

# Small States Challenges to democracy

**MALTA**

Created by: *George Vital Zammit*  
Presented by: *Godfrey Baldacchino*

# Small States

## The quality of democracy in the country 1\_5

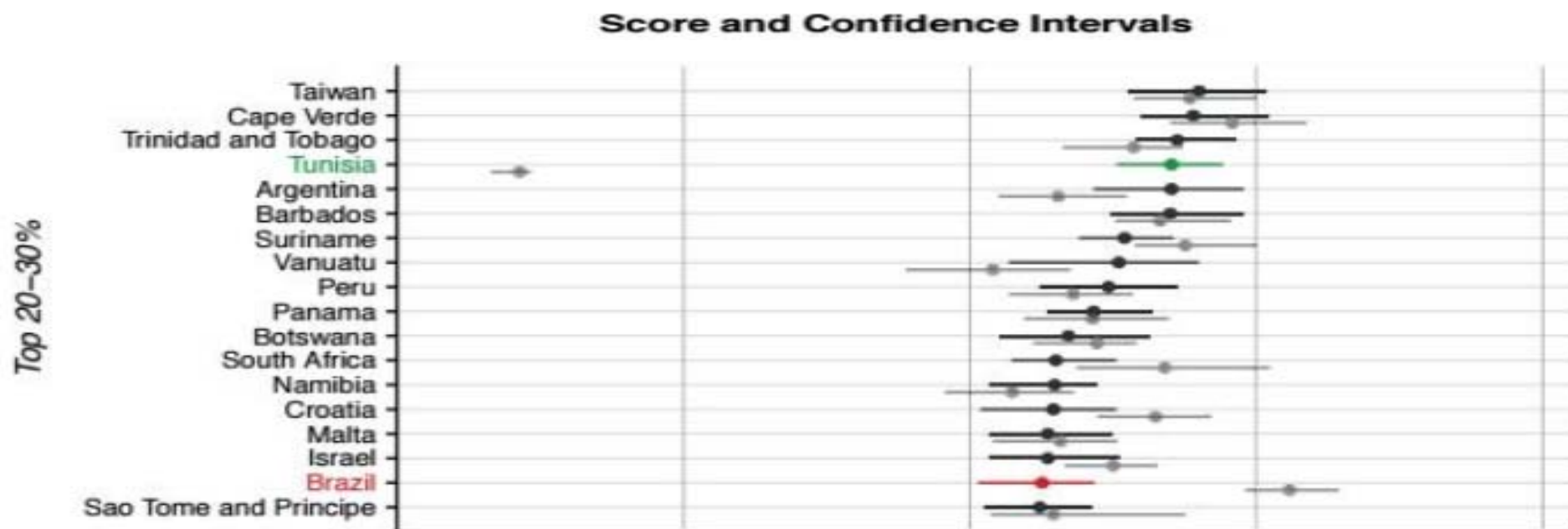
- Comparative tools and indexes (any of the following or any other):
  - V-dem – *Annual Democracy Report*
  - Reporters without Borders – *World Press Freedom Index*
  - Transparency International – *Corruption Perception Index*
  - The Economist Intelligence Unit - *Democracy index*
  - Eurobarometer - *Trust in political institutions*
  - Sustainable Governance Indicators – *Quality of democracy* (sgi-network.org)
  - Regular Newspaper Surveys – E.g. [Malta Today Survey](#) / [Torċa](#)

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## The quality of democracy in the country 1\_6

### 1. V-dem – [Annual Democracy Report](#)

**FIGURE 1.2: COUNTRIES BY SCORE ON V-DEM'S LIBERAL DEMOCRACY INDEX (LDI) 2018 COMPARED TO 2008.**



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## The quality of democracy in the country 2\_6

### 2. Reporters without Borders – [World Press Freedom Index](#)

ISO	Rank 2020	FR_Country	EN_country	Score 2020	^	Rank 2019	Score 2019	Zone
PAN	76	Panama	Panama	29,78	+3	79	29,78	Amériques
CTU	77	Chypre (partie Nord)	Cyprus North	29,79	-3	74	29,67	UE Balkans
TLS	78	Timor-Leste	East Timor	29,90	+6	84	29,93	Asie-Pacifique
MDV	79	Maldives	Maldives	29,93	+19	98	32,16	Asie-Pacifique
HKG	80	Hong-Kong	Hong Kong	30,01	-7	73	29,65	Asie-Pacifique
MLT	81	Malte	Malta	30,16	-4	77	29,74	UE Balkans
KGZ	82	Kirghizstan	Kyrgyzstan	30,19	+1	83	29,92	EEAC
HTI	83	Haiti	Haiti	30,20	-21	62	29,00	Amériques
ALB	84	Albanie	Albania	30,25	-2	82	29,84	UE Balkans
SLE	85	Sierra Leone	Sierra Leone	30,28	+1	86	30,36	Afrique

