

BLAME IT ON HISTORY: AN ANALYSIS OF RACIST ATTITUDES AMONGST
MALTESE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science at George Mason University, and the degree of Master of Arts
at the University of Malta

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Statement of authenticity :

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Susan Mercieca
7th September 2011

DEDICATION

*For my parents,
their patience has no bounds*

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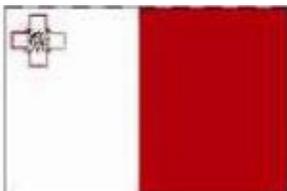


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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EU	European Union
EASO	European Asylum Seekers Office
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
JRS	Jesuits Refugee Service (Malta)
SOS Malta	Solidarity Overseas Service, Malta
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNHCR	United Nations Refugee Agency

GEOGRAPHICAL NOTE

The Maltese archipelago lies half way between the Straits of Gibraltar and Lebanon at practically the precise centre of the Mediterranean Sea. The closest shore is that of Sicily just 58 miles north, while Tripoli and Tunis lie some 220 miles due south and about 200 miles to the west, respectively.

Malta is seventeen miles long and nine miles wide and covers an area of 95 square miles. Gozo is nine miles by five miles with an area of 26 square miles. Comino which lies in between these two islands has an area of one square mile. Total area 122square miles (316 km²). Other uninhabited islets are those of Cominotto (just off Comino), St Paul's Islands (across from St Paul's Bay) and Filfla (across from Zurrieq). Mainly arid, the Maltese islands are made of limestone and the soil has a lot of clay. The maximum land rise is at Dingli Cliffs which rise 800 feet above sea level.

Being in this strategic geographical position Malta has thus been in contact with Europe and Africa, which cultures have both contributed to the many traits which the islanders have adapted to their own use¹.

The population of the Maltese islands is just over 410,000 making it with the highest population density in the European Union.

¹ Boissevain, J., *Saints and Fireworks; Religion and Politics in Rural Malta* (Progress Press Co Ltd -1993 Revised Edition) pg 1.

ABSTRACT

BLAME IT ON HISTORY: AN ANALYSIS OF RACIST ATTITUDES AMONGST MALTESE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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George Mason University & University of Malta, 2011

Thesis Director: Dr. Karyna Korostelina

Malta, a tiny island-state in the Mediterranean Sea has been a member of the European Union since 1 January 2004, and a member of the Schengen area² since 21st December 2007. Since then, Malta has seemingly provided a golden gateway for the boatloads of people that escape the African shores in search of a better way of life. Many a study has focused on how this migratory phenomenon has effected the Maltese population. A detention policy enacted by the Maltese Government precludes the landed immigrants from roaming freely to their utter disillusionment. Thus if migration is as old as mankind, and the Maltese people are migrants themselves, one should assume that the Maltese – *should* understand and accept the immigrants in Malta. But answers to questions put to the University students in this study and other studies herewith quoted, prove differently. The shared-memories of the conflicts of gone-by eras, the way our history books have

² The border-free Schengen area guarantees free movement to European Union citizens and comprises the territories of twenty-five European countries that have implemented the Schengen Agreement, Malta included.

recorded such conflicts and taught in Maltese schools, as seen from the social identity theory³, may have contributed for the current prejudice against the '*klandestini*'⁴ and other foreigners. This study analyses the students' attitudes towards these 'third country nationals'.⁵

Key words: identity conflict, immigration, prejudice, chosen traumas, racism.

³ A social identity is one's self-concept as derived from a perceived membership in his or her own relevant social group and as a way of explaining one's behaviour in the inter-group, as originally expounded by Henri Tajfel and John C. Turner in the 1970's and 1980's.

⁴ The word '*klandestini*' is derived from Latin '*clandestinus*' meaning secret or concealed. This word is usually used for stowaways on ships but the Maltese and even Italians refer to the Africans who come to Europe on a boat as *klandestini* which is written in the same way in both languages.

⁵ These are citizens that hail from countries outside the European Union bloc.

“our nation and our youth are hedged in by innumerable prejudices and were enveloped to a great extent in the obscurity and darkness of the most profound ignorance which constitutes the principal obstacle to our progress in the arts and the sciences”

Mikiel Anton Vassalli, (1764-1829)⁶

(Vassalli conceived the Maltese people as a ‘nation’ and was the first to address his compatriots publicly and in print as the *Nazione Maltese* and to be the first to call the Maltese Language as the National Language⁷)

“Our history is our own cultural DNA. DNA’s are extremely difficult in discovery. However, even though one would still have the same fixed identity without knowing the key, understanding brings about a fuller and more intense conscience of one’s life. One individual’s own, and our nation’s.”⁸

⁶ Vassalli, Mikiel Anton, *Ktyb Yl Klym Malti* (loosely translated into: the Book of Maltese words), printed in Rome, 1796, p. xxii.

⁷ Cassar, Paul Dr, *The Quest for Mikiel Anton Vassalli*, (Ministry of Education Publishing) 1981, p.35. Dr Cassar quotes from translations of Vassalli himself for the Maltese people to start to think of themselves as a nation. Cassar states that Vassalli conceived this idea at a time when the Maltese were far from being treated as a nation and when books dedicated to persons of influence were usually members of the Order of Saint John.

⁸ Mifsud Bonnici Ugo, (President Emeritus of Malta and former Education and Human Resources Minister) in his foreword to Frenndo Henry, *Maltese Political Development 1798-1964; a documentary history* (Interprint Ltd – 1993).

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 *Introduction*

As this is being written, the political and economic stability in Europe, is in great turmoil and changing each day. Riots in London at the beginning of August 2011, took the British by surprise while a few weeks earlier, a lone gunman did the same when he wreaked havoc in peaceful Norway; a Nordic blonde male who deemed killing scores of other Nordic youths at a political youth camp as *necessary* to achieve his mono-cultural aims. These incidents inherently brought to the fore issues relating to racism, amongst others.

These incidents also evolved in the wake of the *Arab Spring* which invariably turned into the *Arab Summer* and ripened quite a few conflicts. In December 2010, an unemployed Tunisian graduate Mohammed Bouazizi doused himself with petrol in protest for being disallowed by the local Police to earn a living for his family by selling vegetables. Little did Bouazizi know that he fired not only himself but the rest of the Tunisian nation whose protests escalated (also thanks to the social media), to the point of dismantling the regime of the Tunisian President, culminating in the domino effect that pervaded and angrily raged in the following weeks and months at Tahrir Square in Cairo, Egypt, until the

Egyptian President had to step down and in August 2011 faced criminal action on a stretcher inside an Egyptian Courtroom. On February 17th, 2011 it was the turn of Libya and its maverick Leader Muammar Ghaddafi who witnessed the end of the British Base in Malta⁹ – which conflict gained a certain momentum in the summer months of 2011. Similar incidents and conflicts have plagued the year 2011, and are still raging on in Syria, Yemen and Morocco. But not only. Other countries have experienced protests against the way their Government was running their country or against austerity measures, as happened in Greece, Spain and also in Israel.

All these conflicts; all these deaths and all these new thousands of North Africans fleeing their country to enter the European Union. Is culture also to blame? Or is it lack of understanding, education and/or political direction? Or should the phenomenon of the social media - be given the praise?

This study will examine the attitudes, the fears and prejudices of the people living on the tiny archipelago at the southernmost tip of Europe :the Maltese Islands – against the non-Maltese that visit these same islands, from a conflict resolution or conflict management point of view, while slightly referring to the social psychological perspective. The study will analyse if the Maltese look at in-group similarities as opposed to group differences – herewith referred to as metacontrast while also trying to glean information whether the

⁹ The 31st March of the year 1979 saw the last British ship leave Malta and thus Malta did not serve as a British Base anymore. The then Prime Minister Dominic Mintoff had invited Muammar Gaddafi to witness this event which is today still commemorated as a public holiday : Freedom Day.

Maltese have attractions to other peoples; if they have prototypes. While delving into the historical context, the study also aims to individualise reservoirs, memory pockets, chosen glories and/or traumas throughout the history. An analysis of some security issues will also be examined especially with regard to illegal immigrants. The study aims to explore such issues and if identity management would be recommended in order to avoid an inflamed identity conflict deep-rooted in Malta's colonial and foreign-governed past. Since identity is socially constructed, identity can be re-constructed and also re-defined.

Once connected by a land bridge to Europe and possibly to Africa¹⁰. These islands along with the Italian Island of Lampedusa have witnessed and received boatload after boatload of people escaping from the North African shores supposedly towards a safer haven, with a rapid rise in numbers in the last few years. Most of these Africans make it to shore but many others perish on the way. The exact amount can never be verified due to the secrecy of the trips.

But Malta is not a new place for immigrants nor immigration as Fernand Braudel (1972:119) pointed out (when referring to Corsica, another island in the Mediterranean Sea) in the 16th Century that '*the commonest way which the islands entered the life of the outside world was by emigration*¹¹'. Thus even though it is a small island-state with the

¹⁰ No Palaeolithic implements have been found in Malta but the caves and fissures are famous for the quantities of animal remains. Ghar Dalam – the Cave of Darkness in Birzebbugia in the south of Malta bears witness to this as it is a store of fossil remains of an Upper Pleistocene fauna that include remnant of elephant tusks.

¹¹ As cited in: Cassola, A., *The Literature of Malta: an example of Unity in Diversity* (Minima Publishers – Malta 2000) First Edition. Pg26.

closest beach being that of Sicily 58 miles to the north of the capital Valletta, the sudden extra influx of immigrants may be casting dark shadows whilst reviving old fears. This study in fact aims to explore the related fears that the Maltese feel specifically with regard to the North Africans and other immigrants and whether this is fuelling even more the prejudice that the Maltese may have or had, which prejudice is evidenced by the increase in racial incidents that have occurred in the normal course of life in Malta. Some Maltese even claim they do not want to donate blood since some blood may end up being given to the North African immigrants if they ended up in hospital.

But in order to understand why the Maltese may have accumulated or perhaps refreshed these prejudices, one first needs to first understand who the Maltese are and where they come from. The history of the Maltese islands, and that of its literature may shed light on this.

According to Kriesberg (2006), *'every fight is unique but there are some qualities in common with others and such commonalities allow us to learn from particular conflicts and apply what has been learnt to similar conflicts'* – and the tiny island of Malta is no stranger to conflicts nor fights.

