years
later, Malta joined India as
a neutral and non-aligned
country in 1979.



Occasion photo on the signing of Malta's membership to the International Solar Alliance.

accredited from its Embassy in Libya. Nowadays there are High Commissions in both countries ensuring direct diplomatic connection between the two countries.

Since then, Malta and India have agreed on 10 bilateral agreements. These agreements include political, cultural, economic, educational and tourism cooperation. Diplomatic missions were opened in both countries and are cooperating in multilateral initiatives such as the United Nations, and the International Solar Alliance.

CONCLUSION

Despite the start of actual historical connections between Malta and India are almost 200 years old these are rich and offer a kaleidoscope for both a diplomat and a historian to further research on such connections. Greater knowledge of these connections which brought Malta and India together will certainly be the nucleus to reassess and give further impetus to explore and build upon bilateral political and cultural cooperation between the two countries.

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Citadel in Victoria city (Rabat) - Capital of Gozo island. Malta



Current Trends in India–Malta Economic Ties

Dr. Himani Pant



The economic pillar has played an important role in contributing towards the steady growth of India-Malta bilateral relations over the years. As the fastest growing economy in the world, India offers several opportunities for Malta. At the same time, Malta has been classified as an advanced economy by the International Monetary Fund, which makes it an important economic partner for India. In addition, Malta is a member of the European Union (EU) and has supported the case for India-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA), the finalization of which would also have positive implications for India-Malta bilateral ties. Malta has been an active participant in the Heads of Missions (HOMs) meetings of the EU on the deliberations on the scope of FTA as well as India-EU joint action plans.

In addition, owing to its strategic location in the Mediterranean, Malta is an important point for India's engagement in the region. India and Malta already have MoUs on (i) Maritime Cooperation between Ministry of Shipping, India and Ministry of Transport, Infrastructure and Capital Projects, Malta; (ii) Mutual cooperation between the Foreign Service Institute, India and The Mediterranean Academy

of Diplomatic Studies, University of Malta; and (iii) Tourism Cooperation between India and Malta.

India and Malta currently have several bilateral agreements in place spanning maritime, taxation, tourism, ICT, among others. Recent diplomatic engagements between India and Malta highlight the initiatives to expand the scope of economic engagement further. For instance, a large business delegation from Malta attended the Vibrant Gujarat Summit on 18-20 January 2019. Former Maltese Prime Minister Joseph Muscat also met Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the margins of the Summit.

Similarly, Indian Minister of State (MoS) for External Affairs and Culture of India, Meenakshi Lekhi visited Malta in August 2022. During her visit to Malta (21-23 August), MoS Lekhi met the President of Malta George Vella, Foreign Minister Ian Borg, Tourism Minister Clayton Bartolo, among others. The discussions centered on issues of trade and investment, cooperation in the maritime domain, solar energy, culture, films and tourism. During her visit, MoS Lekhi also

	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
India's Exports	229.52	208.20	317.04	477.22	312.76	496.11
India's Imports	43.76	121.90	23.70	22.88	51.35	35.68
Total Trade	273.28	330.10	340.75	500.11	364.10	531.79

Source: Department of Commerce; Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India

participated in the annual cultural festival in Dingli.⁴⁷

In February 2023, Minister for the Economy, European Funds and Lands of Malta Hon Silvio Schembri visited New Delhi to attend the first Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) Europe and India Sustainability Conclave.

India and Malta meet regularly within the ambit of Foreign Office Consultations (FOC). FOC is an important mechanism for reviewing bilateral ties and exchanging views on global and regional issues. The last (3rd) round was held on 29 September 2023 in New Delhi. It was co-chaired by Shri Sanjay Verma, then Secretary (West), Ministry of External Affairs and H.E Mr. Christopher Cutajar, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs and Trade, Malta. During the consultations, both sides

deliberated on expanding the scope of cooperation in “sectors such as trade and investments, consular, migration, skill development, health & pharma sector and cultural linkages”.⁴⁸ H.E. Christopher Cutajar participated in the 2nd Edition of the Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) Europe and India Sustainability Conclave.