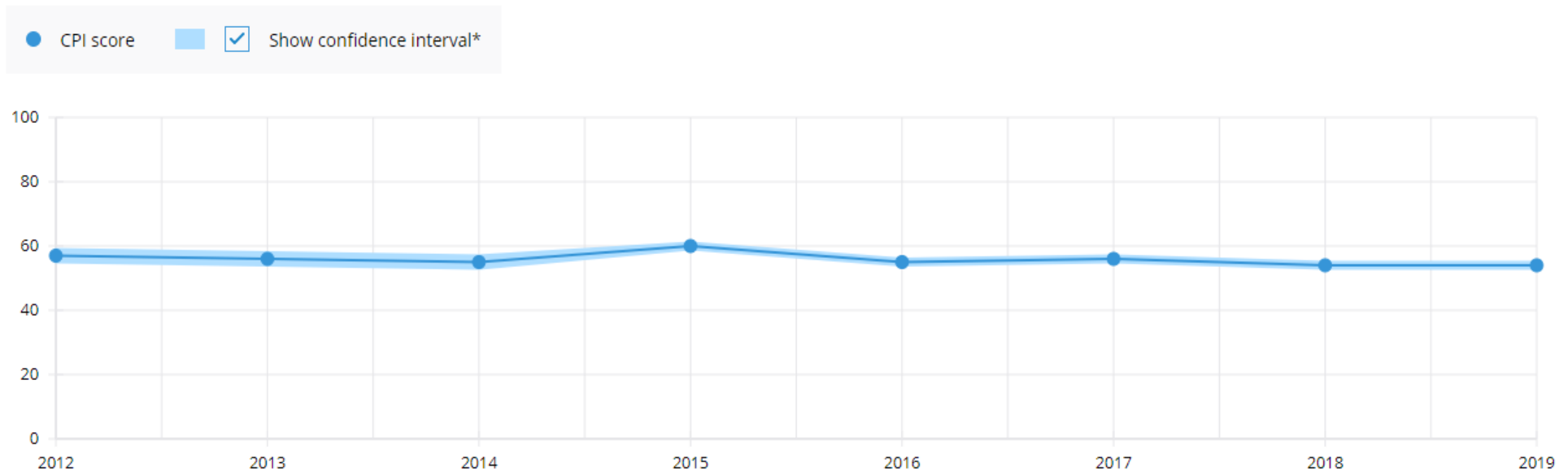
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## The quality of democracy in the country 3\_6

### 3. Transparency International – [Corruption Perception Index](#)

#### Malta's score over time

This data is between 2012-2019. Data between 1995-2011 is excluded because our methodology was different.



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## The quality of democracy in the country 4\_6

### 4. Economist Intelligence Unit – [Democracy Index](#)

## Malta



Summary

Politics

Economy

Risk



### In brief

The Labour Party (PL) won the snap election in June 2017 and is likely to continue in government until 2022. Joseph Muscat stepped down as prime minister in January 2020 following allegations that members of his government and staff were involved in the murder of an investigative journalist, Daphne Caruana Galizia. He was replaced by Robert Abela (PL). We expect that the outbreak of the novel coronavirus will lead to a contraction in real GDP of 6% in 2020.

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## The quality of democracy in the country 5\_6

### 5. Trust in Political Institutions – [Standard Eurobarometer 90](#)

For each of the following media and institutions, please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it	Malta	European Union
The written press	32%	47%
Radio	47%	59%
Television	53%	50%
The internet	39%	32%
Online social networks	24%	19%
Political parties	36%	18%
Justice / the Legal System	49%	51%
The Police	68%	72%
The Army	77%	73%
Public Administration	68%	50%
Regional or Local Public Authorities	64%	54%
The Maltese Government	63%	35%
The Maltese Parliament	59%	35%
The European Union	56%	42%
The United Nations	50%	47%
The European Parliament	55%	48%
The European Commission	52%	43%

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## The quality of democracy in the country 5\_6

### 6. Sustainable Governance Indicators – [Quality of Democracy](#)





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## “Subjective” measures of quality of democracy

- European Value Survey, European Social Survey, Comparative Study of Electoral Systems or other surveys that ask the following questions:
  - How good is having a democratic political system to govern this country
  - Democracy may have problems but it's better than any other form of government
  - How important is it for you to live in a country that is governed democratically?
  - How satisfied are you with democracy?
  - And how democratically is this country being governed today?
  - Overall, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in your country?
  - Trust in institutions (Government, Parliament, EU...)
- Is there a pattern? Who seems to be most dissatisfied?