Situated exactly in the middle of the Mediterranean sea, a sovereign nation state with the name of Malta, hailed as the prehistoric *'Sacred Island'* of the Mediterranean or the *'sea*

of civilisation and all history' and at times the '*Golden Apple*'¹² in the struggle of the powers of ancient and modern times, lays claim to a colourful and chequered history. Conflicts have abounded on the islands of Malta, Gozo and Comino since ancient times, not least because these islands were considered quite a conquest by various rulers with their strategic geographic position and sheltered natural ports but also because of religious beliefs. '*Malta has great memories,*' claimed the Prince of Wales, later King Edward VIII on the occasion of the opening of the Maltese Parliament in 1921.¹³

There are no fossils of Homo Sapiens that may be classified as 'archaic' found in Malta and as such the first people to inhabit these islands arrived around 4200B.C. and already evolved into anatomically modern human beings¹⁴. Thus even if the first Maltese indigenous people, as some claim, are of Carthaginian origin or else drifted onto the island via make-shift wood rafts from neighbouring Sicily, since important similarities exist between the earlier Neolithic cultural phases of *Stentinello* in eastern Sicily and at *Ghar Dalam* in (Birzebbugia) Malta, especially as revealed in certain pottery types¹⁵, the Maltese people's genetic make-up; the DNA, contains blood-lines from all those peoples and nations that have plundered, pillaged, or fell in love with the natives. Also considering that much later, in 1245 since Malta was sparsely populated, there are

¹²The Government Tourist Bureau Malta., *Malta, the Island of Sunshine and History* (The Vandyck Printers Limited –Bristol and London) undated. Pg three.

¹³ Ibid., pg three.

¹⁴ Goodwin, S., *Malta: Mediterranean bridge* (Bergin & Garvey -2002) pg2

¹⁵ Ibid. pg3

historical books that refer to an influx of Tunisian serfs from the Island of Djerba to work in the farms¹⁶. Therefore quite a European and African mix.

Thus, just like many other nations, one can say that the Maltese identity is intertwined with its historical background, that ranges from prehistoric times, to the time of the Phoenicians, and notably that of the Knights of Saint John and on to the British era, because like other nations, the Maltese people today are a reflection and a product of their past undulated history.

But the extent to which this very history and specifically the history books that interpreted the historic events may have manifested into shaping the Maltese identity – or what the Maltese understand by identity - has not been measured or explored in the way this study purports and in contrast to similar studies quoted in the following chapters which were conducted before the start of the *Arab Spring*. Neither has it been indicated from results of similar studies, if there may be a cause for alarm for an identity-based conflict on these islands especially with the upsurge in the influx of economic migrants and/or refugees. These migrants are commonly referred to by the Maltese and similarly by the Italians, as *klandestini*¹⁷ and they hail from the African continent and/or the Asian basin onto the little Maltese soil that there is on its hilly arid lands.

¹⁶ Wood, J., *The Land of the Turks: North African Adventure* (Melita Historica, 2006 ISSN 1021-6952 Vol. XIV, no.3 pg 333-334.

¹⁷ From Latin, *clandestinus* – hidden, secret.

In this study, the researcher's aim was exploration and analysis of attitudes amongst a chosen group of youths: Maltese university students, their views and racist attitudes, if any, and the root causes of such in order to indicate perhaps an identity based conflict and/or incidence of prejudice. The study also focussed on identity awareness and group self-esteem while also taking note if identity management would be needed.

Dozens of books have been written on and about Maltese history, by local and by foreign historians, both academics and amateurs, not to say anything of writers of historical novels. For the purpose of this study a select number of history books, particularly early educational history books were chosen in favour of more academically researched books, over a varied period of publishing from the 20th and 21st Century in order to gain the popular view of what passes for history.

It is important to note that the study was spurred from the introductions during the course of the taught part of this masters, when the researcher who has lived in Malta all her life, felt a certain aversion at the mention that there was a student of Turkish origin, knowing the harrowing experiences – as depicted in the Maltese history books - that the Maltese were dealt with by these Turkish *pirates* and *corsairs*. It is equally, if not even more, important to note that the researcher's aversion quickly dissipated in the following weeks thanks to the development of a friendly relationship and the lowering of the historical prejudicial barrier. So if the researcher could overcome this barrier, can the other Maltese do so? What can be done to remove their prejudices?

According to a tale about the origins of the Maltese people that Andrea Smith¹⁸ reproduced, after she heard it by a Swiss priest who had spent many years in the Maghreb, during the course of her anthropological studies, the Maltese were described by this Swiss priest as a hybrid, boundary-defying people closely related to Jews and that the Maltese were created one day when Jesus was tired.

A certain amount of detail of the historical timeline has been delved into with regard to the basic popular historical facts of Malta, of the Maltese language and also literature in order for a better understanding to emerge within this study's particular context with regard to the Maltese, the birth of the Maltese nation and the racist, xenophobic or prejudice reflected today in the generation of Maltese youth even though *'there is no scientific justification for using the term (race), as to refer to a discrete hierarchy of 'races' distinguished by phenotypical features such as skin colour, as in the latter sense, as far as the biological and genetic sciences are concerned, 'races' do not exist* (Montagu 1972; Rose et al. 1984:119-27)¹⁹.

Thus, armed with this scientific information, the question as to why some people have racist attitudes springs to mind naturally. One cannot argue though that despite being one race, humans have different cultures, according to where they have lived, and what they

¹⁸ Smith, A.L., *Colonial Memory and Postcolonial Europe: Maltese settlers in Algeria and France* (Indiana University Press -2006) pg90.

¹⁹ Miles, R., Brown, M., *Racism*. Routledge (2003- Second Edition, pg88

have experienced and not just *culche*. Edward Taylor in *Primitive Culture* (1870) defined culture as ‘that complex whole which included knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society’²⁰ as opposed to Matthew Arnold’s definition in *Culture and anarchy* (1867)²¹ that culture refers to special intellectual or artistic endeavours or products . Thus, without delving into the discussion of the precise development of views of what constitutes all the shades of culture today, one invariably notes that different beliefs and different ways of life, seem to make humans behave differently, and some culture is invariably acquired by belonging to some social group or a society. And that is one of the reasons why the European Union for example has an immigrant integration policy because it is known that the more effort to integrate within these different groups, the less racist attitudes there will be as it results from various studies, the latest being done by SOS Malta in August 2011²².

Meanwhile it is also to be noted that ‘*Malta’s history about which so much has been written is not really well known. Perhaps worst still, some superficial assessments or prejudiced verdicts still pass as history*’ is what a former president of Malta said in his introduction to Henry Frenndo’s book on *Maltese Political Development 1798-1964*. Thus this research can in no way be termed as exhaustive as regards to the analysis of the

²⁰ Avruch, K., *Culture and conflict resolution* (United States Institute of Peace – 2006 Fifth Printing) pg6

²¹ Ibid.pg6

²² Solidarity Overseas Service (SOS) Malta, *Step in- Do 1 Thing: A preliminary assessment of Integration in Malta* (August 2011).

history books and Maltese history but certainly explorative in the way some books may have depicted the *others*.

1.2 Malta's historical timeline: in the popular imagination

The following is the historical timeline as the researcher perceives it from popular accounts. The reader who has studied Maltese history will immediately realise that it is a distorted version of history with emphasis laid where it is of little political consequence but of deep popular relevance. The researcher is not claiming that the following is a definitive body of popular historical knowledge.

Pre-history

Malta has fully-erect stone temples at Tarxien and a unique necropolis at the *Hypogeum* in Paola which were in use in the 3rd millennium B.C. Other temples from the Megalithic period such as *Hagar Qim*, *Mnajdra* and *Ggantija* in Gozo still stand today. Some historians believe that Malta may have been some haven for the tempest-tossed sailors who offered sacrifices to the Deity in thanksgiving or for favourable weather conditions. Remains show the local Deity as a reclining, short and fat lady.

Phoenicians 9th Century B.C.

Earliest inhabitants of Malta are known to be Phoenicians of Israelite origin who planted colonies in Africa, Sicily and Spain and laid their foundations in Carthage, now Tunisia.

Greeks

Other historians claim that the Greeks settled in Malta between 700 and 480 B.C. though there is not much evidence on this.

Romans

At around 264 B.C. the Punic Wars broke out between the Romans and the Carthaginians and Malta is claimed to have been governed by the Romans, after the second Punic War, between 218 B.C. and 395 A.D during which Malta became a Roman Municipium which means that Malta was under the Roman Constitution.

Saint Paul

At around 60 A.D Saint Paul was said to have arrived in Malta when his ship was wrecked. He is also claimed to have converted the Maltese to Christianity. He also appointed the first Bishop of Malta : Publius.

The Byzantines (395-870)

With the fall and break of the Roman Empire, Malta ended under their rule first when it formed part of the Western Empire and then in 494 under the Eastern Empire until the year 870.

The Arabs (870-1090)

Malta was under Islamic Rule during this time and a census taken in the year 991 by order of the Emir stated that there were nearly 15,000 Muslims to just over 6,000 Christians – amounts which are debated by historians.

The Union of Malta and Sicily

Norman Rule 1090-1194

Under Count Roger the Faith of Rome was restored. Legend has it that Count Roger gave a strip of his own flag before he left for Sicily in token to the Maltese, which colours, the red and the white, in equal proportions, is currently the flag of Malta.

The Swabians (1194-1266)

Malta was ceded to a Fiefdom and the feudal system was introduced.

The Angevins (1268-1283)

The Maltese plotted against the rule under the house of Anjou and this plot is known as the ‘Sicilian Vespers’.

The Aragonese (1283-1410)

This period is sometimes referred to as 'The Times of the Tyrants' as Malta was passed from one hand of a Feudal Lord onto another while the Maltese people were not said to be respected.

The Castilians (1412-1530)

Malta passed under the reign of King Ferdinand of Castile after an interregnum of two years. By this time the Maltese had some kind of Communal Government and free from the feudal lords until the Maltese Islands were again sold to Don Antonio Cardona, Viceroy of Sicily for 30,000 Florins. Cardona resold Malta to Don Gonsalvo Monroy, a nobleman who is remembered as being cruel and greedy. The Maltese though overthrew the government of Monroy and went to King Alfonso in Sicily to expel the feudal lord. And on 3rd January 1427 King Alfonso gave the Maltese a *Diploma* which is a document preserved in the National Bibliotheca in Valletta, Malta and which is regarded as the *Maltese Magna Charta*.

Attacks from Pirates

Meanwhile towards the end of the Castilian rule the Maltese islands were plundered and pillaged by so-called Arab pirates who often landed on the coast to sack the villages from all they could find and from able men who were taken as slaves. At the same time on the other side of the Mediterranean sea the Turks were also gaining momentum and after taking Constantinople from the Byzantines were extending their power to the west and thus frequently also attacked the Maltese shores. The attacks are said to have been made

by a mix of Moors, Turks and Arabs. Malta was in fact the scene of the struggles between the Cross and the Crescent during this time.

The Religious and Military Order of the Knights Hospitallers of Saint John of Jerusalem, Rhodes and Malta (1530-1798)

King Charles V ceded Malta to the Order of Saint John – the chief defenders of the Cross - who thus became known as the Knights of Malta with Grand Master Philippe de Villiers de l’Isle Adam being the first grand master of Malta after the Knights were driven out of the island of Rhodes in the Dodecanese. One must also note here that the Knights of Malta also ‘lived by plunder as much as any Corsair: but they tempered their freebooting with chivalry and devotions; they were the protectors of the helpless and afflicted and they preyed chiefly upon the enemies of the Faith²³’.