Trade and economic ties between the two countries have grown at a modest yet consistent pace over the years, estimating about \$531.79 million in 2023-24. in US\$ Millions)

Main items of exports from India to Malta include pharmaceutical, petroleum goods, organic chemicals, ceramic products, wheat, etc. Main imports from Malta to India include organic and inorganic chemicals, recovered paper, integrated circuits, electronic goods, electrical machinery, etc. Indian companies

47 Visit of Minister of State for External Affairs Smt. Meenakashi Lekhi to Norway, Iceland and Malta (August 16-23, 2022 24 August 2022,)https://hcmalta.gov.in/news_letter_detail/?id=157

48 Ministry of External Affairs, 3rd round of Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) between India and Malta September 29, 2023, https://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/37152/3rd_round_of_Foreign_Office_Consultations_FOC_between_India_and_Malta

The use of English language in Malta has also facilitated corporate contacts as well as people to people exchanges. Indian companies find it easier to operate in Malta. Similarly, the use of English language has also been a major factor attracting Indian students going overseas for higher studies.

have made substantial investments in the pharmaceutical sector, creating knowledge-based jobs. Malta is a freight transit shipment point, financial centre and ICT and R&D hub, offering investment scope for Indian companies. The Maltese side appreciated the contribution of the 112 Indian companies present in Malta, mainly in the pharmaceuticals and ICT sectors.

The use of English language in Malta has also facilitated corporate contacts as well as people to people exchanges. Indian companies find it easier to operate in Malta. Similarly, the use of English language has also been a major factor attracting Indian students going overseas for higher studies. In addition to the language factor, affordable cost of living, lower fees, post study work opportunities/

permits, etc. have proved instrumental in affecting choices of Indian students going to Europe for higher education.⁴⁹ Currently, 112 Indian companies operate in Malta, with a substantial presence in the pharmaceutical industry. A global Indian pharmaceutical company Aurobindo Pharma Ltd has invested €16 million and set up a manufacturing plant in Hal Far, Malta that gives employment to over a hundred locals in Malta and helps train Pharmacy students at the University of Malta. Another Indian global generic medicines company, Torrent Pharmaceuticals, is investing €22 million in a new plant in Malta creating more jobs for locals. The Maltese government has also been encouraging Indian firms to set up business in Malta. In order to attract Indian businesses Malta has

49 https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/nri/study/indian-students-turn-to-europe-for-higher-education-and-better-work-opportunities/articleshow/121260526.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

offered various incentives to Indian companies. Malta has also signed a bilateral trade agreement with the Indian government, for the avoidance of double taxation.

Steady growth of economic relations between India and Malta is also attributed to the presence of the Indian Diaspora, which has grown rapidly in recent years. As members of the Commonwealth, the people-to-people ties between the two countries pre-date Indian and Maltese independence. The Indians who travelled to Malta towards the end of the 19th Century established famous textiles and clothing stores.

This includes mainly the Sindhi community. Indian Diaspora in Malta is estimated to be around 18000, including persons of Indian origin. Malta has issued work permits to Indian citizens since 2006. Malta also has a “Citizen by Investment” plan, which is Malta’s Individual Investor Programme as well as the Malta Residence and Visa Programme, which has attracted many Indians. Malta is also among a leading destination for Bollywood film shoots as well as destination weddings for Indians.

These are a number of Indian workers who form the largest cohort of foreign workers in Malta. Acknowledged

for their skills’ set and hard work, these workers have made significant contributions to the growth of the Maltese economy. In addition to health care sector, the other sectors employing Indians include Hospitality Industry, Construction sector, IT sector and related services. Several Indian Associations like Malta Malayalee Association, Malta Tamil Association, Bengali Association Malta, Gujarati Association and Navodaya Sanatan Group have been formed in recent years.

■ CONCLUSION

India is the fastest growing economy in the world. Malta is classified as an advanced economy by the IMF. The economies of Malta and India are technology-based and share several complementarities. Trade relations between the two countries have been growing at a modest yet steady pace, especially in the last few years. In terms of future engagement, collaborations in the digital technologies such as Fintech (including e-payments which is a success story in India); healthcare including pharma to source affordable generic drugs; education, tourism, film production, Information and Communication Technology (ICT),

shipping, financial services, carry promising prospects.

Both countries could also explore the migration and mobility agreement to enhance future contacts, including smooth mobility of professionals

on both sides. Malta being in the Mediterranean Sea, is a global tourist destination that requires several related services to develop the sector. There is an opportunity to cooperate further with India in this domain.



