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Comparing foreign policy and development in Malta and Singapore after 1964: Between surviving, thriving and taking risks

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Abstract: Malta and Singapore attained full independence nearly a year apart: 21 September 1964 and 9 August 1965 respectively. Yet today, despite being self-classified as small states, Singapore has been treated as a developed economy by the OECD and is widely acknowledged to be a 'behind the scenes' helmsman of the regional security architecture in the Asia-Pacific. Malta, in contrast, appears to be a relative diplomatic bystander enunciating its own principles of sovereign difference, calling for EU and Mediterranean regional forums to address non-traditional security issues, and focussing heavily on growing a service economy in finance, tourism, electronics and freight transhipment. Singapore's growth trajectory takes on these areas as well, but also experiments with designs to establish itself as a transportation and communications hub for Asia. This preliminary comparison of Malta and Singapore as small states will proceed through three categories of examination: stabilising the geopolitical environment for growth; experiments in integration into a global economy; and the idea of a globally branded small state.

Keywords: branding, development, foreign policy, geopolitics, growth, Malta, Singapore. small states

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Introduction

The comparison of pairs of small states as an academic venture is often fraught with methodological and political complications. When two small states are compared, questions are raised as to whether they could be justified on the basis of being located within a common geographical region. Yet this is not without controversy: does the location of two small states justify objectively fair comparisons? It is even trickier when two different small states are compared from two different regions. The geopolitical argument could also be applied to justify analysing two small states; but this can prove unsatisfactory due to the difficulties of treating differences of time and space with the same standard (Maass, 2017). Looking at development and economics across two small states evokes similar difficulties, often because each of them are products of specific regional histories and colonial construction that have evolved very differently with the onset of modernity.

In this article, I will resort to a quasi-sociological argument to justify comparing Malta and Singapore as I have previously compared Singapore, Sri Lanka and the Vatican City (Chong, 2010; Chong, 2014b). A small state is often self-identified as such on a diplomatic level because its government or political elite asserts that it is a very special category of global security vulnerability. Following established scholarship, one can justify small states as sharing globally acknowledged, relatively weak capabilities in navigating the international order *and* suffering significant asymmetries in power vis-à-vis their larger neighbours and great powers (Fox, 1959; Vital, 1971; East, 1973; Keohane, 1969; Commonwealth Advisory Group, 1997; Thorhallsson & Wivel, 2006; Thorhallsson, 2018; Baldacchino & Wivel, 2020). On a third level, one can justify scrutinising any single small state, or a pair of them, to uncover the unique experiences that have shaped their present vulnerabilities or relative successes. In this article's approach, every small state is *both* unique and universally comparable and hence when we use both approaches, we can indeed produce some interesting results as to how each small state's exceptions have ushered in new operating norms for other small states.

The thrust of sociology, like the thrust of studying a small state, is to investigate the causalities and cumulative mind sets of the evolution of particular human communities to produce deep knowledge. This sort of approach lends itself to the treatment of case studies, and at the same time, supplements the general approach of treating small states as a universal category of actorness within International Relations. Fundamentally, this leads one to query of any small state: how did it survive, and in some cases, thrive as a viable international actor backed by a functioning economy? *Survival* for a small state is often taken to be a negative framing of the objectives behind foreign, economic and defence policies. A small state's self-described policies for survival imply that it has reached its sovereign and resource limits and therefore can achieve no further goals in the international society. *Thriving* is much more positive and agentic: a small state thrives because it can somehow leverage its weaknesses and diminutive geography as resources for virtual enlargement of its goals and an ability to prove itself useful or even indispensable to the international community, with the attendant possibility of failing altogether. Malta and Singapore illuminate these possibilities.

This article will proceed by first justifying the intellectual value of comparing Malta and Singapore. Thereafter, the two small states are compared according to three self-evident themes: stabilising the geopolitical environment for growth; experiments in integration into a global economy; and the idea of a globally branded small state.

Malta and Singapore

Both Malta and Singapore were colonial creations. Britain founded both as strategic outposts of a trading empire and military defence. Although Malta has endured a long history of having been invaded and occupied by assorted European empires, it was the occupation of the island by the French forces under Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte that invited Britain's attention through counterreaction, and partly by the invitation of the Maltese (Abela, 1997/2017, pp. 167-179). By the 1930s, Malta was central as a naval and air base to British strategy to counter the Axis powers during the interwar years and especially during the Second World War. Malta served as the linchpin for the Allied campaign to retake North Africa and Italy during the latter part of the Second World War (Strawson, 1987, pp. 66-68). Britain's naval base in Malta anchored the island's economy right into the 1970s. Singapore was likewise built up as Britain's equivalent of a naval base for projecting its politico-military presence throughout Southeast Asia. Right up to the outbreak of the Second World War, Singapore (like Malta) was touted as Britain's unsinkable aircraft carrier. Axis airpower projected from Italy and Occupied Greece pounded Malta's military infrastructure during the war in the Mediterranean, but the archipelago was not invaded. In contrast, the Japanese planned to neutralise British air and naval power by bombing Singapore's harbours and airfields in 1941-2, and eventually seizing and occupying Singapore after an effective siege. And while the British naval squadron acquitted itself gloriously in the Mediterranean by sallying forth from Alexandria and Gibraltar to escort convoys and challenge the Italian fleet and Luftwaffe in active battle formation, the battleships HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Repulse stationed in Singapore suffered an ignominious disaster at the hands of Japanese airpower projected from Indochina: the two attempted (without air cover) to thwart Japanese troopships out to land invasion forces on the nearby Malay Peninsula, and ended up being sunk (Murfett, et al., 1999, pp. 198-247).

These accounts of military history reveal one thing: both island territories retained strategic importance under modern conditions of air and naval connectivity, and this would advantage them after independence. Both postcolonial governments could simply avail themselves of path dependence by promoting themselves as either strategic allies of great powers or else converting their strategic transportation positions into commercial assets (Commonwealth Advisory Group, 1997; Thorhallsson, 2018). Ironically, both island states' initial economic buoyancy was tied to the delayed withdrawal of the British military bases during the Cold War (Pirotta, 2018). In Singapore's case, the economic footprint of the British bases contributed some 20 percent to the island's GDP between 1968 and 1971 (Lee, 2000, p. 69).