The Great Siege (1565)

It is historically claimed to have been the biggest battle that Malta was ever involved in and sometimes described as the ‘*brightest page in the records of Christendom*²⁴’. The attack is said to have come from the Turkish Admiral in Chief Piali Pasha and Mustapha Pasha with Dragut being entrusted with the operation to try to take over Malta with a fleet of 15 galleys and 1,500 men at the initial stage. After many losses both from the Maltese and the Knights’ side and by the Turkish side, help by means of the Sicilian fleet of the

²³ Lane-Poole, S., *The Barbary Corsairs* (T. Fischer Unwin/ G.P. Putnam’s Sons- 1890) Kessinger Publishing (Rare Reprints – ISBN 1-4179-4913-9) pg142.

²⁴ The Government Tourist Bureau Malta., *Malta, the Island of Sunshine and History*, (The Vandyck Printers Limited –Bristol and London) undated. Pg seven.

Knights arrived on 7th September 1565 and the Turks taken by surprise, are said to have retreated while the greatest of all struggles ever engaged between the Crescent and the Cross was said to be over. The 8th of September is thus a public holiday till this day and it is known as the day of Victory. It is also the titular feast of Our Lady of Victory in one of the Three Cities in the inner harbour region opposite Valletta.

Napoleon Bonaparte (1798-1800)

In the meantime the French General Bonaparte was gathering momentum in building his great French Empire and thus when a suggestion to take possession of Malta was made to him, he took the challenge and on 9th June 1798 he went to Malta with a great French Fleet supposedly made up of 472 war vessels with Bonaparte on his ship *L'Orient* in command. The Knights of Malta thus capitulated and French rule took over. One of the articles mentioned in the Capitulation gave the Maltese people the right “*..will be allowed the free exercise of their religion, They will enjoy their privileges and their property will not be confiscated*”. But besides this Bonaparte is also known to have pillaged the Maltese churches from their precious gold and silver items. One such valuable item which Bonaparte took from the Maltese and which today stands on show at the Museum *De Louvre* in Paris, France, is the dagger which belonged to the Grand Master Jean Parisot de La Valette – the founder of the Maltese capital city. A theft which the Maltese have never forgotten and many times still argue in the local papers about its return. When Bonaparte occupied Malta he claimed to have the ‘strongest place in Europe’ as Malta was considered the most strategic place in the whole Mediterranean. According to Laferla

in *The Story of Man in Malta*²⁵, it is certain that no one in the space of a few days attempted more (Bonaparte only stayed in Malta eight days), did more and upset the Maltese more than he did'. Bonaparte abolished slavery in Malta and also indicated the Code Napoleon as a basis for the laws of Malta (apart from the Roman Laws and Code de Rohan in place at the time).

The British Blockade (1800)

Captain Alexander Graham Ball²⁶ with direction from Lord Nelson pressed to besiege the French and to storm the city of Valletta in order to take over the island since the Maltese were not very happy with the French occupation under General Vaubois. Even though the French administration was an improvement on that of the Knights, when the French started to seize church property and close the religious convents, the Maltese rose against them.²⁷ In fact a few uprisings against the French took place notably that of Don Michele Xerri, a priest from Zebbug Malta who was shot at along with a group of forty five persons who were caught plotting against the French. The Maltese asked directly for Admiral Nelson's help. England - through Nelson and Ball in fact defeated the French. And in 1813 the Maltese were recognised as British subjects and the year after the Treaty of Paris ratified the pact which had been entered into between Malta and Great Britain.

²⁵ Laferla, A.V., *The Story of Man in Malta* (A.C.Aquilina and Co. 1958) p144.

²⁶ Laspina, S., *Outlines of Maltese History; prehistoric to modern times* (A.C. Aquilina & Co Publishers - 1966 Tenth Edition Revised) pg209.

²⁷ Gourlay., Douglas, *Andrew Jameson and the origins of the Criminal Code of Malta*, (Melita Historica, 2009, ISSN 1021-6952, Vol. XV, no.2: 109-134), (The Malta Historical Society – 2009) pg 109.

British Rule 1800-1964

Under British Rule, Malta changed from a theocracy ruled by a religious order to a self-governing colony with an active internal political life²⁸.

Malta was also utilised to the fullest by the British, including the building of a dockyard and concentration of its fleet in the Maltese natural harbours. The tiny uninhabited islet of Filfla, just off the coast of Zurrieq also diminished in size during the time of the British since it was used as target practice by the British forces.

The importance of Malta was underscored during the first World War when squadrons of the Allies – the British, the French, Japanese, Italian and American – were anchored in her harbours.

Similarly in World War II Malta played an even greater role as Maltese men and women enrolled in the armed forces and the Civil Defence Services while for more than three years the island was bombarded from the air and food rations ran low until a convoy of ships barely managing to move, made it to Malta to give the necessary supplies that were needed. Malta was awarded the George Cross in April of 1942 by King George VI for the bravery of its garrison. Such a cross is emblazoned on the top left corner on the white part of the Maltese flag. Incidentally this cross is of some current concern to some Maltese because they argue in favour of removing it as it promotes pro-colonial and/or other sentiments.

²⁸ Boissevain, J., *Saints and Fireworks; Religion and Politics in Rural Malta* (Progress Press Co Ltd -1993 Revised Edition) pg6.

Malta becomes an independent state 21st September 1964

Upon a final agreement reached between the Government of Malta and the British Government, Malta gained its independence and ceased to be a colony of the British Empire. Malta became an independent nation of the Commonwealth and thus gained its sovereignty. The Nationalist Government's Prime Minister Giorgio Borg Olivier in his message to the People of Malta on 21st July 1964 said that *:the Maltese people are not unaccustomed to great events and I have no doubt that they will reckon this among their greatest. We will all, I am sure, face this new era in our long and glorious history with faith, courage and determination.*²⁹

The birth of the Republic of Malta 1974

After independence Malta joined a number of international organisations and in 1965 joined the United Nations and the Council of Europe. Although a small state, Malta contributed to initiatives in international affairs and most notable was the initiative by the Maltese delegate to the United Nations in 1967 where Arvid Pardo proposed the elimination of possible conflicts concerning sovereignty of the sea-bed by using the wealth derived from the sea-bed to finance development in the poorer countries of the world.³⁰

²⁹ Cremona, J.J., *The Maltese Constitution and Constitutional History since 1813* (Publishers Enterprises Group Limited -1997) pg 172.

³⁰ Cassar, C., *A Concise History of Malta* (Mireva Publications -2002) pg243

Meanwhile Malta's face was changing from that of an occupied defence station to a country of agriculture, manufacturing and tourism. A change to a Labour government in the early 1970's and the creation of a welfare state coupled with the promoting of Malta as a neutral and non-aligned status was aimed to 'open' Malta to new markets, investments and financial aid from untapped sources'³¹ But Cassar also claims that the Labour government went out of its way to '*champion the Arab cause in the international scene. The Maltese were projected as partly Arab and partly European, and the teaching of Arabic became compulsory in Maltese secondary schools. This move served to open an issue over Maltese ethnic identity indicating that the search for an identity is far from a dead issue in tiny Malta*³².

Malta was thus proclaimed a Republic on the 13th December of 1974 with Governor General Sir Anthony Mamo becoming the first President.

Freedom Day, 31st March 1979

When Malta ceased to serve as a base for the British on 31st March 1979, which was witnessed by the then Ruler of Libya, Colonel Muammar Gaddafi – the Maltese Prime Minister Dominic Mintoff was reported to have referred to the Libyans as '*blood*

³¹ Ibid. Pg244.

³² Ibid. Pg245.

brothers', clearly combining the two elements implicit in this construction, namely language and descent.³³

Malta joins the European Union 1st May 2004

After a public referendum on 8th March 2003, the country narrowly voted in favour of joining the European Union and after a re-election the Nationalist Government, the then Prime Minister Edward Fenech Adami signed the accession treaty in Athens in April 2003 and Malta joined the European Union on 1st May 2004.

1.3 Malta's Literature – the birth of a Nation

In the contemporary world, language often marks the identity of the ethnic community or nation. Consequently, we often hear strong views about the need for official national languages and the importance about the need for official national languages and the importance of citizens speaking a single language despite the existence of many bi- and multilingual people and states³⁴. For Malta the issue of the Maltese language is quite tortuous and complex.

³³ Ibid. Pg245. The author Cassar also notes that the term 'brother' in Semitic languages is a classificatory term often used strategically to reduce distance. In reality, Cassar claims, Mintoff's discourse contributed towards closer relations between Malta and Libya at a time when the Maltese relations between Malta and Libya at a time when the Maltese depended, almost totally on Libyan oil.

³⁴ Howard Ross, M., *Cultural Contestation in Ethnic Conflict*, Cambridge University Press (2007) pg127

The linguistic history of a territory is as complex as the political history of its inhabitants. Sometimes it is more convenient to speak of territories rather than peoples, because the ethnic composition of the inhabitants of an area may change, sometimes drastically³⁵. And that is what happened in Malta because throughout the course of its history, and because of the many rulers who conquered it, the language changed, became malleable and today stands structurally fused amongst the branches of semitic and romance languages (Zohar:1992) deriving from Arabic and Amorite but not without an injection of Italian and English adopted words.³⁶

It is many times claimed that thanks to language, humans possess culture. And with the acquisition of culture, and the production of Maltese literature, Cassola claims³⁷ that since a good number of Maltese authors have lived away from the island, their stay in the different country influenced their literary output.

In fact, Mikiel Anton Vassalli who is claimed to be the 'Father' of the Maltese Language, studied Arabic and Semitic Languages in Rome and his first book on the structure of the Maltese language which he wrote with a phonetic basis and in Roman letters but following the principles on which the alphabets of other Semitic languages related to

³⁵ Brincat, J.M., *Maltese and other languages; a linguistic history of Malta* (Midsea Books- 2011) pgxxvii

³⁶ Ibid.xxii and xxiii Fig1 and Fig2: Family tree of languages and their time-line.

³⁷ Cassola, A., *The Literature of Malta: an example of Unity in Diversity* (Minima Publishers -2000) First Edition. Pg28.

Maltese are based³⁸. But Vassalli is not only hailed as the father of the Maltese language and the first man to introduce the study of Maltese to the people in accordance with a system based on principles of morphology and phonetics. Since his life straddled three crucial periods of the Maltese national history³⁹, and since he was also a thinker and a pioneer of the concept of the Mediterranean Sea as a lake of peace and tranquillity⁴⁰ and for the promotion of a rapprochement between Islam and Christianity, his legacy still stands relevant today especially since he was also the first to call the Maltese a nation. Sometimes he is also referred to as the first Maltese patriot also because of his involvement in the politics during his lifetime. For Vassalli, the Maltese language deserved to be cultivated not merely as a basis for creating a national literature but also for developing an adequate means of communication among the various strata of Maltese society; as a tool for the dissemination of education and the promotion of art and the sciences⁴¹. Thus one can fairly state that the birth of the Maltese nation coincided with Vassalli's time⁴² – irrespective whether he was exiled and was a French sympathizer⁴³, and not just because he was the first who called the Maltese a nation, but he was also the

³⁸ Vassalli, M.A., *Alfabeto maltese spiegato in lingua maltese ed italiana* (Rome, 1790) as cited in Cassar, P., *The Quest for Mikiel Anton Vassalli* (Ministry of Education- Malta 1981) pg2.