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## Social cleavages

- Two-party system is deeply entrenched; but political cleavage has diluted ideologically (left vs right is less pronounced) with country adopting a pro-business / capitalist approach.
- [75% of the Maltese](#) are considered to be 'middle class'
- Cleavages depend on the narratives woven by the main political parties.
- Political parties do not wish to alienate voters. So: social cleavages are expressed by interest groups:
  - Bird Life and Environmentalists vs Bird Hunters ([e.g. Spring hunting](#));
  - Environmental friendly groups vs Government ([e.g. land concession](#));
  - Civil Society vs Developers and Government ([e.g. over-development](#)).

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## Mobilisation of anti-democracy sentiment

- Civil Society has been mobilised mainly on concerns regarding [over-development](#) / [encroachment on the environment](#) and [corruption](#)
- Perceived inability of the [Police to rein in corruption](#) was cause for protest
- Joseph Muscat's tenure as Prime Minister (2013-2019) characterised by cases of corruption, patronage, cronyism and clientelism. In 2019, Muscat was named "[Man of the Year](#)" for corruption.
- Events led to swearing in of new Prime Minister, resignations of Members of Parliament, Police Commissioner and Attorney General in 2020.
- Leader of the Opposition (Nationalist Party) was outvoted from office after an internal party rebellion. His [integrity and ability to lead](#) was questioned.
- Polling indicates that such cases did not have any bearing on support for the Government, whilst that for the Opposition has not recovered.

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## Corruption and inefficiency

- Allegations of corruption remain rife.
- National Audit Office repeatedly flagged breaches of procurement regulations
- A private bank in Malta ([Pilatus Bank](#)) has had its license revoked after money laundering charges. Bank [CEO eventually arrested](#) in the USA.
- Corruption costs taxpayers in Malta [€725 million every year](#) (8.65% of GDP)
- [Huge mobilization of people](#) in November and December 2019 with various forms of protest.
- Prime Minister Joseph Muscat [resigned](#) from office after Chief of Staff was found to be allegedly connected to the assassination of journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia.

# Small States Populism

- Populism, or rather disenchantment from the centre, is present too. This is manifested both by groups, movements and parties.
- State populism is sporadic too (e.g. party in government supporting spring hunting)
- Two main political parties have strong ability to rally support (ubiquitous presence in the public arena, media: TV, Radio, newspapers, social media)
- Government [refused entry of immigrants](#) after ports were closed during the pandemic.

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## Extremism and extremist parties

- New parties: [Moviment Patrijotti Maltin](#), [Partit Popolari](#)
- These emerging fringe (right) parties are fuelled mainly by immigration
- Two party system remains strong in Malta (90% of total support) but such parties find support when immigration issues (public disorder, crime, boat arrivals) escalate.
- Such parties joint others, long established like [Imperium Europa](#) (far-right), [Alleanza Bidla](#) (social conservative), and the recently merged [AD+PD](#) (progressive greens), that attract the protest vote during local and European elections, but do not manage to make any inroads during general elections.
- Alleanza Bidla and AD+PD are not extremist parties.

# Small States Democracy and COVID-19

- Malta came to terms with Covid-19 by the end of the first quarter of 2020.
- Government took a *phased* approach that moved towards a partial lockdown with non-essential services closed, and schools (all levels) closed.
- Public services adopted various approaches (rotating rosters & tele-working)
- Superintendent of Health was given full-powers yet message was not always in concert with Prime Minister and Minister for Health
- By July 2020, Malta had only registered 5 deaths, and measures were relaxed again. By August, cases started picking up again.
- Unions representing health professionals threatened government with industrial action, after public activities promoting Christmas were announced.

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## Prospects of democracy

- Malta has a [high level of participation](#) (over 90% turnout for House of Representatives elections).
- Since 2019 (MEP and Local Council elections), 16 year olds are eligible to vote. The franchise will be extended to the next general election.
- Female representation in Parliament is currently at 10%. Two main parties in the process of approving a Reform Bill to increase [gender representation](#) in the House of Representatives.
- Censorship in theatre and performing arts has been lifted and [blasphemy laws removed](#).
- Anti-Strategic Action Against Public Participation (SLAPP) [laws](#) still not introduced and journalists still exposed to hefty lawsuits.