As entrepôts, both small island states sought to capitalise upon their respective imperial heritage as free ports and strategically positioned and sheltered harbours vis-à-vis their respective geographical sub-regions. Malta's official statements of strategic interests since 1964 have emphasised its maritime claims to stretch to 3,000 km^2 of security concerns. This includes a huge 'Search and Rescue' area of responsibility, stretching from the coasts of Tunisia to Crete in Greece. This maritime enlargement also includes an Exclusive Economic Zone subsequently allowed under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. This is a maritime zone roughly ten times the land area of the Republic of Malta's two main heavily populated islands of Malta and Gozo (Pace, 2013, p. 245). Malta Freeport also touts itself as the Mediterranean's key transhipment hub in relation to the so-called Europe-Maghreb-Middle East commercial triangle. Even though the port operator was privatised and subsequently restructured as Malta Freeport Corporation, a separate Malta Freeport Terminals was created in 2001 as the operator of container terminals and warehousing provider. (Malta Freeport, 2020) As part of a deliberate strategy of globalising Malta's nautical prominence, Malta Freeport Terminals was contracted out to be managed by CMA-CGM, the world's third largest shipping company, for a 30-year concession in 2004, later extended to 65 years (Malta Freeport, 2020). In 2011, CMA-CGM transferred half its shares to the Yildrom Group of Turkey; by 2013, it had sold 49% of its stake in Maltese subsidiary Terminal Link, to China Merchants Holdings (International) Ltd. (Malta Freeport, 2020)

Likewise, the Port of Singapore Authority (PSA) was privatised in stages, beginning in 1994-7 with PSA Corporation succeeding to the port authority. By late 2003, PSA International was transformed into a holding company for subsidiaries conducting container operations worldwide, shipping related logistics and marine servicing. It even offers towage services in a number of countries. Its website claims that PSA's portfolio currently comprises a network of over 50 deep sea, rail and inland terminals, as well as assorted marine and warehousing services, in 26 countries (PSA The World's Port of Call, 2020). Singapore has also manifested ambitions to serve as an air and logistics hub. Much like Malta, independent Singapore succeeded to the British imperial scheme of creating a naval, mercantile and aviation control hub over the commercial thoroughfares – both sea and air, as well as trade – of the Straits of Malacca, Straits of Singapore and into the lower third of the South China Sea. Before and after World War Two, Singapore served as Britain's preeminent naval and air base 'East of Suez' until UK Governments decided on an economically induced strategic retrenchment after 1967. The same retrenchment by London's defence planners rudely wrested Malta out of its millennial fortress economy role and obliged the search for an alternative business model.

In terms of demographics and territorial size, Malta and Singapore are both similar *and* different. Malta's 441,970 inhabitants count as 95% native Maltese (World Population Review, 2020). In contrast, Singapore boasts a population of 5.69 million, of which only 4 million (or

70%) are Singaporean citizens and permanent residents (SingStat, 2020). Amongst this 4 million, 75% are self-identified to be of Chinese ethnicity, 13.5% claim Malay ethnicity, 9% claim Indian (or broadly South Asian) ethnicity, while the remaining roughly 3% are associated with mixed identities such as 'Eurasians', Arabs, and a handful of Europeans (SingStat - Population and Population Structure, 2010). As far as is known, Maltese citizens do not appear in official statistics, news or scholarly media to sub-differentiate themselves in terms of imported ethnicities. In the Singaporean case, it is commonly acknowledged that these sub-identities are both historical legacies and endorsed by the People's Action Party (PAP) state as constituent building blocks of a multiracial national identity (Clammer, 1998). In this case, these 'hyphenated' identities are vulnerable to the propaganda pulls from the 'mother countries' across the recognised sovereign borders of Singapore. This generates significant 'intermestic' security complications for the island republic but can also serve as social facilitators for enhancing the island's economic connectivity with China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Indonesia.

Malta's territorial size of 316 km^2 is slightly under half of Singapore's 726 km^2 (World Population Review, 2020; SingStat - Land, 2020). On the surface, this is quite a marginal difference considering that these statistics compare badly with key economic hubs such as Amsterdam, Beijing, Shanghai, London, Paris, Berlin, Frankfurt, New York, Boston, Tokyo or Sydney. Surveying the small state literature, these geographical statistics are fairly typical and underscore the standard power indices that define small states as a distinct international category of actorness (Commonwealth Advisory Group, 1997). Unless such a minuscule territory contains exceptional natural resources onshore or offshore, such as oil, gas, metals, rare earths or fertilizer, such a miniscule territorial size is not expected to support a significant working population deriving their incomes from domestic resources, let alone render critical contributions to a global economy. The difference that Malta and Singapore offer to many small island states in the Caribbean Sea, Indian and Pacific Oceans is the exploitation of location and logistic advantage. Additionally, the economic and cultural trappings of having been part of a European empire – the British – has significantly enhanced the attraction of their territoriality and brand; this includes the currency of the English language across large swathes of the population. Singapore has, of course, transformed its small island territorial size to become a microcosm of the latest high technology and least labour-intensive industries of the developed world. There is extensive geo-economic mimicry of both the First World economies and the so-called 'Tiger economies' of East Asia in Singapore's development policies; but it is a decidedly strategic one.

Singaporean political and economic culture is mindful of the limitations of the size of its human resources and its potentially fractured national identity (Chew, 1991). Interestingly, Singapore seems to have made great strides over the past few years in attaining a rank of 9 out of 189 countries surveyed for achievement on the Human Capital Index (HCI). According to the World Bank, HCI "measures the amount of human capital that a child born today can expect to attain by age 18. It conveys the productivity of the next generation of workers compared to a benchmark of complete education and full health" (UNDP - Singapore, 2018) Malta comes in at position 29 out of 189 countries surveyed. (UNDP - Malta, 2018) One huge difference between the two lies in the percentage of "skilled labour" measured by the tertiary education qualifications of workers above the age of 15 against the entire registered workforce: Malta scored 60.6% while Singapore scored 81.7% (UNDP - Skilled Labour Force, 2018). Despite this gap, one might still surmise that both island states have attempted to prioritise the training of their only significant asset: the human resource.

Stabilizing the Geopolitical Environment for Growth

It is axiomatic that all small state policy practitioners and scholars pronounce that the operating environment for small states must either be tempered – even in some modest way – or accommodated through degrees of self-sacrifice (Keohane, 1969; Commonwealth Advisory Group, 1997; Chong, 2010; Fox, 1959). In the Maltese case, the Mediterranean Sea and its littoral states constitute the island's immediate geopolitical environment (Pace, 2013). There are great and middle powers such as the UK, France and Italy possibly factored into the situation. And then there are, on the southern and eastern coasts, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Israel, Palestine, Lebanon and Syria, who are essentially overlapping members of what many argue to be a subset of a larger political region known as 'Middle East and North Africa' or MENA. During the Cold War, there was an added complication, with the USA and USSR treating littoral states as proxies for ideological and military competition (Nimetz, 1999).