³⁹ Vassalli was born in Zebbug Malta on 5th March 1764 and died impoverished on 12th January 1829, his grave is unknown as he was not granted a Catholic burial.

⁴⁰ Cassar, P., *The Quest for Mikiel Anton Vassalli* (Ministry of Education- Malta 1981) Foreword.

⁴¹ It is to be understood that during the time of Vassalli, the Italian language was the language of the nobles and other educated gentry while the commoners spoke the Maltese language but it was hardly written.

⁴² It is to be noted that towards the end of the 18thC, Europe experienced a time of intellectual revival which is sometimes referred to as the time of the *Illuminati*.

⁴³ Cassar, P., *The Quest for Mikiel Anton Vassalli* (Ministry of Education- Malta 1981) pg24.

one who compiled the first dictionary in the Maltese language and grammar and started to elevate the Maltese language along with other languages prevalent in his times.

Vassalli leads us to the one other author which is of concern in this research – who authored the only Maltese epic in Maltese literature – entitled *Il-Gifen Tork*⁴⁴. As Friggieri⁴⁵ explains in the introduction to *Il-Gifen Tork*, the aim of an *epic*, is that of recognizing the foundation of a nation, a narrative which, according to Friggieri, might even go back to Babylonian stories of heroes written in 2000 B.C. Friggieri also refers to *The Lliad* and to the *Chanson de Roland*; which describes the first skirmish of the French against the Saracens while *El Cantar de mio Cid* is the story of the Spanish when fighting against the Moors. The epic according to Friggieri, is aimed at extolling the local heroes' individual courage and the collectivity of the national virtues. Thus, for the Maltese, *Il-Gifen Tork* is the equivalent. Succintly put the story of the Maltese epic – which Vassallo⁴⁶ wrote in Maltese - is the real story of a group of Maltese, Greek and Sicilian slaves that were taken on a Turkish galley and how they overcame the Turks in one attack and thus sailed back towards Malta as free men. (They returned to Malta in October 1760 and the galley was refurbished and used by the Knights of Malta).

⁴⁴ Vassallo, G.A., *Il-Gifen Tork* (Trans. The Turkish Galley) (Saint Paul's Press – Malta 1975).

⁴⁵ Professor Oliver Friggieri wrote the introduction to Vassallo's epic in the above cited publication which is in Maltese – a loose translation of some excerpts are herewith being reproduced since both the epic and the introduction are in the Maltese language.

⁴⁶ Gian Anton Vassallo (1817-1868). The Maltese language had only recently started to be written since Mikiel Anton Vassalli had written the Maltese Grammar book in 1791. Before the Maltese language, Italian was the language that was used in Malta and it is known that the Italian language was written in Malta as early as 1419 while the first published book in Malta was also in Italian; *I Natali delle Religiose Militiae* was written by Commander Geronimo Marulli and published in 1643.

Thus from an onlooker's point of view – Malta as a nation was born just when these first literature attempts in the Maltese language were being scribbled on the rough papyrus available in those days. The Maltese thus may see themselves as having been a slave to many a ruler, but certainly a resilient cast of people, who against all odds, considering the very size of the Maltese islands and that of its people, Malta is a sovereign state, with its own government system and without being annexed to any empire – with the latter representing more a matter of pride as will be discussed in Chapter Three.

CHAPTER TWO:

Literature Review

2.1 Theories

Identity ties with the human existence and also with the human geographical environment, just like conflict, and it can be popularly described as the way people live, their beliefs, their fears, their work and their language and also, of concern to this study, their social behaviour within their specific group, ethnic or class.

Similarly, identities have been described as complex, historically bound, socially structured and thus ever moving. They may be transitory in some cases, and rigid and inflexible in others as they are constituted in specific lived realities, bound and shared through story, myth, history, legend (Black 2003; Wetherill 1996)⁴⁷.

Identity plays a vital role in social conflict⁴⁸ – as it is fundamental to how individuals and collectives see and understand themselves in the conflict. They delineate who is ‘*us*’ and

⁴⁷ Ibid. p.17.

⁴⁸ The social conflict theory is a Marxist based theory – argues that individuals and groups of people of different social classes in a given society all have different amounts of resources, both material or non-material, and that the most powerful group will exploit and use their power against the smaller groups of lesser powers

who is 'them', mobilizing individuals and collectives and providing legitimacy and justification for individual and group aspirations⁴⁹.

Whilst identity studies can explore many social issues, this study is concerned with the identity issues that may be at the root of a possibly undetected identity conflict in Malta. It is limited to the collective and/or social identity of the Maltese University students and leaves out their individualistic identity.

In anthropological circles, some may argue that Man is the same all over the world and that only his clothes (and technology) may have changed throughout the centuries. Similarly, one can argue that the human race agrees to the number of essentials in order to survive. According to psychologist Abraham Maslow and conflict scholar John Burton, these essentials go beyond mere food, water and shelter as they include other non-physical elements needed for human growth and development⁵⁰.

Burton's theory – and list - of basic human needs⁵¹ proposes the following: safety/security; belongingness/love; self-esteem; personal fulfillment; identity; cultural

⁴⁹ Cook-Huffman, C., *The Role of Identity in Conflict* in Sandole D.J.D., Byrne S., Senehi., Sandole-Starose I., *Handbook of Conflict Analysis and Resolution* (Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group 2008) pg17.

⁵⁰ Marker, S., 'Unmet human needs'. Beyond Intractability. Eds. Guy Burgess and Heide Burgess. Conflict Research Consortium, University of Colorado, Boulder. Posted August 2003 http://crinfo.beyondintractability.org/essay/human_needs/

⁵¹ 'Human needs are a powerful source of explanation of human behaviour and social interaction. All individuals have needs that they strive to satisfy, either by using the system, acting on the fringes, or acting as a reformist or revolutionary. Given this condition, social systems must be responsive to individual needs, or be subject to instability and forced change (possibly through violence or conflict): Coate and Rosati,

security; freedom and distributive justice and also participation. Of concern in this study is the notion of *identity* which Burton (and other human needs theorists) define as a sense of self in relation to the outside world. Identity becomes a problem when one's identity is not recognized as legitimate, or when it is considered inferior or is threatened by others with different identifications⁵².

A source of conflict would thus be the unmet basic human need herewith highlighted – identity – and the source of conflict being its denial, such as when immigrants are denied this right for example when they are detained for 18 months in Malta when they land illegally.

Burton and Burtonian theorists claim that these basic human needs cannot be traded as they are not interest-based and consequently un-fulfillment of the basic human need – in this case: identity would equal conflict. The theory claims that such needs are innate and universal. Consequently, identity, and specifically social identity, is a prerogative for every human being.

Burton worked closely with Edward Azar who himself came up with the theory of *protracted social conflict*, such as those that persisted in Azar's native Lebanon for instance, but also in Northern Ireland and Cyprus to mention but a couple of examples,

"Preface," in *The Power of Human Needs in World Society*, ed. Roger A. Coate and Jerel A. Rosati, ix. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1988.

⁵² Ibid. p.1.

which, Azar described as ‘*the prolonged and often violent struggle by communal groups for such basic needs as security, recognition and acceptance, fair access to political institutions and economic participation* (1991: 93)⁵³. Azar had also identified, more than sixty incidences of this ‘new type of conflict’, which, ‘distinct from traditional disputes over territory, economic resources, or East-West rivalry, revolves around questions of communal identity’ (1991: 93). According to Azar, the term ‘protracted social conflict’ emphasized that the sources of such conflicts lay predominantly within (and across) rather than between states, with four clusters of variables⁵⁴. Of concern in this study is the cluster of ‘communal content’; the notion that the ‘most useful unit of analysis in protracted social conflict situations is that identity group – racial, religious, ethnic, cultural and others (1986: 31)⁵⁵ – and the relationship between the identity groups and the state⁵⁶.

Azar links the disjunction between state and society in many parts of the world to a colonial legacy which artificially imposed European ideas of territorial statehood onto ‘a multitude of communal groups’ on the principle of ‘divide and rule’⁵⁷ – which explanation can certainly be applied in this study since Malta, even though it has a natural border since it is an island, is also a former British colony.

⁵³ Ramsbotham O., Woodhouse T., Miall H., *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*. Polity (Second Edition) p.84.

⁵⁴ Ibid. p.85.

⁵⁵ Ibid. p.85.

⁵⁶ Or what Azar would call the ‘disarticulation between the state and society as a whole : 1990; 7’

⁵⁷ Ramsbotham O., Woodhouse T., Miall H., *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*. Polity, (Second Edition) p.87

Similarly Tajfel (1981) defined social identity as that aspect of one's self-concept that comes from membership in groups. Individuals need/desire a positive sense of self and thus want their groups to compare favourably with other groups (Hogg and Abrams 1988; Skevington and Baker 1989; Turner and Giles 1981)⁵⁸. The social identity theory explores specific behaviours in conflict, including intra-group solidarity, inter-group hostility, ethnocentrism, out-group bias, why and when inter-group relations lead to conflict and when they do not, how, and when weak or latent identities become the motivator of ethnic cleansing, and when and how social identities affect group members' willingness to engage in collective action (Brown 2000; Hewstone and Greenland 2000; Oakes 2002)⁵⁹.

People seem to maintain their self-esteem in part by identifying with groups and believing that the groups they belong to are better than other groups (Tajfel 1981; Tajfel & Turner 1986). Thus, social identity theory holds that an important motive behind inter-group attitudes and behaviour is the creation or maintenance of a satisfactorily positive identity (Brown 1995) and thus it follows that threats to one's identity, have to be resolved by attempts to positively distinguish the *in-group* from the *out-group*. If the threat is severe to the group's social identity, the attempt to differentiate from the out-

⁵⁸ Cook-Huffman, C., *The Role of Identity in Conflict* in Sandole D.J.D., Byrne S., Senehi., Sandole-Starose I., *Handbook of Conflict Analysis and Resolution* (Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group 2008) p.22.

⁵⁹ Ibid.p.22.

group may result in prejudice⁶⁰. And racism can be identified with prejudice and discrimination based on a person's racial background. Racism is a specific type of prejudice that is targeted toward people of another race, colour or nationality⁶¹. Meanwhile much of the research on cultural dimensions confirms that members of collectivistic cultures are more likely to discriminate against representatives of other groups⁶².

On the other hand, Brewer and Pickett (1999) defined that in-group loyalty and out-group prejudice - were registered with more intensity within groups that were in the minority, than for members of larger and inclusive majorities⁶³.

This study thus aims to classify and see what group membership in Malta means and whether it translates into political or social cohesion when group members have interests in common. The researcher aims to analyse social identity as part of individual self-conception, as a part of the Self which might have been influenced by membership in specific social group or category and shared behaviour and socialization. Also the researcher, based on the description of the major historic events, will develop and analyse different groups (who describe different traumas) and indicate the differences between them in their perceptions of their own identity and the immigrants.

⁶⁰ Engebakken, Nina Cecile, Maltese University students' attitudes toward Arabs: a study on social psychology of prejudice B.Psy. (Hons) April 2006. p. 14.