Malta and
the Santal Tribe
of India

A Hundred Year Mission

Ms. Marcette Buttigieg



I first set foot in Santal Parganas – which the Santal Adivasis refer to as Sona Disom – the Golden Land – in 1981. Situated at the east end of Jharkhand, bordering with West Bengal, Santal Parganas is bordered on the west side by the hills of the Rajmahal Range and by the holy river Ganges to the north, continuing its flow on the eastern side through the district of Murshidabad of West Bengal, which forms the eastern and southern border of Santal Parganas. Since my school days, especially in High School, I had listened to stories about the Maltese Jesuits who were working among the Santal Adivasis. Occasionally one or other of these missionaries would visit our school, or even our homes, and give us even more vivid accounts of their exploits, and gain our attention and admiration writing our names in Devanagiri script!!

What I saw during that first visit filled me with admiration for what this dedicated group of Maltese had done in the land of the Santals and what they had contributed to the development of this people.

From the beginnings of their activity in 1925 in Majlispur village in the erstwhile Dinajpur district of West

Bengal, right through the many years of their involvement, the aim of these Maltese Jesuits was the well being of the Santal people, building up their dignity and restoring their rights, so as the Santal people may find their rightful place in the mosaic of the Indian nation.

Fr. Anthony Debono S.J. started his work by defending the rights of Santals for the land they had rented from the Zamindars. He took up lawsuits, and at times paid rent dues from his own limited resources to stop the exploitation of the simple Adivasis by the hitherto mighty, invincible landlords. The favourable judgements of the courts helped to reduce the fear of the Santals, who gradually began to understand that they too had rights.

This 'building' up of a people implied a great investment of effort from the Maltese. They shared the simple living conditions of the Santals, staying in mud houses roofed with thatch, and daily ate rice and vegetables with meat or fish on the weekly market days. Beyond this immediate, practical closeness, they understood that walking with a people entailed understanding them learning their culture and their language, which was an essential tool for reaching

the heart of the Santal people. All the Maltese who came to work among the Santals learned Santali and were able to communicate effectively with the people, with some of them becoming very proficient in the language.

Fr. Joseph Portelli S.J. came to India with the second group of Maltese / Sicilian Jesuits in 1927 and lived and worked in India for 59 years. Working alongside the first pioneer Fr. Debono, Fr Portelli fell in love with the Santals and their language. He mastered Santali beautifully and during his studies for his priesthood he would spend much time translating material into the Santali language. In 1946 he started a monthly publication in Santali – Marsaltabon – Our Light – which continued to be published for over 65 years. This encouraged Santals to write small articles in their own language about current affairs, cultural matters and religious articles also.

Fr. Calleja Gera S.J., who lived in India from 1934 to 1987, mastered the language and would deliver talks in such beautiful Santali, that Santals from all neighbouring villages – Christians and non-Christians – would come to attend functions at which he would speak to listen to his highly cultured Santali. And his love for the

language, a reflection of his love for the people, was so deep, that up to his last years he kept a notebook in which he wrote new Santali words that he would pick up during his interaction with the people.

Fr. George Muscat S.J., who lived in India from 1952 to his death in 2005, mastered the three languages spoken in the area, Santali, Hindi and Bengali. And became a master teacher of Santali to generations of men and women who came to work in the area: over 20 years he taught Santali to over 800 persons from different parts of India who worked among the Santal people. His one-month crash course in Santali was original, entertaining and effective. He wrote a New Approach to Santali, as a means of teaching and learning the language. He wrote short 10-minute plays for radio in Santali which served as starters to discussions about various aspects of the Santal culture.

The attention given to Santali by the Maltese Jesuits and the use of Santali in the liturgy have contributed to deepening the love of the Santal people for their own language, to ensure its use and development, as an essential part of their identity.

The other highly significant contribution to the development of

The aim of the Maltese was to provide primary education to the largest number of children possible, convinced that literacy was an essential requirement for development.

the Santal people was education. From the late 1920's onwards, the Maltese opened schools in every place where they settled, starting from Majlispur village. This was followed by schools in Kasturi, then Monglapara in Pakur area. Then came Guhiajori school for boys, a school in Tinpahar in 1935 followed by a school for girls at Dudhani. The Maltese Missionaries invited Indian Sisters to join them in their education efforts so as to ensure that girls also would go to school, since the Sisters would start and look after the boarding hostels for girls. As the years passed some schools were totally entrusted to Sisters so that the education work would expand.