If one adopts a neo-realist analysis of all these states, Malta's strategic position would be parlous considering that, for reasons of size and resources, it would more likely be a pawn instead of an active, let alone, autonomous player. In fact, Malta's foreign policy and security position would easily suffer from the spill over of economic and humanitarian insecurities from the geographically contiguous states along the entire northern and southern Mediterranean especially since the vast majority could be classed as 'Global South' (Biscop, 2003, pp. 55-62). As one of Malta's own eminent foreign policy scholars has pointed out, the enlargement of the European Union by including its Mediterranean neighbours along the northern shores of the sea meant that its member states' energy dependence on Algeria and the Arab Middle East depended upon the cooperative efforts of a 'Mediterranean community' (Pace, 2007, pp. 176-177). Additionally, illegal immigration from North Africa across the Mediterranean into southern Europe is of enduring concern. Finally, the tentacles of Middle East related terrorism and other internecine intra-state and inter-state conflicts will affect the eastern Mediterranean EU littoral; and islands in the region act as potential transit points for both refugees and terrorists (Pace, 2007, pp. 177-179). Malta's location defined its specific vulnerability to all these trends even to the present.

Even so, Malta has historically encountered political discrimination from being located along Europe's southern periphery for quite a while. At the inception of the European Community, one of continental Europe's most ambitious regionalism experiments to date, the original member governments treated the Mediterranean littoral states outside its membership as 'Mediterranean Non-Member States' (MNMS). This category reflected a state of mind influenced chiefly by French plans to preserve exclusive economic and political relations with the freshly decolonised states in North Africa (Waites & Stavridis, 1999, p. 29). By the time Britain joined the EC in 1973 the MNMS category was enlarged to take into account Britain's influence with Cyprus, Egypt and Jordan. At the same time, there were arguments from inside the EC and amongst Britain's former colonies that the former imperial metropoles ought to balance or prioritise economic market openings between the EC's near abroad (i.e. the MNMS) and the so-called African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) states (Waites & Stavridis, 1999, pp. 29-30).

Increasingly such debates led to defensive economic nationalism within the EC members as to whether they should even open the EC's markets to the detriment of their own producers in competing agricultural categories. One could classify this as an economic and food security issue. The EC's, and subsequently the EU's, dealings with the MNMS became ensnared in differences with certain MNMS over the interests of oil producers like Algeria and Libya, and oil consumers like the EC/EU members along with Morocco (Waites & Stavridis, 1999, p. 31).

Thirdly, the Cold War divided both the MNMS states amongst themselves, as well as the MNMS against the EC/EU. Every one of these states' foreign policy orientations were judged according to whether they hewed towards a pro-NATO and pro-Washington line, or a pro-Soviet and Warsaw Pact line. Fourthly, the spill over ideological effects from the Iranian Revolution of 1979 polarised the way EC/EU member governments and their respective public opinion viewed closer association with the MNMS (Waites & Stavridis, 1999, p. 31). Even within the EC/EU, the dominant discourse vis-à-vis its members exhibited some discriminatory tones towards the smaller and less developed among them. One foreign policy official had been quoted as early as 1983 as stating that it was a fact that 'second ranked' and 'smaller countries' ought to pay a price for political cooperation with and within the EC/EU through the 'bending of national principles' (Wallace, 1983, p. 13).

Not surprisingly, Malta's erstwhile foreign minister George Vella reflected in 1999, nearly a decade after the Cold War ended, that the republic's policy of neutrality and nonalignment, enshrined in the 1987 Constitution, would remain in place (Vella, 1999). Noting that security crises had 'paradoxically escalated' since the collapse of the USSR, Vella emphasised that the appropriate foreign policy for his country ought to uphold values of democratic tolerance towards diverse religious beliefs and cultures, while opposing all forms of extremism including nationalism (Vella, 1999, p. 146). He observed that the majority of Malta's Mediterranean neighbours suffered greatly from non-conventional security threats. Vella had in mind then Gaddafi-ruled Libya's economic distress under UN sanctions, Algeria's drift towards religious fundamentalism and continuing socio-political divisions on Cyprus gravitating towards the traditional Greek-Turkish rivalry. Furthermore, he also extrapolated that the Middle East peace process had to maintain some momentum; otherwise, its spill over effects would jeopardise Mediterranean security and Malta's security along with it (Vella, 1999, pp. 148-149). With much prescience, he was also thinking of the refugees that would flock by boat to 'safe havens' all along the Sea, straining host governments' welfare and financial capabilities. Additionally, throughout much of Muammar Gaddafi's reign in Libya, Valletta maintained an actively nonaligned position that favoured Libyan interests and resistance against American charges that the Gaddafi regime was supporting transnational terrorism and upsetting transatlantic security. Valletta treated Libya instead as a close neighbour who served as both a good customer for exports from Malta while also maintaining a climate of law and order in North Africa that kept refugees from crossing the Mediterranean (Pace, 1999, pp. 228-229). Much of this scenario remains current, given the ongoing illegal migration from Syria's unfinished civil war since 2011 and the refugees from MENA fleeing both political oppression and genocide, and now, climate change.

From a mainstream small state perspective, there is nothing much one can argue about a pro-multilateralist, non-aligned and non-military orientation of foreign policy (East, 1973). Indeed, one should also note Malta's call in tandem for the institutionalizing of Mediterranean security agendas in the deliberations of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Malta has been vocal in calling for the literal enlargement of the OSCE agenda to include all Mediterranean states, risking antagonism from the more EU focussed members. Vella acknowledged cryptically what he termed "perceived difficulties" within the OSCE, and proposed that perhaps the littoral states could convene a Conference on Security Cooperation in the Mediterranean (CSCM) as an autonomous offshoot of the OSCE whilst retaining some form of political link with the latter (Vella, 1999, p. 150). This idea had successfully taken off as the Inter-Parliamentary Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean. This Inter-Parliamentary CSCM had staged its fourth round in Greece (2005) and an earlier round was significantly held in Valletta itself in 1995. It pledges its participants to foster dialogue on common security problems on the basis of equal partnership and confidence building. It is on this basis that Malta's foreign policy can be interpreted as having pragmatically inched away from rigid neutrality – at least in practice – by touting its role as a 'trusted interlocutor' between the EU and the Arab Mediterranean (Pace, 2013, pp. 243-245).