⁶¹ Ibid.p.20.

⁶² Korostelina, K.V. *Social Identity and Conflict*, Palgrave (2007) p.43.

⁶³ Ibid p.14.

The researcher will also analyse the different approaches to identity and thus develop groups and analyse the differences between perception of immigrants and history which will perhaps result in identifying whether it is the chosen trauma or the identity that has the most indicative role in the perception of immigration.

It might also be valuable to note whether the Maltese students have a primordial or a constructivist approach, or, whether their Maltese identity is intertwined with the Maltese' strong religious affinity.

According to Brewer's theory of 'optimal distinctiveness', people have both the need for distinction from group and also the need to be part of a group. The search for balance between these two might prove to be the nuts and bolts of this whole study exercise, since as a nation the Maltese is a fairly young one despite the Maltese inhabiting the Maltese islands for centuries.

According to Korostelina⁶⁴, research shows that social identity, rather than being primordially intrinsic and inherent, is socially constructed and influenced by the processes of existing social structures. Thus the researcher will see if there have been any 'socially constructed and influenced' processes (such as history education) that might

⁶⁴ Korostelina, K.V. *Social Identity and Conflict*. Palgrave (2007) p.15

have made the current Maltese population so averse to accepting the illegal immigrants that are currently ‘invading’ the Maltese shores.

Korostelina⁶⁵ opines that many modern philosophers contend that the new century can be called the ‘era of identities’ because social identity provides individuals with a sense of protection from the risk of interpersonal opposition and saves them from solitude by establishing boundaries and a sense of a common sense within a group. She also opines that in collectivistic cultures, group identity is dominant and determines positive attitudes toward in-group members as well as aloof, negative attitudes toward out-group members. Thus she claims that a high level of differentiation between ‘us’ and ‘others’ leads to the differentiation of behaviours: positive toward the in-group and negative toward the other groups. The more salient a social identity, the more impenetrable the inter-group boundaries, and the more difficult the contact with representatives of out-groups will be⁶⁶.

There is also the issue of *metacontrast* (comparative fit) (Turner) – whereby the Maltese people might look at the in-group similarities while indicating the out-group differences. A specific question to identify prototypes (Turner) was inserted in the questions so that the Maltese students are assessed with regard to the attractions that they might have to some peoples but not to others.

⁶⁵ Ibid.p.15

⁶⁶ Ibid.p.44

Vamik Volcan's theory of group identity - 'projections', 'chosen trauma/glory' and 'reservoirs' will also be speculated on especially if those interviewed might recall the story of the Great Siege of Malta of 1565 when the Maltese people fought with the Knights of Saint John against the Turks – a trauma still marked till this day with a public holiday in Malta⁶⁷ – the 8th of September – the celebration of Our Lady of Victory – even though it was on the 7th September of 1565 that the Turks retreated after their heavy defeat which brought the siege to an end – and thus the Turks will feature in the chosen list of nationalities and an analysis will be done according to the choice made by the participants and its relevance to the issue today.

The interrelations between the social and the individual identity as expounded by Korostelina will also be seen in conjunction with the results/answers obtained by the participants and explained in the following chapter. Since the notion of individual identity reflects that each individual is unique – so too will the questions take into account that each participant is unique in his or her own stance of answers. After all, it has already been proven biologically that all humans are of one race as indicated earlier.

2.2 Studies on prejudice in Malta

⁶⁷ According to statistics of the European Union members, Malta has the most holidays. Since 2005 the National holidays are: March 31- Freedom Day; June 7 – the uprising of the Maltese against the British; September 8- Victory Day; September 21 – Independence Day and December 13 – Republic Day. Other holidays (not National) are mostly of a religious nature such as February 10th – St Paul's Day; March 19 – St Joseph's Day; May 1- St Joseph the Worker; June 29th - St Peter and St Paul; August 15th – St Mary; December 8th – Immaculate Conception; December 25th –Christmas Day. Good Friday, and January 1 are also public holidays.

For the purposes of this study – the researcher has taken into account two particular studies, one being a Eurobarometer, which was conducted in the EU (15) and goes back to 1997, and another which was specifically conducted in Malta as recent as August 2011. The latter is in itself a Preliminary Assessment of Integration (of immigrants) in Malta. The researcher has chosen these studies because the former does not entail interviews with the Maltese population while the second is concentrated on the Maltese population and the immigrants in Malta. The data from these two studies was chosen in order to compare and contrast it with the results obtained from the interviews of this study the results of which follow this chapter. Similarly, the researcher has chosen two theses which highlighted the issue of prejudice and illegal immigration in Malta; one thesis submitted in 2006 tackled the Maltese University students' attitudes towards Arabs (-a study on social psychology of prejudice) conducted by Nina Cecile Engebakken, and the other thesis by Ryan Callus submitted in April 2010 focussed on Prejudice towards immigrants in Malta (is xenophobia an issue?). Both theses were submitted at the Faculty of Psychology of the University of Malta. Furthermore, the researcher will highlight those answers (to the questions in the above mentioned theses) which pertain to the specific emphasis of this study and which correlate with similar questions that the researcher asked the participants of this study.

Racism and Xenophobia in Europe: a Eurobarometer opinion Poll⁶⁸ (no.47.1)

This study was carried out in March and April of 1997 in the then fifteen EU member states. Malta had not joined the European Union at the time and thus the findings of this study do not reflect the Maltese scenario. Results, though, indicate ‘a worrying level of racism and xenophobia in Member States, with nearly 33% of those interviewed openly describing themselves as ‘quite racist’ while 9% said they were ‘very racist’⁶⁹. Only 33% claimed that they were ‘not at all racist’. The Belgians, the French and the Austrians topped the most racist lists. While Luxembourg and Sweden on the lower end of the scale with only 2% claiming to be racist.

Those who claimed to be quite racist or very racist blamed dissatisfaction with their life circumstances, fear of unemployment, insecurity about the future and low confidence in the way public authorities and the political establishment worked in their country as the main characteristics that led to their declaration.

The study also indicated that many of those declared as ‘racists’ were in fact ‘xenophobic’ as the ‘minorities’ who were the target of racist feeling in each country,

⁶⁸ The results of the study are available online on the EU portal.

⁶⁹ This opinion poll was carried out between 26 March and 29 April 1997 in the fifteen member states at the request of the Employment, Industrial and Social Affairs Directorate (DGV) of the European Commission within the framework of Euro barometer 47.1. It involved 16,154 people and was commissioned as part of the European Year against Racism and coordinated by INRA (Europe). The previous poll had been taken in 1988. The data was analysed under the responsibility of Jeanne Ben Brika and Gerard lemaine (Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris), and James S. Jackson (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan).

varied according to its colonial and migratory history and also the then recent arrival of refugees.

It identified the complexity of racism itself and claimed that feelings of racism co-existed with a strong belief in the democratic system and respect for fundamental and social rights and freedoms while a majority felt that society should be inclusive and offer equal rights to all citizens, including those from immigrant and minority groups.

There were no significant differences between the answers of women and men respectively in this study while there was also no difference between respondents who lived in urban or rural areas who claimed to be racist or non-racist despite the lower presence of minorities in rural areas.

70% claimed that people from 'minority groups' were being discriminated against in the job market. 88% agreed that when hiring personnel, employers should only take into account the candidates' qualifications.

While 75% favour a multicultural society, 59% claimed that the members of minority groups 'abused the system of social benefits' while 63% indicated that that the presence of such people from minority groups increases unemployment and 68% said that they did jobs nobody wanted to do.

The study showed that integration was favoured but within limits. In fact 36% said that in order to become fully accepted members of society, people belonging to minority groups should 'give up such parts of their religion or culture which may be in conflict with the law'. 25% went further and claimed that to be fully accepted, they should 'give up their own culture'. At the other end of the scale 60% said that they 'are so different, they can never be fully accepted members' of society. Two thirds interviewed in this study, agreed that 'in two or three generations' time, people belonging to these minority groups will be like all other members of society.

This study concluded that the anxieties expressed by some respondents seemed to result not so much from the actual presence of minority groups but from the perception as to the ability of the host country to accommodate them. Immigrants were most welcome as long as they had an economic function – in fact 43% said that 'legally established immigrants from outside the EU should be sent to their original country of origin if they are unemployed'. Even though indiscriminate repatriation was rejected, 20% still agreed with 'wholesale' repatriation while 79% opposed the view that 'all immigrants, whether legal or illegal, from outside the EU and their children, even those born there, should be sent back to their country of origin'. But 68% thought that decisions about repatriation of illegal immigrants should always depend on their personal circumstances. Meanwhile 88.5% held the view that 'employers who hire illegal immigrants should be punished more severely'.

To conclude the section on this Eurobarometer study, 84% called for a strengthening of actions by EU institutions to combat racism with 60% stating that ‘promoting the teaching of mutual acceptance and respect in schools’ as the most possible actions to combat such.

*Step in- Do I Thing : A Preliminary Assessment of Integration in Malta*⁷⁰

Conducted by SOS Malta and presented to the media in August 2011, this study by this voluntary organisation focussed mostly on integration processes by the immigrants within the Maltese population. The study highlighted that language training was imperative since many immigrants, illegal or not, found the language to be a barrier to their integration. The study interviewed Maltese people from all strata of society and from all age groups. With regard to the migrants, the interviews were conducted with those who had been in Malta for seven years and also with those who had arrived as a consequence of the Libyan conflict in March 2011. One of the ways for the migrants to become integrated was the question of becoming economically self-sufficient but the study revealed that apart from the language barrier. But the study underscored that the

⁷⁰ SOS Malta is a registered non-governmental organization set up in 1991. This study is a result of reflection over a previous SOS Malta project entitled Healing Hands run in 2009 which aimed at creating opportunities of empowerment and productive activity through promoting social enterprises that would lead towards the integration of women with refugee and/or humanitarian status in Maltese society. This study is the result of data collected from 75 answers from Maltese participants and 70 answers from beneficiaries of protection which for the purpose of this study included those of refugee status, those beneficiaries of international protection and beneficiaries of temporary humanitarian protection. According to the Geneva Convention of 1951, the European Qualification Directive and the Maltese Refugee Act, the beneficiaries of protection are entitled to receive help in kind or money and should have access to social services and welfare of the country where they are hosted.

acquisition of a travel document presented the first hurdle for the migrants as such was not easily granted for various reasons. Since the migrants are supposed to be given unemployment benefits and also social assistance, such a document in fact would be vital for the attainment of such. Thus this study found that the migrants, apart from being detained in closed centres in Malta upon their arrival, even felt more uncertain over time when the travel documents took a long time to be processed and also when their status such as their application for refugee status took long months if not years to be processed without a guarantee that the refugee status would be given. The travel documents as the study indicates, is considered as the first step for the migrants integration but also for them to seek a better life outside the Maltese territory and because they claim they would like to be free to move from one country to another as every human being. The migrants responses indicated that should they be given the travel documents they would also start to contribute to start businesses in Malta and thus contribute to the Maltese economy. Indeed, any Maltese employer would not be in a position to employ these migrants without the necessary travel documents with the consequence that thus some of the migrants end up working illegally, and thus exploited and without contributing to the economy of Malta. The latter was also mirrored by and highlighted from the answers given by the Maltese participants, who indicated that the migrants were indeed exploited. The migrants also indicated that Malta was 'too small to have a job' which leads one to understand that for the migrants, Malta represented merely a stepping-stone to mainland Europe. Entry into the University of Malta also proved to be another problem for the migrants as the University required the original certificates in order for them to continue

to study in Malta and thus gain a proper education and consequently a decent job. Some of the Maltese participants indicated that the migrants had skills and abilities and thus indicated that the Maltese authority responsible for employment and training should train refugees to help them find decent work and thus help them integrate with the Maltese population ‘ not ghettoizing them in Marsa and Hal Far areas’⁷¹.