The aim of the Maltese was to provide primary education to the largest number of children possible, convinced that literacy was an essential requirement for development. So they started small village schools wherever possible, as well as strengthening the Middle schools in the few mission stations, where the children coming

from the village schools would continue their education. Eventually some schools were upgraded up to Matriculation level, starting in 1947 with the school in Guhiajori. By 1950 the Maltese Jesuits were running one High School, 2 Middle schools and 40 village schools.

These education initiatives taken ahead by the relatively small group of Maltese Jesuits entailed a considerable financial investment. As the years passed and the work of the Santal Mission became better known in Malta, the Maltese people responded generously – as always – to the requests for financial assistance for the benefit of the underprivileged. I remember the distribution of 6 x 4 inch pieces of paper with a rudimentary outline of a building, broken up into small squares, each one of which corresponded to 1 penny (in the days before Malta's Independence) which we were encouraged to collect, to a total of two and six (2 shillings 6 pence) and then donate for a school building. Later on

came the requests for sponsorships of students for their studies through to High School up to Matric. And again the Maltese responded generously.

The major contribution of the roughly 70 Maltese who worked in the Santal Mission over a period of 100 years has been in the line of preservation and enhancement of Santali culture and language and in the field of education. And thousands of Santal children have been educated, some went on to higher studies and several occupy significant posts in the Government Administration and Civil Services. A noteworthy achievement for a people who were considered capable of meeting their needs only through cultivation work.

In more recent years a few other Maltese have worked among the Santal people, in their Santal Parganas homeland and also beyond, in the State of Odisha. There were two Maltese Community Social Workers who spent over a year in Santal Parganas, building up the skills of Indian Heads of schools and Directors of socio-pastoral initiatives in the field of social service. They also developed a comprehensive course for training 'barefoot' social workers and thus equipped a considerable number of Santal villagers with these skills.

I myself got engaged in Community Health Work in the 80's. In spite of the Alma Ata Declaration of 1978, the only health facilities in the whole of Maheshpur Block in which I resided was the Government Doctor at the Block Headquarters. So I toured all the 100 villages of the Block spread over an area as large as the island of Malta, established contacts with the people and learned of their health concerns. I realised that the traditional beliefs kept them away from the benefits of 'modern medicine' and so, with the help of selected villagers, I designed and implemented a programme of health education throughout the Block. I then selected the northern half of the Block for further engagement—since the area was divided in two by a river which was not bridged and had to be crossed by boat or wading when the waters receded. There, with the help of Santal nurses, I took up mother and child health programmes, including vaccinations – which were totally unheard of in the area. Actually I carried out the activities now covered under the ICDS Government programme, except for the feeding. We weighed the children, charted their growth, showed the mothers how to interpret weight charts and how to prepare high protein calorie

foods to remedy undernourishment, of which there were many cases. Vaccination for children and pregnant women were a much bigger challenge, but some headway was made as the villagers who came to my outdoor clinic developed trust in me when I treated them for malaria and kala-azar and they got better without spending too much money. And a measles epidemic which spread some three years after the start of my vaccination programme convinced the villagers that vaccines were useful in preventing illnesses – a fact that was beyond their comprehension earlier. There was good collaboration between our work and the Government Health Sector which supplied us with the needed vaccines and to which we gave our regular monthly reports.

As Government programme gradually took over these activities and provided these facilities, I turned my attention to the many disabled children I found in these same villages, especially those affected by Poliomyelitis. I found treatment centres in Ranchi and Calcutta and began taking the children there. But the numbers were too high and eventually, in collaboration with a Rural Development Programme run in the same area by the Methodist Church, we engaged professionals

and set up a rehabilitation centre in Pakur. Gradually, as the number of polio affected cases decreased and the number of children identified with other disabilities increased, I learned about and set up a Community Rehabilitation Programme which is still functioning even though limited in extent and number of beneficiaries.

Meanwhile the need and opportunity for a similar Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) programme arose in Odisha, when one of the professionals working with me at Pakur, returned to his State. We selected Baripada Block in District of Mayurbhanj for our CBR programme, since Santals formed a large proportion of this Block, and so were happy to work with this known and friendly people.