However, at that 2005 Inter-Parliamentary CSCM meeting, the members agreed to encompass a wider Mediterranean membership under a reconstituted institution named the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM), whose secretariat is housed in Naples, Italy. On its website, PAM appears to be fully-fledged, including more than a dozen ad hoc committees studying issues of non-traditional security along with the informal diplomatic networking through the mechanism of 'national focal points' for each of the 26 member parliaments, 2 associate partners and 12 observer missions (PAM, 2020). It also appears that the PAM is also acting as a lobby for its member governments vis-à-vis UNCTAD and OECD and their negotiating processes. Moreover, PAM currently serves as an information and 'best practices' dissemination forum for anti-COVID-19 national efforts across the Euro-Mediterranean region (PAM, 2020). The results of the PAM and its predecessor, the Inter-Parliamentary CSCM, are not fully in view but from the perspective of small states in IR, the journey in starting dialogue instead of militarised and antagonistic posturing is itself worthy of celebration as a gain for Maltese foreign policy. As has been argued, if multilateralist processes constrain Gulliver, this is an achievement of the small state's basic survival goal (Keohane, 1969).

In an even more significant demonstration of small state effectiveness in leading international organisations by discharging its due responsibilities as an appointment holder, Malta celebrated its role as the President of the EU Council in 2017 as an outsized diplomatic 'shepherd' (Wivel, 2018). Even though national delegations' attendance of EU Council meetings has been tepid and inconsistent, Malta used its presidency to highlight the gravity of Mediterranean security issues in Brussels by linking migration, development and security (Pace, 2018, pp. 75-81). These moves capitalised on the diplomatic momentum of the EU-Africa Summit convened also in Malta in 2015. Additionally, Malta invoked the EU's environment-friendly credentials to initiate discussions on a Blue Growth Strategy for the Mediterranean that included talks on overfishing, sustainable fishing and job creation relating to sustainable development goals around the maritime sub-region (Pace, 2018, p. 84). It helped that the veteran foreign minister (and now Head of State) George Vella was energetic in leading Malta's stint as EU Council President during those six months in 2017. While no concrete agreement was reached during the presidency, Valletta's efforts have generated discussion space that will probably gain traction on the strong diplomatic tailwind of the ongoing COVID-19 non-traditional security threat.

Singapore faced a similarly perilous security situation at the point of independence in August 1965 at the height of the Cold War in Asia. US-USSR competition was in full force, and the divisions represented by the African-Asian solidarity movements forced the new republic to either take sides or practise a brand of nonalignment acceptable to its immediate neighbours (Chan, 1988; Leifer, 1989). The ruling Peoples' Action Party (PAP) fought and won colonially administered elections on the basis of heralding a new democratic socialist order that was more in tune with the worldwide aspirations of anticolonial populations. This was initially accommodative of the leftist orientation of President Sukarno of Indonesia and his omnidirectional anti-neocolonialist crusade at home and abroad. But the PAP under Lee Kuan Yew also wished to retain the colonial-era British defence arrangements that yoked anti-communist, pro-western Malaya's national and external security to the western camp in world politics. Lee Kuan Yew had fought very hard at home to outmanoeuvre his far Left opponents within the PAP and harboured no wish to see the communist insurgents in Malaya and other leftist countries in Asia succeed by invading Singapore in the name of revolution. Additionally, the birth of an independent Singapore took place against the backdrop of the collapsing truce between North and South Vietnam following the French Indochina War of 1946-54. The US had launched a massive military and economic effort to bolster South Vietnam's non-communist governments in spite of a few coups in Saigon. But this was petering out within a decade following the severe knocks on US domestic morale in the wake of the Tet Offensive, the My Lai massacre and the horrific pictures of casualties televised to Americans at home by their own media companies. A newly emboldened Maoist China was bent on 'exporting revolution' following the boost in confidence given by its participation in the Korean War and now its full throated support for North Vietnam's struggle to reunify with the South through force. During the 1971 Commonwealth Summit held in Singapore, Soviet warships sailed within visual proximity to Singapore's southern port facilities as if to signal that communist forces could menace both Singaporean independence and those of the non-communist Commonwealth members.

As expected, Singapore officially enunciated a nonaligned foreign policy with a twist. As its first foreign minister S. Rajaratnam put it, Singapore practised a foreign policy distinguishing words from deeds (Chong, 2006; Chong & Ong-Webb, 2018). Firstly, the ideal foreign policy would be one where words coincided with deeds. Included in this category are Singapore's close friends and allies because of a coincidence of fundamental objectives and national interests, in spite of minor bilateral 'irritations' from time to time.

The second category would be those whose deeds reflect normalisation and amity towards Singapore, while their official rhetoric reflects a dogmatic ideological hostility. '[T]here is always the hope that friendly relations, however tentative and however cautious, could in the course of time and with good sense on both sides, mature into friendship of the first category' (Chong & Ong-Webb, 2018).

The third category is the negative extreme where both words and deeds are consistently hostile to Singaporean national interests and hence becoming a case of irreconcilable enemies. Rajaratnam observed in 1965 that no country had thus far entered this category. Five decades – and a Cold War – later, Singapore rarely had to deal with the nightmarish third category.

From time to time, Singapore's foreign policy partners have oscillated between categories one and two. Rajaratnam had always counselled patience, and adherence to the principle of welcoming friendship from all directions. This represented a chameleonic form of nonalignment even if the latter has been described as 'slippery' to begin with (Chong, 2006). Well into the Cold War, between 1975 and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, Singapore was quietly servicing the US military effort in Vietnam by supplying the US military and South Vietnam with consumer goods, facilitating rubber supplies, and providing hospitality for US servicemen's 'Rest and Recreation' needs. At the same time, the island republic allowed Communist Beijing's Bank of China to retain a branch in Singapore and allowed China-made consumer goods to be sold in Singapore shops. Beijing's erstwhile rival across the Taiwan Straits sustained a cosy relationship with Lee Kuan Yew himself along with key members of Singapore's Cabinet. Most importantly, Taipei happily allowed the Singapore Armed Forces to train in Taiwan given Singapore's shortage of training areas. This unusual arrangement was to prove both a liability and a bargaining chip in Singapore-Beijing relations following Mao's passing in 1976. Long before this delicate diplomatic dance across the Taiwan Straits, Singapore was carrying on an undeclared illicit trade with Sukarno's Indonesia, despite the latter's loud propaganda against Singapore's coddling of British neo-colonialist air and naval bases on its territory.