The survey concluded that *‘the lack of knowledge and the presence of many prejudices on the part of both the beneficiaries of protection and the Maltese population’* while highlighting the introduction of social tools as a way towards integration of the migrants with the local Maltese population. The migrants portrayed the Maltese in these words ‘ *Maltese people I work for are nice, you know, each country has good people and bad people*’ (Female,46-55yrs, East Africa) while from the other hand, a Maltese relayed that his relationship at work with the migrants could be described as ‘very positive. Although there are a few cultural barriers, these can be easily overcome’ which as the survey indicated – shows that once in contact, the differences can be easily transformed into strengths⁷². The survey concluded that there were gaps between the Maltese citizens and the beneficiaries of protection (or migrants), since they do not have the same access to the same services such as welfare and procurement of travel documents and neither is there

⁷¹In Marsa, Malta there is the Open Centre for migrants where the migrants can live and work. At Hal Far there is the closed detention centre where most of the migrants are kept, kids included.

⁷² Step in – Do 1 Thing, A Preliminary Assessment of Integration in Malta, (SOS Malta –August 2011) pg24.

sufficient mutual understanding to encompass their differences and advance together in a one joint direction⁷³.

Maltese University Students attitudes towards Arabs : A study on social psychology of prejudice. Nina Cecile Engebakken⁷⁴

Conducted among Maltese university students in 2006 and thus before any Arab Spring issue, this psychology student set out to discover the Maltese student population's prevalence of prejudice against this particular group – the Arabs. She found that from answers to various situations posed in the study's questionnaire, Maltese students showed a prevalence of prejudice against the Arabs in particular '*for reasons other than being concerned about different cultures infiltrating Malta*'⁷⁵. In her analysis of the results, she concluded that the students showed '*not only a lack of tolerance toward irregular immigrants, but toward all Arab nationals*'⁷⁶. She also indicated in her results of the study that the Maltese students would feel more negatively toward having an Arab person joining their social group than having a neutral person doing so⁷⁷. Another finding was that the students held more negative attitudes towards a situation when the word Arab or Islamic was inserted which Engebakken said might indicate that the students felt such situations as a threat to their social identity.

⁷³ Ibid. p.27.

⁷⁴ Unpublished thesis: B.Psych (2006) University of Malta

⁷⁵ Engebakken, Nina Cecile, *Maltese University students attitudes toward Arabs: a study on social psychology of prejudice* B.Psy. (Hons) April 2006. p.45

⁷⁶ Engebakken, Nina Cecile, *Maltese University students attitudes toward Arabs: a study on social psychology of prejudice* B.Psy. (Hons) April 2006.p. 45

⁷⁷ Ibid.p.47

Engebakken pointed out in her study that since local Maltese stereotyping stated that Arab men harass women, thus the females but also the Catholics in the study showed prejudice against the Arabs. She indicated that irrespective of such stereotyping, her study did not explain why *‘Catholics have more negative feelings in the situation compared to the whole group and males’*⁷⁸. Her results, she further indicated, revealed a tendency for Catholics to be more prejudiced than the University students in general. Further on Engebakken indicated after more analysis that *‘religion is a very important aspect in the life of many Maltese people’* which she said could also apply to Maltese University students. Engebakken further claimed that *‘following the theory about prejudice as a consequence of group membership, and considering Malta’s size, the Maltese population might see immigrants as a threat to their culture, and therefore feel that their vital group interests are at stake’*⁷⁹. While having a different religion than that of the Maltese did not help either, which phenomenon is reflected in other European countries who are worried about the ‘infiltration of Islam’.

Finally she concluded that the Maltese University students *‘are prejudiced towards Arabs because of the environment they grew up in. That their parents and other significant adults in their lives ‘taught’ them how to be racist, and they are just continuing the*

⁷⁸ Ibid.p.48

⁷⁹ Ibid. p.51

circle'⁸⁰. She positively commented that according to social constructionists, people's identity is flexible, multiple and inconsistent and thus it can be changed.

Prejudice Towards Immigrants in Malta is xenophobia an issue?- Ryan Cassar

Cassar's dissertation, presented in April 2010, focussed on the effect that the flow of immigrants in Malta has on xenophobic attitudes of the Maltese population. He investigated the correlation between the level of xenophobia and symbolic racist beliefs towards immigrants.

A major emphasis was on the economy in relation to the immigrants where he found that the perceived number of immigrants correlated with the perceived threat and exclusionary attitudes, as similar studies conducted in other countries which he quoted, had indeed also indicated. He found that Maltese citizens who lived in proximity with immigrants and in neighbourhoods that had a high visibility of immigrants, had a clear increase in the mean xenophobic and racist beliefs⁸¹, which he claimed was contrary to the hypothesis of proximity. He claimed that with regard to xenophobia, as the number of illegal immigrants entering Malta increased, many started to question their stay and how their presence would impact the country. Many news articles on the subject were on the

⁸⁰ Engebakken, Nina Cecile, *Maltese University students attitudes toward Arabs: a study on social psychology of prejudice* B.Psy. (Hons) April 2006.p.53

⁸¹ Cassar, Ryan, *Prejudice towards immigrants in Malta; is xenophobia an issue?* B.Psy. (Hons) April 2010.p. 48 (unpublished thesis)

increase, Cassar stated, and thus xenophobia became an issue of popular discussion while also resulting quite high in his survey's score. He claimed that the fear of losing their (Maltese) culture was the main culprit for such a high mean score. Cassar referred to the 'social dominance orientation' phenomenon (Pratto, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994) where social hierarchies are said to be inherently supported and that native born people should be placed higher up the hierarchy of the country than the foreigners, which he claimed would then result in the safety of the native country's culture and national identity⁸². His study also found that the phenomenon of xenophobia in Malta concurred with the findings of Esses, Dovidio, Semanya & Jackson (2005) study that nationalism and patriotism were integral elements of xenophobia. Cassar also found that the xenophobia and racism in Malta were mutually supportive and tended to complement one another and tended to overlap. But he indicated no form of prejudice trigger which might increase the levels in either xenophobia or racism⁸³.

2.3 Newspapers and Blogs

The Times of Malta: 4th September 2011

Quote Blog : I counted 24 telephone calls and SMSs from listeners, likely to be churchgoers. 23 of them were negative about illegal

⁸² Ibid.p.50

⁸³ Callus indicated that a main limit and weakness of his study was that the sample consisted of 144 participants from all over Malta. He claimed that his study was biased in favour of the younger population as more youngsters appeared happier to answer his questionnaire.

immigrants. The most touching was a statement by an elderly man who was still traumatized after he and another person were threatened by an illegal immigrant with a knife and made to undress and give him all their belongings. Another listener reported that some illegal immigrants tell the Maltese: “keep the boats we came on because you will need them to leave Malta”. . (Click on “ RTK” and then click on Gallerija.⁸⁴)

This excerpt is lifted from a blog on *The Times of Malta*, which is the most popular English newspaper in Malta. It referred to a report about a local radio program on the Church Radio Station *RTK* which had tackled the subject of immigration following unrest at the immigrants’ Detention Centre in the days prior to this blog.

Such exemplifies many of the sentiments expressed by the local population. The amount of discussion and hot debates that this subject has generated in the past few years is indeed a worrying factor. And this is just one blog, among many, that refer to the anti-immigrant sentiment in Malta. Other reports in the newspapers on the subject of racism and prejudice abound and are too numerous to quote but a glance on each day’s paper would surely result in some letter or discussion that featured immigration and the negative sentiments in their regard by the local population.

⁸⁴ <http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20110904/local/Migration-is-AFM-s-financial-gain.383110>

The researcher has limited the literature review to particular theories and a few select studies that pertain to the issue of prejudice, racism and the effects of immigration in Malta – before and during the Arab Spring in particular. The selection is by no means exhaustive, nor does it do justice to the amount of other studies, surveys, theses and books written on the subject matter but it is particularly relevant to the current study as Chapter Three will further highlight.

CHAPTER THREE:

The Interviews

3.1 The Method: A qualitative research strategy

For the purpose of the time frame and specificity of this study, the researcher will be focussing on one segment of the population – on University undergraduate students aged between 18 and 30, which segment was chosen specifically as the researcher would like to point the study into assessing also the level of tolerance prevalent in these particular participants as these will be the same participants with a very high probability of becoming Malta's future leaders in the various spheres, not least the political and the educational sphere.

Thus, with this study the researcher collected data on :

- a. Racism, xenophobia and prejudice in Malta – how prevalent/if any
- b. If the origin of racism and/or xenophobia and prejudice can be attributed to Maltese history books (or other well known and distributed literature)
- c. If the way famous battles in Maltese history were depicted in ways that concur with Vamik Volkan's theory of '*chosen traumas*' and '*projection*'; if this had any impact on the relationships between the Maltese people and the people from countries that were

historically responsible for negative aspects of our history. And also to see if Vamik Volkan's theory of group identity applies in this scenario; if Malta needs to manage its identity.

d. The main aim is an exploratory background into the notion of racism, prejudice and xenophobic attitudes. The aim is not to map out the possible conflict but more as an initial exploration of the growing phenomena, and perhaps what has seemingly resurrected it.

Robson in *Real World Research*⁸⁵ argues that distinctions are commonly made among those seeking to find out what people know, what they do, and what they think or feel – and this according to him, leads to questions concerned with facts, with behaviour and with beliefs or attitudes – and the latter is what this study aimed to achieve in analyzing racism, xenophobia and prejudice in Malta.

The researcher opted for a qualitative research study for two reasons. One is that the researcher being a former journalist who has lived on the Maltese islands for most of her life, would put to good use all the experience she gained in interviewing human subjects. Thus, taking the study in the form of structured interviews with a random sample from the University of Malta's⁸⁶ undergraduate population would suffice to address the sampling strategy adopted as explained above. Colin Robson also indicated that such interviews or other fully structured or unstructured interviews are appropriate where a

⁸⁵ Robson Colin. *Real World Research*, Blackwell Publishing, Second Edition (2002) pg272.

⁸⁶ There is only one university in the Maltese archipelago.

study focuses on the meaning of a particular phenomena to the participants and also where individual perceptions of processes within a social unit are to be studied prospectively and also where individual historical accounts are required of how a particular phenomena developed – which is exactly the case in this explorative research.