In all these initiatives in health work and rehabilitation work, once again the initial financial support came from friends in Malta. And over the last two to three years, the Malta Ministry for Foreign Affairs has been helping us financially to be able to engage professionals on a periodic basis for the Odisha CBR programme.

So the ties with Malta continue to bear fruit, for the good of the Santal Adivasis in India.

■ Bio-Profiles



Mr. Christopher Cutajar

Mr Christopher Cutajar is the Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs and Tourism at the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. He heads the administration and coordinates all the departments within the Ministry, which also covers European Affairs and Trade.

Mr Cutajar sits on the Governing Board of Administrators of the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law since 2020. He holds an Honours Degree, which was then supplemented by an Executive Master in Business Administration, both from the University of Malta. In his younger days he was an activist within the civil society as the young leader of the General Workers' Union Youths, editor of a local journal, and financial officer of the executive committee of the National Youth Council.

His career within the public administration started off in 2011 when he served as Executive Secretary for Local Councils and for the national Local Councils' Association. In June 2016 he was appointed as Permanent Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Capital projects for a 4-year stint. During that period, he coordinated major projects such as the Triton Square project, which is a landmark at the entrance of Valletta. He was also the Deputy Chairperson of the Maritime Security Committee at that time.

During his current tenure at the Foreign Affairs Ministry, Malta intensified its multilateral efforts through a non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council in 2023-2024 and by assuming the Chairpersonship-in-office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 2024, which was culminated by a successful OSCE Ministerial Council that took place in Malta in December of that year.



H.E. Ms. Gloria Gangte

High Commissioner of India to the Republic of Malta

Mrs. Gloria Gangte is India's High Commissioner to the Republic of Malta. Prior to her current position, she served as Joint Secretary, Latin American and Caribbean Division at Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi for over three years. Earlier, Mrs. Gangte served as Deputy Chief of Mission at Embassy of India in Rome, Italy and Deputy Permanent Representative to the Rome based International Agencies including UNIDROIT, FAO, IFAD, WFP (2017-19). She was Deputy Chief of Mission at Embassy of India Muscat, Oman (2015-2016). She served as Counsellor (Political) at the Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations Offices in Geneva (2011-14) and was the key Indian delegate to the UN Human Rights Council. A career Diplomat, Mrs. Gangte's overseas assignments have included Political, Commercial, Cultural and Information work at the Indian Embassy in Buenos Aires, Argentina (2005-08). She has also worked as Head of Chancery and has handled Consular (Passport & Visas) work at the Embassy of India in Madrid, Spain (2002-2005). At the Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi, Mrs. Gloria Gangte has worked as Deputy Secretary in the Latin America and the Caribbean Division dealing with more than 33 countries (2008-11) and as Attaché in the East Asia Division dealing with China and Japan (2001).



H.E. Mr. Reuben Gauci

High Commissioner of the Republic of Malta to India

H.E. Reuben Gauci was born on 20 May 1976 in Tal-Pieta`, Malta. He joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2007 following a national examination to enter the diplomatic service. He is the current High Commissioner of the Republic of Malta to India as from September 2020, resident in New Delhi. He presented Credentials to the President of India, H.E. Ram Nath Kovind on 14 October 2020. He is also accredited as Malta's High Commissioner to The Maldives, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh and Malta's Ambassador to Nepal. Reuben Gauci previously served as Head of the Representative Office of the Republic of Malta in Ramallah, Palestine in the period October 2015 to September 2020. He also served as Career Consul General of the Republic of Malta in Istanbul, Turkey from July 2011 to September 2015 and as Charge d' Affaires ad Interim at the Embassy of Malta in Lisbon, Portugal from February to June 2011. Prior to being posted abroad, he served in the Directorate of External Relations and Mediterranean Affairs and in the Directorate of Protocol and Consular Services.



Amb. Anil Trigunayat

Former Non-Resident High Commissioner of India to Malta

Amb. Anil Trigunayat is a member of the Indian Foreign Service. He has served in the Indian Missions in Cote d'Ivoire, Bangladesh, Mongolia, USA, Russia, Sweden and Nigeria, Libya and Jordan. In the Ministry of External Affairs he has worked in the Economic, West Asia and North Africa and Consular Divisions. He also served as Director General/Joint Secretary for the Gulf & Haj Divisions in the Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi. Thereafter, Mr. Trigunayat worked as Deputy Chief of Mission in the rank of Ambassador in the Embassy of India, Moscow Prior to his superannuation in May 2016, he served as Ambassador of India to Jordan and Libya and High Commissioner to Malta (June 2012 – May 2016). He is a post Graduate in Physics from the Agra/Kumaon University and also studied Russian History, Culture and Language at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. As a visiting fellow he also conducted research work on “WTO and Regional Trading Blocs” at the Oxford University. He is a member of the All India Management Association/Delhi Management Association as well as that of Oxford and Cambridge Society of India and the Association of Indian Diplomats (former Ambassadors). He is also the Honorary Member of the International Trade Council, Brussels.