Even in the 1990s and 2000s, Singapore's chameleonic nonalignment was manifested in relations with North Korea, Cuba, Iran, Myanmar and most recently with Zimbabwe and Russia. During the unprecedented Trump-Kim Summit, held on Sentosa Island, in Singapore, in 2018, it came to light that both North Korea and the US found Singapore an acceptable intermediary given both sides' quiet Cold War connections with Singapore in trade and other political fields. North Korea had benefitted apparently from Singapore by treating their embassy as a shopping agent for consumer goods and – some suspect – military-capable industrial hardware, given Singapore's open port status. It is also widely known that North Korea has sent a steady trickle of students to study at Singapore's tertiary institutions. Singapore-Iranian and Singapore-Myanmar relations have taken after a similar pattern where the island republic offered both 'pariah' governments an open door for sending their elites to the island for 'medical tourism' under the care of health facilities that are regarded as second to none. Interestingly, Iran has taken a leaf from the Singapore foreign policy playbook and launched a campaign to draw medical tourists to the country for cost-effective high quality English-speaking medical treatment (Iraniansurgery.com, 2019). More recently, in the 2000s, Singapore served as Zimbabwean strongman Robert Mugabe's only reliable Commonwealth friend and sanctions-free tourist destination (Miller, 2017). Unsurprisingly, Mugabe passed away in a Singapore hospital while under treatment for an undisclosed illness in September 2019. During the final years of Lee Kuan Yew's life, Singapore's search for new markets and investment destinations led the veritable 'Minister Mentor' to visit Putin's Russia to court Russian investments and acknowledge Russian elites' fascination with Singapore's economic and one party dominant democratic models. Even Singapore's current engagement with China's Belt and Road Initiative is being undertaken at a time when much of the EU's larger member economies and the Trump Presidency are wary of China's attempt at trans-regional economic and technological hegemony.

In comparing attempts by Malta and Singapore to influence their foreign policy environment for their developmental needs, there are obvious parallels in the pursuit of nonalignment for strategic reasons. Complete bandwagoning with a great power is clearly disavowed for its risk of generating an unhealthy dependency amounting to some form of disguised colonialism. Coalescing and seeking undeclared alliances with equally weak and vulnerable states seems like the more viable option (Jayakumar, 2011; Kausikan, 2017; Yong, 2019). Maltese foreign policy indulged Gaddafi-ruled Libya's maverick anti-western postures and offered itself as interlocutor between the EU and any number of nettlesome Arab Mediterranean neighbours, while Singapore courted Taiwan, Indonesia, North Korea, Iran, Myanmar and Zimbabwe along with the rest of Asia when it was politically risky to do so during the Cold War and after. But Singapore also actively sought to balance the influence of the great powers like China, Russia and the US through subtle manoeuvres in foreign policy even though it could not do so militarily. Malta tried too by emphasising neutrality between Washington and Moscow, but Valletta chose a less risky play without ramping up economic relations in a significant way with the great powers. But like Singapore encouraging developmental regionalism in the form of founding the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and its associated security forums in the 1990s and 2000s, Malta chose to align its economic needs with the EC/EU despite the perceived risks of discrimination by the bigger members. It also attempted to cultivate trade ties under the umbrella of fostering the CSCM vision (Leifer, 1989; Ganesan, 1998; Pace, 1999; Vella, 1999; Pace, 2018).

Experiments in Integration into a Global Economy

Both Malta and Singapore thrive on regional and international trade. Small states tend to operate on the logic that, if the world possesses stakes in these small economies, over time, their presence will entrench some degree of indispensability to the small state's economy. According to the Observatory of Economic Complexity website, Malta appears to have achieved significant economic status despite its territorial size. The OEC's narrative of the island state's economic position in relation to its 2018[1] statistics reads as follows:

> In 2018 Malta exported a total of $4.74B, making it the number 114 exporter in the world. During the last five reported years, the exports of Malta have changed by $2.55B: from $7.29B in 2013 to $4.74B in 2018.
>
> The most recent exports are led by: refined petroleum ($943M), integrated circuits ($651M), packaged medicaments ($463M), models and stuffed animals ($195M), and low-voltage protection equipment ($157M). The most common destination for Malta's exports are: Germany ($511M), France ($419M), Italy ($361M), Singapore ($282M) and Libya ($252M).
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> In 2018, Malta imported $14.8B, making it the number 85 trade destination in the world. During the last five reported years, Malta's imports changed by $3.13B: from $11.7B in 2013 to $14.8B in 2018 (OEC on Malta, 2018).

The picture portrayed here is one of a successful export and import dependent economy. Understandably, imports outstrip exports by a three to one ratio, given the fact that the island possesses no natural resources and imports even most of its basic needs. It is also quite evident that the island's exports reflect the needs of servicing a global technological economy: integrated circuits, fuel products, medical and artisanal novelties. Notably, it imports maritime transportation craft presumably to enhance the transportation of goods and tourists. The top trading partners of the island appear oriented towards mostly developed economies, with a few exceptions such as Russia, China and the Philippines. From the perspective of straightforward economic security, the size of Malta's external trade in dollar terms appears relatively evenly spread out in the event of any bilaterally imposed embargo involving its major trading partners.

And yet, as is typical of fast-growing developing economies, these niche areas are not unique growth formulae. Every growing economy aims for the fastest solutions for national unemployment without necessarily thinking of their sustainability in relation to the long term. Nonetheless, the World Bank has assigned Malta a human capital index of 0.70, placing it in the top band alongside the majority of the EU countries, Canada, USA, Australia and New Zealand. The World Bank's Human Capital index assesses the impact of health and education strategies on the productivity of the next generation of workers (World Bank, 2019). The UNDP ranks Malta even higher at 0.878, ranking 29 out of 189 countries surveyed (UNDP - Malta, 2018). This also partly explains why Malta boasts a GDP per capita of US$31,867, ranking number 34 worldwide.