Robson reiterates that interviews are ideal where exploratory work is required before a quantitative study can be carried out which is – secondly - the reason why – the researcher re-calibrated her methodology from the pilot study to the research project, specifically from an electronically filled-in survey to an interview with a number of questions and face-to-face interview with the participants.

As indicated earlier the researcher recalibrated her methodology after doing a pilot study in the subject area in the month of March 2011 (with participants from various walks of life and via-email) from a list of direct questions to a list of open-ended questions. The results collected in the pilot study made the researcher decide in favour of a semi-structured interview with ten open-ended questions as it seemed that people felt the need to expand more on the subject even when a simple *yes* or *no* answer would have sufficed. The participants in the pilot study felt that they needed to qualify why they answered in the particular way and the answers in the research itself confirmed this, as the participants in this study provided their own different answer multi-faceted answer . Hence in the end the questions in the sample survey which was sent via email to a sample of 25 Maltese people of multi-background friends, who were my friends and their friends, elicited such a

response that tipped the scale towards a qualitative study rather than a quantitative study as the original plan was.

The interview, according to Robson, is a *flexible* and *adaptable* way of finding things out and the human language is fascinating both as a behaviour in its own right and for the virtually unique window that it opens on what lies behind actions. Also, face-to-face interviews offer the possibility of modifying one's line of enquiry, following up interesting responses and investigating underlying motives in a way that postal and other self-administered questionnaires cannot – which is exactly what the researcher needed in order to get to the answers to the questions posed in such a somewhat delicate matter. The interviews though can be time consuming but were nevertheless worthwhile for this subject matter. The participants though were instructed to respond quickly to the questions so that their answers were elicited instinctively and without thinking too much perhaps for a more diplomatic answer.

3.2 The Data Collection

The following methods of data collection were used:

- i. Interviews with participants in the form of semi structured interviews (see Appendix 'X') after signing the Consent Form (see Appendix 'Y').
- ii. Archival, books and studies.

iii. Other studies, thesis and court cases that have occurred or been tried in the Maltese Courts.

The sample included 30 students which the researcher approached randomly either at the University of Malta's cafeteria, the library, the carpark, and allotted study corners found on the vast *Tal-Qroqq* Campus in August 2011. This selection was done in order to expand the spectrum as wide as possible from students who frequent various areas of the Campus and also studying from different faculties. The researcher did not interview participants who seemed to be in the same cluster of three or four people sitting together.

An important aspect before the interviews are undertaken is the notion of informed consent as the '*capacity of an individual to give freely their informed consent to research is a core principle in research ethics; it is a capacity that can be diminished by a range of factors*⁸⁷'. The researcher made sure that the interviewees read the informed consent document⁸⁸ and answered any questions in that regard as indicated in Appendix Y. All participants signed the consent/information sheet out of their own free will and then proceeded to answer the questions in the questionnaire. It is to be noted here that none of the participants seemed perturbed by the content of the questions and they answered all the questions without any hesitation.

⁸⁷ Darlington, Y., Scott, D., *Qualitative research in practice; stories from the field* (Open University Press-2002) pg25

⁸⁸ The researcher acquired the consent for the interviews both from George Mason University's Human Subjects Research Board (ref. no.7600) and also from the University of Malta's Research Ethics Board.

The researcher, interviewed one Maltese university student at a time – so that the students felt comfortable and opened up more when not in the presence of their cohorts, friends or peers -

The interviews took place without the audience of the other friends from the participant's group, in fact there was just one interviewee who objected to his friend being somewhat within earshot to where the interview was being conducted.

The questions were asked identically to each participant while leaving some space for a final open ended question as to what each participant may think would like to add to the subject and also if they minded or considered marrying an immigrant or not.

The researcher drew on her expertise gained through the years spent interviewing as journalist and is in concordance with the questions to avoid such as long questions, double barrelled questions, others involving jargon or leading and biased questions, as elencated by Robson⁸⁹. Many times a lose translation into Maltese was instantly made during the course of the interview since the questions were in English but both the Maltese and English languages are the official languages in Malta and as such everyone understood the questions posed in both languages. But some students admittedly felt more comfortable to answer some questions in Maltese rather than in English. Thus the

⁸⁹ Ibid. Pg275, box 9.2

lose translation was made and repeated to the participants in order for them to agree with the english translation to their answer.

The researcher conducted the interviews with an open mind as to what the answers to her questions might reveal in order to get the best possible picture or answer to the question; which was, the pulse of the new generation's tolerance to foreigners, and their prejudice against or in favour of them or some of them. Some of the participants who were hesitant at first, showed much more openness about the subject once the questionnaire was filled in and finished and the researcher sometimes had to end the constructive discussion that ensued since some ended longer than half an hour. Such may perhaps indicate that the subject matter requires much more popular discussion and understanding than it is perhaps allowed in the public or even in private spheres but this is in no way indicative of the whole population as the student population in any University, though composed of students from all strata of the society know that discussions at University are quite common and arguments and discussions are in fact expected.

The researcher's sample was made up of fifteen males and fifteen females that were interviewed, thus the sample was gender balanced. The variables though pertained to marital status, religious and political affiliation, with the latter being an optional question. The first two variables are self-explanatory but with regards to the latter two variables it must be understood that religious and political affiliation might prove indicative with regards to whether the interviewees may have been influenced on the level of racism or

xenophobia by the Maltese political parties as some Maltese political parties have a record of affinity with the Roman Catholic Church⁹⁰ which is the prevalent religion on the Maltese islands and which religion is also enshrined in the current Maltese Constitution (Article 2) despite the unsuccessful separation between church and state during the French occupation. It is also to be noted that the Knights of St John had emphasized Christianity as opposed to Islam – hence the fights between the galleys of *Cross* and those of the *Crescent* (middle ages) mentioned in Chapter One.

The researcher did not ask leading questions or biased questions in order to get the most relevant answer possible that any participant may want to offer. She conducted the interviews by first introducing herself and also the subject, using similar conversational phrases in order to crack the ice and get the participant to gain her trust, then got quickly to the questions. In the end the researcher offered what Robson calls a ‘closure’. Some participants were interested in the result of the study – and the researcher informed those participants that the thesis would be available in the University of Malta’s melitensia section in the following months.

Particularly since the researcher is herself a seasoned former television journalist as indicated above, she made sure that the students did not connect to her previous occupation and in fact there was not even one interviewee who indicated that they

⁹⁰In *Saints and Fireworks*, Boissevain concluded that ‘the Church in Malta played the important political role of defender of the interest of the people and its importance in the political and its dominance in the religious sphere reinforced each other’.

remembered her in her previous line of work – thanks also to the common casual student attire and attitude that the researcher adopted in order to blend in even more. This was necessary as the researcher did not want the students to have any preconceived ideas about the researcher herself as she felt that it might influence the answers to the questions. Surprisingly though quite a few students in fact asked further questions, not just about the subject matter but also about the masters course itself as they found the subject of conflict, in their words, quite fascinating.

Meanwhile throughout the interview the researcher aimed to define the students' identity awareness, the formation of their common identity, knowledge about the role of identity as a source of conflict or tolerance. Specific questions were addressed with regard to some of the participants' historical education, if they had a *chosen glory* or *chosen trauma*⁹¹ regarding Maltese history but also with regard to any strategy of de-categorization (Brewer & Miller: 1984) and/or integration with the foreign immigrants in order to assess their own meanings of conflict in terms of *us* versus *them* – and the threats that they might perceive, such as in-group loyalty, locus of self-esteem and security. None of the participants answered a question with another question posed to the researcher, though some did sort of 'discuss aloud' while answering some questions. For example, when the question of 'what is identity' came up, some remarked to themselves

⁹¹ Volkan Vamik., *Blood Lines, from ethnic pride to ethnic terrorism*. Westview Press (1997) pg48: by chosen trauma Volkan refers to the description of the collective memory of a calamity that once befell a group's ancestors while with regard to chosen glory Volkan refers to the mental representation of a historical event that induced the feelings of success and triumph.

that this was not an easy question, nor did they have a specific straight answer and hence they delved into a little discussion with the researcher in order for them to arrive as to what they understood by the notion.

Identity can in fact be a source of conflict but identity can be managed as well – and this was another facet of the aim of the research so that if such was identified, then awareness about meaning of identity would be the first step for the Maltese population to address the issues of prejudice and perceptions of immigration. . Perhaps a public dialogue or a forum would be needed as a tool for reconciling identity – not as an intervention but as a suggestion. Hence asking how participants understand identity was the first step in this direction.

The Questionnaire was split into three parts, Part A which pertained to basic information with regards to the participant and Part B which contained the Key Coding when storing the data apart from the signed and named consent form and which will not be reproduced in this research, and Part C which contained 10 questions regarding the subject matter. Since the research was gender balanced, the answers as reproduced might sometimes reflect how males or how females answered but this was not analysed in that perspective.

3.3 The Results

Description of the final sample

Thirty students, 15 females and 15 males were interviewed at the end of August 2011 irrespective whether the Maltese population shows a slight slant in respect of there being a few hundred more females than males in the national population. Only one student refused to be interviewed when approached because of time constraints with his studying (a re-sit) but the rest all showed their availability to take part in the questionnaire.

All participants' status was that of single except for one Male who was married. All Males professed to be Roman Catholic while one Male said he was Christian.

All Females said they were Roman Catholics while one said she belonged to the Anglican Church and another said she had no religion.

Thus this represents the current situation with regard to the global Maltese population's religious beliefs as that being predominantly made up of Roman Catholic Church-goers though there are also other significant religious denominations such as the Muslim Community, and on a smaller scale in respect of Greek Orthodox, Anglicans, Jews and some atheists and other smaller denominations.

The ages of the participants were predominantly in the early 20's but the ages of both genders varied from age 18 to a maximum age of 30.

With regards to political affiliation, which was an optional question, most participants wanted to leave that question out but one female said she was a Nationalist Party

supporter while another said she was Liberal. Only three Males declared their political affiliation; one said he was Democratic, another said he had Socialist views and another said he was a floating voter. This is also another common aspect of the Maltese population – that they do not show their political affiliation. One here invariably notes that polarization is quite high in the country where only two parties are represented in the National Parliament. One only needs to look at the last results at the general elections to see that it was won with less than two thousand votes' difference to realize why.

Part C

Answers to Q1: *Do you like Maltese history? And why?*

Only one female declared that she did not like history while the rest indicated that they enjoyed history as it indicated the 'rich culture' of the Maltese Islands; that it was important to know one's history; and that it provided identity of who the Maltese are; and also because it was one of the richest histories in the world since Malta was ruled by many different nation/rulers throughout the ages.

The male participants had similar answers and only one participant said that he was not interested in Malta's history, while two participants happened to be studying to become history teachers themselves. The answers by the Males indicated the uniqueness of Malta's history. One participant said that it was important for him to know his country's history because he was born in Malta and that history was his national identity. Others indicated that history was important for them as it shed light on what the Maltese fore-

fathers went through while beaming where Malta was going. Another indicated that history was a 'source of information to how society was in the past'. Others indicated that Malta's history was important because despite the small size of the state, Malta still had a rich history when compared to other bigger states.