Mr. Wilfred Kenely

Mr Kenely is the First High Commissioner of Malta in India (2007-2010). Mr. Kenely is currently involved in Research and Innovation.



Sqdn Ldr (Retd.) Rana T.S. Chinna

Director and Editor, Centre for Military History and Conflict Studies, United Service Institution of India, New Delhi

Squadron Leader Rana T.S. Chhina served in the Indian Air Force as a helicopter pilot. He is currently Director of the United Service Institution of India (USI) Centre for Military History and Conflict Studies. The author of a number of books, he was Vice President of the Indian Military Historical Society (2004-2020), and a member of the Government of India's Archival Advisory Board. He is a member of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) Independent Advisory Panel and is actively engaged in promoting the preservation of India's rich tangible and intangible military heritage. A recipient of the Macgregor Medal for best military reconnaissance, he was appointed an Honorary Member of the Order of the British Empire in 2016 and an Officer of the Belgian Order of Leopold in 2018.



Tarniem Mangion Shokry Iskandar

Tarniem Shokry Iskandar is a Maltese diplomat currently serving as the Deputy Head of Mission at the High Commission of Malta in New Delhi. She holds a Master's degree in Contemporary Diplomacy from the University of Malta and DiploFoundation, as well as a Bachelor's degree in International Hospitality Management from Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences in Helsinki (Finland) and the Institute of Tourism Studies in Malta.

Tarniem commenced her public service career at the European Union Programmes Agency, where she was involved in the implementation and communication of EU-funded initiatives. She subsequently joined the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Tourism, where she contributed to Schengen and visa policies.

In 2023, she assumed her current diplomatic role in New Delhi, where she represents Malta in various EU coordination formats, including Political, Schengen, Consular, and Migration groups. She also oversees public diplomacy efforts and actively promotes Malta's cultural and strategic interests in India.

Fluent in Maltese, English, and Arabic, and possessing a working knowledge of French, Tarniem is particularly committed to supporting the visibility of women in diplomacy and maintains a strong interest in promoting gender equality.



Mr. Ivan Vassallo

Former Deputy Head of Mission at the High Commission of Malta in India

Counsellor. Former Deputy Head of Mission at the High Commission of Malta, New Delhi. (February 2022-October 2024). Mr. Vassallo is a historian and a career diplomat.



Dr. Himani Pant

Research Fellow, ICWA

Dr. Himani Pant is a Research Fellow at the Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi. She has done her PhD from the Centre for European Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University. Her doctoral thesis focused on “The European Union and Russia in their Common Neighbourhood: A Case Study of Georgia and Ukraine, 2004-2016.” Prior to joining ICWA, she worked at the Observer Research Foundation and Vivekananda International Foundation. She was also a Visiting Research Scholar at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium in 2018. Her research focuses on developments in Russia, European Union, Eastern Europe.



Ms. Marcette Buttigieg

Ms. Buttigieg is a Maltese Missionary in India since 1979. Ms. Marcette Buttigieg is a qualified nurse and has been working in India for 43 years.

About ICWA

The Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) was established in 1943 by a group of eminent intellectuals led by Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Dr. H. N. Kunzru. Its principal objective was to create an Indian perspective on international relations and act as a repository of knowledge and thinking on foreign policy issues.



The Council today conducts policy research through an in-house faculty as well as through external experts. It regularly organizes an array of intellectual activities including conference, seminars, roundtable discussions, lectures and brings out a range of publications. It has a well-stocked library, publishes the journal 'India Quarterly', and is active on social media.

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Upper Barakka Gardens in Valletta on Malta



'Transformation', Installation by Prakash Vani and Jatin Bhatt at Ministry of External Affairs, Jawaharlal Nehru Bhawan, New Delhi



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