If one looks at the contribution of different sectors to GDP, tourism stands out with a figure of around 13.4%, followed by the general services sector (comprising professional and technical services combined with financial and insurance activities) at 11.6%, with the other industrial sectors making up single digit percentages (NSO Malta, 2020). Tourism is sustainable, provided Malta's urban housing and transport infrastructures can continue expanding to support increased numbers of visitors. Otherwise, the bottlenecks to the future growth of tourism will intensify to the point of throttling GDP growth. The financial sector is nonetheless a bright spot that perhaps does not need extensive infrastructure development,

[1] 2018 is used as the benchmark year for comparing Malta and Singapore: it is the latest year for which fully declared economic statistics were available for both island states at the time of writing.

aside from adopting the latest in information and communications technology to facilitate real time economic data processing. The 'invest in Malta' campaigns appear to be working, and the attractiveness of Malta's initial implementation of an offshore banking haven has been finessed into a full-scale onshore Malta Financial Services Centre. This approach allows the application of varied regulations being applied to full-fledged banks, as well as 'offshore operations' (Fabri & Baldacchino, 1999). This would of course sit well with the regulatory obsessions of the US Treasury Department or the European Central Bank. Malta appears to have kept its financial reputation secure all these years. This is most strongly attested to by the fact that HSBC Bank has retained its status as Malta's biggest and oldest bank to the point of creating HSBC Bank Malta as a brand name subsidiary of its UK parent. Nonetheless, a 2016 report commissioned by the Central Bank of Malta warned that:

> the transformation of the Maltese economy is the result of the appearance of a large swath of new service operators rather than the disappearance of existing industrial operators. Some industrial sub-sectors, such as the manufacturing of pharmaceutical products have increased their economic share. Meanwhile, even agriculture and fisheries witnessed considerable growth in value added, up by 45%, despite having their share in the national economy halve in the last two decades (Grech, et al., 2016, p. 17).

This is an ostensible warning that Malta is not fully investing in a high technology economy within a specific future-oriented policy roadmap. Indeed, labour productivity per worker has declined in real terms. Amidst the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the private sector has partnered the Ministry for Economy, Investment and Small Businesses, and the Malta Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry to offer webinars for firms interested in further internationalisation of their operations and marketing. This appears to be a run of the mill prescription for post pandemic recovery (Times of Malta, 2020).

According to the same Observatory of Economic Complexity think-tank website, Singapore's economic integration with the world economy is comparatively more glowing:

> In 2018, Singapore imported $323B, making it the number 16 trade destination in the world. During the last five reported years, Singapore's imports changed by -$44.4B: from $368B in 2013 to $323B in 2018.
>
> The most recent imports of Singapore are led by refined petroleum ($48B), integrated circuits ($46.3B), crude petroleum ($25.8B), gold ($10.1B) and office machine parts ($7.11B). The most significant import partners for Singapore are: China ($47.2B), Malaysia ($36.8B), United States ($28.9B), Chinese Taipei ($22B) and Japan ($17.8B).
>
> In 2018, Singapore exported $165B worth of services. The top services exported by Singapore in 2018 were: miscellaneous business, professional, and technical services ($46.4B), sea transport ($41.4B), financial services ($20.7B), travel ($20.4B) and air transport ($9.53B) (OEC on Singapore, 2018).

From this description, there are tremendous overlaps with Malta's profile. Singapore is evidently trading in all the components of high technology industry, oil and oil derivatives, as well as business, professional and logistics services. Its largest markets are however located in Asia and the Pacific Rim. The volume of turnover is several hundred percent larger than Malta's, implying either that Singapore's business promotion strategies are more sophisticated in delivering outcomes or have dabbled successfully in high risk ventures. The problem of risk in attracting high volume oil and manufacturing industries lies in the amplified impact factor when the developed country markets suffer from an economic downturn (Yong, 2019).

Apart from these similarities and differences with Malta, Singapore's economy carries with it several insights about integrating into the world economy. In this regard, this author will draw upon several semi-biographical and philosophical texts authored by key personalities involved in Singapore's economic transformation. Incidentally, this is an aspect in which this author has momentarily been unable to find a parallel in studies of Malta.

Firstly, integration into the world economy came about for Singapore through trial and error, inspired by a few regional examples. Lee Kuan Yew's memoirs record the fact that Singapore's post-Independence economy in the 1960s needed to experiment with low technology manufactures that could deliver profits and employment in the shortest time possible with the minimum of capital outlay. Hence, Singapore's industrial export forays in the early to mid-1960s included producing matchsticks, mosquito coil, vegetable oils, hair cream, joss paper and mothballs. The PAP government even tried luring Hong Kong and Taiwan investors into Singapore to duplicate their factories there, producing toys, textiles and garments (Lee, 2000, p. 68). As Lee recounted it, the initial large expenditures lavished on renovating jungle land in the western part of the island for a dedicated 'industrial park' failed to attract the interest of foreign investors, except for paper recycling and ceramics businesses, both of which petered out quickly. Making fishhooks for foreign companies fared slightly better but this was not a sure formula for future success (Lee, 2000, p. 69). It finally came down to the efforts of Singapore's investment promotion agencies that turned the image of Singapore's hospitality to foreign enterprise around: the work of the Economic Development Board, Enterprise Singapore and the indefatigable personal networking of the PAP Cabinet ministers.

Secondly, the PAP leaders, especially Lee Kuan Yew himself, heeded the advice from a number of sources about calming the anxieties of western and Asian capitalist investors in relation to the PAP's ideology of democratic socialism and the attendant risks of investing in what was then a Third World Singapore. Dr Albert Winsemius, formerly of the UNDP, first made his acquaintance with the PAP in 1960 on a fact-finding visit. Consequently, he befriended Lee and advised him that Singapore's situation required a psychological gambit on top of economic rationality. He advised the PAP to make a symbolic peace with the island's colonial legacy to reassure investors that the new nationalist government was not out to expropriate foreign holdings in Singapore. He advised Lee to retain the statue of Thomas Stamford Raffles, the founder of colonial Singapore, at the mouth of the Singapore River (Lee, 2000, p. 67). This has served as a signal that Singapore would embrace and not renege on its imported western heritage. Subsequently, Lee spent a short sabbatical at Harvard University in 1968 where he met and discussed Singapore's economic strategies with a number of academics. He admitted that Raymond Vernon, the scholar closely associated with theorising the prospects of multinational corporations, made a positive impression on him and convinced him to defy the then Third World 'orthodoxy' of rejecting dependent relationships with western companies. Lee claimed that Vernon imparted to him the idea that technology, industry and markets were all changing with the times and in productive flux (Lee, 2000, pp. 73-74).

This was buttressed by Lee's very capable Finance Minister Goh Keng Swee's personal reflections about experimenting with unorthodox economics. Goh in particular enunciated in his many speeches in the late 1960s and 1970s the need to ensure that Singaporeans needed to avail themselves of the know-how, technical competence, and work attitudes of foreign companies invested in Singapore and employing them to good local effect (Goh, 1995). Once this 'intellectual capital' was acquired, Singaporeans could pioneer their own companies and try their hand at start-ups. In this way, Singaporean economics could invert the Marxist-Leninist warning about the one-way exploitation by foreign 'imperialist' capital.

The rest of the Singapore story then falls into place. Attracting USA's Hewlett Packard (HP) to set up factories producing printers and ink cartridges in Singapore ushered in the company's long-term stakes on the island. This has now morphed into HP reinventing its Singapore base for R&D activities while moving its factory operations offshore to the rest of Asia. The other big anchor of confidence in Singapore's integration into the global petroleum economy lies with the successful attraction of Japan's petrochemical giant Sumitomo Corporation to set up Singapore's first full scale refinery on Jurong Island, offshore from the main island of Singapore. The Japanese were persuaded that, instead of shipping the oil bought from the Middle East to Japan for refining at exorbitant cost, they could do so at midpoint, i.e. Singapore, given its strategic location between two Oceans. This initiated a virtuous cycle with other petroleum companies adapting to a demonstration model and then falling into path dependence via Sumitomo's example.

Both Malta and Singapore appear to be heading in the same direction of retaining their strategic plugs into the global economy. But the relative success of Singapore beckons a host of questions this short article can only tentatively surmise: why was Singapore willing to take such risky gambles and play up the human promotional aspects of economic attraction?

The Idea of a Globally Branded Small State

In Lee Kuan Yew's telling of the 'Singapore Story', the formula behind the developmental orientation of Singapore's foreign economic policy is summed up in one word: 'confidence' (Lee, 2000, p. 87). From the first impressions of investors arriving at the airport, taking in tree lined roads and orderly traffic to the trouble-free operation of the lifts they have to ride to view the industrial factory floors, every aspect relevant to the projection of an efficient coordinated society had to count towards soft power (Lee, 2000, pp. 80-87).

In the author's own research on small state soft power, the ability to offer something of value to outsiders is a necessity for sustaining the sovereign state. The orthodox logics of interdependence and comparative economic advantage offer one set of pedestrian answers concerning the need for all states to contribute to the value chain across the globe. But in offering value to the world of states, non-state actors and peoples can be much more than merely pandering to material needs. Soft power can be a mode of ensuring the survival of a repository of attractiveness through services in diplomacy and serving as demonstrations of good governance (Chong, 2010). Strategies of 'virtual enlargement' are actually feasible for the vast majority of states in the international community. The larger powers – the US, Russia, China, France, Germany, India and Japan and the UK – have already understood this far earlier and on a larger scale than most others. They became 'great' in part due to the practices of physical enlargement in the form of physical conquest and intensive physical penetration across borders in non-traditional spheres of influence, which they actively supplemented with *virtual enlargement* through the export of ideologies, educational standards, popular culture and lifestyle patterns (Chong, 2007; 2014a).

The point of virtual enlargement through ideational instruments is to ensure that the example, or services, offered by the soft power exerciser is prolonged to benefit the exerciser's vitality as a recognised member of international society indefinitely. In relation to small states, smallness, being geographically limited, can be psychologically tactical in disarming major powers' suspicions towards the small state's motives. On the other hand, as some have argued, the small state's foreign policy apparatus may possess among its human resources, intellectual and propagandistic skills that are disproportionate to its physical size (Fox, 1959; Commonwealth Advisory Group, 1997). One can therefore link the possibility of soft power usage by small states with the prospects for the virtual enlargement of their presence in the international community through medium theory borrowed from media studies (Chong, 2010).

In the Singapore case, its active branding as an attractive investment destination is treated seriously as an existential exercise, managed informally by individuals in government and by several full-time economic promotion agencies. The Economic Development Board (EDB) is the most prominently studied amongst these agencies. In Edgar Schein's book, he argued that the EDB was successful because it possessed an organisational culture of "strategic pragmatism" (Schein, 1996). A business school professor, Schein was impressed by the energy, positive attitudes and overall 'can-do' outlook of the staff across the hierarchy. More importantly, national promotion was a matter of learning and well-rehearsed practices of vigilance and open intelligence gathering:

> The basic work of the EDB is carried out through its first-line senior officers who are assigned a technical area to develop by becoming familiar with the area, the major companies worldwide operating in that area, and the prospects for recruiting those companies to develop a project in Singapore. As projects are developed, the proposing officers recruit from among their peers the necessary additional people they will need. Teams are thus formed, and officers often end up "matrixed" across several divisions, reporting to several bosses simultaneously. This way of working internally mirrors Singapore's overall manner of operation, in that most senior civil servants or private sector executives have as many as five different jobs in different organisations at the same time. Such "multitasking" reflects a scarcity of sufficiently trained people in Singapore, but it has the benefit of creating networks and building trust across a wide range of government units and private companies (Schein, 1996, p. 11).

Human resources are not treated as factory shop floor employees. They work across a somewhat flatter and fluid collaborative environment to strategically woo 'sunrise' industries and firms to Singapore. Initially, Lee Kuan Yew felt that the EDB merely introduced companies who adored the risk appetite the agency shared and the promise of Singapore as a *tabula rasa* for their business (Lee, 2000, pp. 77-80). Since the mid-1980s, up till the present, the EDB has acted more strategically by actively issuing Pioneer Certificates and Development and Experience Incentives for companies that invest in Singapore. The EDB currently encourages companies that employ 'intellectual property' derived from R&D use to set up shop in Singapore; specialise in financial strategies and treasury management; promote energy efficient industry; aircraft leasing; and activities that achieve "an intensification of industrial land use towards more land-efficient and higher value-added activities" (EDB Singapore, 2019). In this way, the branding of Singapore goes beyond merely sloganeering; it is also employing advertising *qua* 'incentive policy' to target industries that optimise the use of land, labour, capital and technology. The latter are clearly the usual resource shortfalls found in a small state. Currently, the Singaporean Ministry of Trade and Industry has openly sounded the warning for firms to seize the COVID-19 induced hiatus in economic growth as an opportunity to go digital in their business process operations and marketing in view of the official prognosis that the pandemic will ultimately produce a significant transformation of the global economy. The Minister warned that Singapore needed to consistently defy the "tyranny of geography" in order to keep its prosperity (Lai, 2020).

Malta Enterprise is the EDB's counterpart in Malta. Its objective is a mirror of the small state's need to build a manufacturing base that is sustainable and retains long term viability. It is stated on its website that:

> Malta Enterprise provides incentives for enterprises demonstrating commitment towards growth, an increase in value added and employment. Enterprises engaged in manufacturing, ICT development activities, call centres, healthcare, pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, aviation and maritime services, education and training, logistics and more may benefit from these incentives (Malta Enterprise, 2020).

Very much like Singapore, this declaration of intent reveals successive Maltese governments' aspirations to build niche strengths in the soft industries that prioritise human resources, talent and R&D – and broadly knowledge creation – over those that demand land and large volumes of physical raw materials. Most importantly, these industries of the present and future do not tax, in theory at least, Malta's miniscule territorial size. Playmobil Malta's CEO, Mathias Fauser has praised the skill quality of Maltese workers and the responsiveness of its government; while David Schembri, Director of Manufacturing, Cardinal Health, commends Malta for its logistical efficiency and connectivity to EU markets, Latin America and Asia through air and shipping connectivity. Schembri tellingly quotes cost efficiency as the third most significant factor for his company's stake in Malta. In fourth place, he cites its political and social stability. Luke Satariano, CEO of machine tool manufacturer MCL, in turn praises Malta's vocational schools for allowing him to produce accessories and machinery for other firms (Malta Enterprise - Testimonials, 2020). Yet, notwithstanding these branding efforts, the Maltese government still does not appear to have drawn up a future oriented strategy for the positioning of its workforce and its hospitality to foreign investments for a high technology vision, as has been flagged by a 2016 Central Bank of Malta report (Grech, et al., 2016). This is not a flaw *per se*, but it does suggest a level of passivity in governmental planning for coordinating public and private sector collaborations and strategic industrial foresight. COVID-19 could in fact be a reason to compel businesses to embrace the so-called Fourth Industrial Revolution in digitalizing business.

In comparative terms, it might be said that the global branding of both Singapore and Malta operate along the same frequency but with different degrees of intensity. It is also strongly evident that both small states ardently embrace soft power in foreign economic policy within the discourse of attracting businesses and investment in future forward industries as well as currently profitable ones. Through investment promotion efforts, both small states enlarge themselves virtually through their brands that are simultaneously riding on globalisation-assisted interdependence. The difference between the two small island states lies in the degree of risk, aggressiveness, and gamble in their respective promotion efforts.

Malta and Singapore: The difference in degrees of risk?

In this tentative comparison of Malta and Singapore, this article has attempted to cut to the core of the study of small states in international politics by studying foreign policy and development. How do these two instruments and fields of policy endeavour enable both states to survive, and even thrive, in international society? Foreign policy adjusts relationships between the small state and the rest of the international society by either practising power politics at one extreme, to various stages of middling strategies that lead to the other extreme of almost complete pacifism. Hence, foreign policy matters to the study of small states because it determines physical security, or demise as an international actor.

Development is not that different from foreign policy. Development in a small state context is usually understood in terms of economic growth underpinning the rise of a middle class and the ending of mass poverty, just as it is with the majority of the Global South. For a small state, development *qua* economics, must always be aligned, or ordered if one prefers, to compensate for the small state's shortfalls in land, labour, capital and technology. This is why Malta and Singapore must always stay open and engaged with the global economy. This is also the theoretical point this author has made elsewhere about the strategic purpose of virtual enlargement (Chong, 2010).

Scrutinizing Malta and Singapore in particular, the difference across the three areas of examination – foreign policy mitigating the security environment, integration with the global economy, and the global branding strategies of each – is revealed as degrees of risk taking. In terms of foreign policy, both states have played with multilateralism to guarantee security against harassment by bigger states and taken counterintuitive policy measures to displace and pre-empt predatory behaviour (Pace, 1999, pp. 203-209; Ganesan, 1998; Pace, 2018). One party-ruled Singapore has perhaps taken more risks than Malta by consistently cultivating relatively substantive ties with communist states and international pariahs during and well after the Cold War. Independent Malta however started out cautiously under the extended Anglo-Maltese climate of transitional economic goodwill carefully coordinated by the centrist government of Prime Minister George Borg Oliver of the Nationalist Party. This translated into a pro-British and mostly pro-NATO foreign policy. (Pirotta, 2018, pp. 1105-1120) However, by 1971 Malta switched to a distinctly non-aligned posture under a left leaning government headed by Prime Minister Dom Mintoff of the Malta Labour Party. This stance was upheld well into the mid-1980s. By the early 1990s, the attractions of membership in the EU for most parties across the political spectrum revived serious talk of tweaking Malta's constitutionally enshrined neutrality to enable it to play a stronger role in EU policymaking (Pace, 2013, pp. 248-250; Pace, 2018).

Singapore's boldness in carving out its own version of foreign policy independence went from strength to strength. Following Rajaratnam's dictum of courting all non-hostile, like-minded states, Singapore has gone out of its way to jointly coordinate a semi-formal Forum of Small States (FOSS) at the UN as a significant lobby group and caucus within the organisation. FOSS ensures that diplomatic solidarity obtains among small states whenever each member is putting up candidates for any official UN appointment. Malta is working with Singapore within FOSS; but Singapore has acted in a more gregarious manner by even joining other small state caucuses like the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS). A significant reason for Singapore joining the latter two caucuses is to jointly lobby for international regimes that will protect low-lying coastal states from the impending effects of global warming and the concomitant rise in sea levels worldwide. (UNESCO, n.d.; Lee, 2019). Malta has taken no such formal role.

On the economic integration front, Singapore and Malta pursued parallel strategies on trade and investment enmeshment with the regional economies and the rest of the world. Both have been enriched by industries that do not rely heavily on land and labour. They have compensated their limitations by borrowing and attracting funds and technology from other economies and non-state economic actors. Singapore experimented with economics contra-ideology, and this paid off in Singapore's large trade turnover and sizable GDP figures. The large body of primary literature on Singapore's economic thought has revealed a great deal of trial and error efforts mixed in with strategic learning and aggressive self-promotion.

Finally, in terms of national economic branding for the global market, Singapore seems to have adopted an extremely high-risk strategy that can trigger significant setbacks since it is actively tracking high-tech futuristic industries. Failure remains a distinct possibility depending on whether these trend-following strategies can be sustainable despite physical shortcomings in land and tangible resources. Malta is embracing high technology and financial businesses in a more passive mode, given the persistence of traditional industries like tourism and agro-fisheries in its GDP composition. Therefore, in going forward in the study of small states' strategies for thriving, one must increasingly devote careful attention to the scrutiny of policy innovations in *intangible* strengths and resources.

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