Q2: Do you remember which Maltese history books you had and studied at school?

Please name them if you remember

More than 25 out of the 30 participants replied that their basic history school book was *Grajjet Malta* (trans.The Stories of Malta) which is still in circulation today and still being used in various Maltese secondary schools as a basic history text.

A few participants either did not remember what history book they had or indicated that their teacher provided a set of notes and handouts and as such didnt have a proper history book. It is to be noted here that even though *Grajjet Malta*⁹² is the basic history book in most Government schools, there are also other books in the Maltese language that are used academically for the teaching of the history subject at schools. Incidentally history is a subject that is taught until age 13 (boys and girls) and is only taught after this age if the student wishes to further the study of the subject to higher levels.

Q3: What do you remember most from Malta's history? Explain the particular choice

⁹² This book was mostly used in Government Schools which is where the majority of children attend.

22 out of the 30 participants answered that the time of the Knights of Saint John and the Great Siege of 1565 (not all remembered the precise date) were the most prominent in their memory with regards to Malta's history. In answer as to why this was the period they remembered most, many answered that it was a subject that was very much emphasized at school, others said because it was a great victory over the Turks despite Malta being so small and others answered that they liked this period because the Knights left a large legacy in the form of fortifications and also because it was the knights that built the capital Valletta which is in fact named after the Grand Master Jean Parisot de la Valette who at the age of 73 was still fighting with his sword during the same Great Siege of 1565.

Three of the remaining eight respondents answered that they were fascinated by Malta's prehistory period, particularly with the temples, namely *Ggantija* and *Hagar Qim*, which some archaeologists claim date back to 5000 BC and which are still free-standing today. One other participant answered that he preferred the period of the French occupation particularly because of the stolen sword of La Valette while two other participants preferred to the British period as they claimed it was fresher in their memory and also because it was fairly recent that Malta gained independence from the British and ceased to be a colony of the British Empire. One other respondent claimed he liked all the period of the Romans as it was also linked, he claimed, to the legacy of the Roman Catholic church in Malta. Another respondent had no preference.

Q4: *Which nationalities do you prefer in order from 1 most to 7 least*

(Swedish/Libyan/Turkish/English/Congolese/French/Americans)

20 out of 30 participants answered that they preferred the English people first.

3 preferred the Swedes first, two preferred the Americans first and one preferred the Congolese. Four other participants said they had no preference at all.

None preferred the Libyans, Turks and French first.

The trend showed that most chose the English/Americans/Swedes/French 'group' first, and then chose between the Libyans/Turks/Congolese even though the nationalities were split and appeared in the above sequence. Some even admitted they did not know from which country the Congolese came from.

Those that preferred the English/Americans/Swedes or French first, mostly explained that they had no language barrier with these nationalities while with the other others they found language and culture barriers. Thus the Maltese students predominantly identify themselves more with the Europeans/ white caucasians than with those of African or eastern descent. Other participants claimed that they liked the English/Americans/Swedes/French because they admired them for particular traits but also because they had more friends from those countries as well and were thus familiar with their ways more than they were with those that come from Africa/Turkey. Some contradicted themselves by claiming the English and Americans as their first option but then claiming that they liked the Arab culture quite a lot. Another specifically claimed

that he was not racist but he preferred the English as his culture was very similar to theirs. Others claimed familiarity also because they had visited and worked for a short period of time in European countries. Another participant realised he was somewhat stereotyping but still reiterated a preferred choice. Another was more specific with regards to each nationality and claimed that to him the French were snobs, the Americans think they were the centre of the world while he did not like the Turks whom he claimed were savages. On the other hand, there was another participant who claimed a soft spot for the Americans and also for the Congolese and Libyans. Another participant said that he preferred a nationality because of the mentality of the people of that country.

Those that showed no preferences claimed that all nationalities have the 'nice bits' while another claimed that the nationalities appeared all the same to him. Another participant said that he can communicate with all of the nationalities and that he has worked with quite a few foreigners.

Thus the predominant trend showed that the familiarity of cultures or the lack of language barriers was more akin to the Maltese liking one particular nationality as opposed to another. Surprisingly there were four participants who indicated non-preference mainly because of their exposure to quite a few other cultures and lack of language barriers.

Q5: What do you understand by identity? Do you have an identity? What identity do you have?

This was one of the questions that made the participants think most. While all participants claimed to have an identity, many did not understand what was meant by identity while only one asked what type of identity the question referred to. After some discussion and sometimes prodding, most of the participants claimed what they understood by identity, such as, who they were, where they came from, their nationality, language and country. Another answered that identity is what distinguished him from others; what made him unique.

In answer to what was their identity, many did not distinguish between identity and nationality and thus many claimed to have a Maltese (European and/or Mediterranean) identity; a catholic identity and/or a student identity. How they looked was also mentioned as part of some participants' identity as opposed to the firm Christian beliefs and democratic principles that some claimed to be identified with.

Q6: What makes you proud to be Maltese?

Two participants here argued that they did not feel proud of being Maltese and cited a certain amount of ignorance across the board and bureaucracy. But more than 95% answered that they felt very proud of being Maltese as they claimed that despite being a small country, the Maltese people had always advanced in all spheres. Others claimed that they felt proud mainly because of the Maltese history, the hospitable and charitable nature of the Maltese, and also because of the 'spectacular' culture of Malta. Quite a few

participants referred to Malta's small size and also to the many times that Malta proved to be a goal of conquest to a foreign legions but that despite all that Malta and the Maltese suffered, they claimed Malta still shone through the ages and managed to stand on its own feet.

There was one participant though that singularly remarked that he was proud of being Maltese because of the Maltese language, its food and its culture but that he did not like a mix of cultures which he claimed was making the Maltese 'lose' their proper identity. Another participant felt that the village 'festas' made him very proud.

Q7: What is migration? Is migration a current phenomenon? Should migrants be sent back to their original country? Explain your answer

In general most of the participants replied that the general notion of migration pertained to the movement or travel from one country to another, for good. Surprisingly though 53.3% replied that migration was a current phenomenon and not an issue that goes back to time immemorial. Less than half, 13 out of 30 participants, said that migration always existed and was not a current phenomenon.

Meanwhile in answer to whether migrants should be sent back to their original country, half of the participants said that such depended whether the migrants were in Malta legally or illegally, and as such there was no clear yes or no answer. Many of these

claimed that the reason why they would be in Malta was a determinant factor whether they could stay or not. In fact two thirds were of the opinion that should on their return, the migrants be faced with torture, it would be better for them to stay and be granted asylum. Ideally two thirds also claimed that their stay in Malta should not be prolonged as they claimed that Malta could not sustain a large number of migrants. Another point to ponder was that brought up by one answer; that it depended from which country they came from.

A third of the participants explained that in the best scenario they should not be allowed to stay in Malta even though the migrants had big problems in their own countries but Malta was too small to take the whole load. One participant said that people were born in a country for a reason, he claimed that with a mix of cultures there would be chaos and the hosts would lose their identity when mixing with them.

60% said that economic migrants should definitely be sent back to their original country, especially if they came over to Malta for the social benefits, while others claimed that genuine cases should be given a right to stay. On another note, a participant said that they should only be sent back if the immigrants could not integrate well with the host country.

The overall trend tended to tip the scales in favour of a qualified return to their country or else that of using Malta as a means to their end but not the end. 95% did not even

distinguish between asylum seekers, refugees or economic migrants and said that all should be sent back, while others referred to their human rights and to the need of the Maltese to observe these human rights. A participant claimed that they should be sent back because of their family's sufferings even though as another claimed, that the migrants would have left for a reason. The legality of the issue kept propping up in more than two thirds of the participants' answers as the need to regulate the matter seemed to be a sore point in the overall discussion.

Q8: Should immigrants be given a right to work in the host country? Would you hire a foreigner in your own company (if you have one)? Explain your answer

24 participants replied in favour of giving the immigrant a right to work in the host country – presumably that the immigrant had all the papers in order and that he/she had the qualifications and came with a good conduct.

Out of the other six participants, two claimed they would only consider employing a foreigner if there were no Maltese who could do the job. Another said that he would not employ an immigrant as he would be taking the place (job) of a Maltese citizen. Others cited full permissions and legalised documents plus good conduct and qualifications as the criteria for employing foreigners.

Q9: Would you house an immigrant in your home? For free? For a fee?

This was invariably the question that many times brought another pause before answering the question, considering that there is also the issue of privacy involved. In fact there were five participants who said that 'their home was their home' and they would not share their home with anyone irrespective whether immigrants or Maltese, while on the other end of the scale another five participants there were others who claimed that they would house an immigrant for free even though they did not know him especially if his situation was rather bad.

Two answered that basically it boiled down to whether a person needed shelter, and that irrespective of nationality they said they would house the immigrant, stating as a reason - helping and reaching out.

Four participants answered that irrespective whether immigrant or Maltese they would take on someone for a fee, while others distinguished between a friend whom they said they would not charge, while they would charge if it was not their friend. Another cited the point of background or character, irrespective of nationality, of the person who entered their home – therefore here it was more a question of trust. Five indicated that a person would be allowed to stay if that person could afford to pay up.

While three claimed to have already done it before, fifteen were not so decided and this reflected in their answers as they indicated 'maybe', 'perhaps' or 'depends'. Another was more specific though and said that he didnt know what he would do, even though he

said that he believed in human rights, in the end he said that he could help out but then he explained that he should not be expected, to 'bond' with the immigrants.

Q10: Who are your friends? Are they all Maltese? Any foreigners? From which countries?

Most of the participants claimed that most of their friends, the people with whom they went out socially, studied etc were Maltese. Others said to have mostly Maltese with a few foreign friends because they had worked with them in summer jobs. Most of the participants claimed to have friends mostly from Europe, the United Kingdom especially, but there were quite a few with American, Canadian, Australian and also African friends.

It is important to note here that there are quite large communities of second generation Maltese living in England, America, Canada and Australia thanks to a quite a few migration invitations but the governments of those countries. Thus some of the participants friends, as they themselves claimed, spurred from friendships through their cousins living in those continents and countries. The same could not be said about participants who said they had friends from Egypt and Turkey.

Would you marry an immigrant?

Towards the end of the interview and while the participants were quite warmed up to the subject the question of mixing blood via marriage was asked.

Seventeen, slightly more than half, of the participants qualified their answer with a 'maybe would consider it' or 'why not'. Of these, six explained that they would marry or have a significant relationship preferably with someone closer to their own culture. Two distinguished between a north European or Australian immigrant to an African immigrant while another said that he would marry a Scandinavian. Another participant distinguished whether the immigrant would be in Malta legally or illegally and thus he answered that in the affirmative if legally in Malta, Five answered that it depended on the individual characteristics of the person which would make the participant decide. Only three participants mentioned the word 'love' and answered that they would bond in marriage with an immigrant if they fell in love or loved each other. Another was of the opinion that he couldn't say with whom he would fall in love and marry. Only three gave an outright negative answer with one of them qualifying his answer by stating that he would have liked to say 'yes'.

CHAPTER FOUR: The Analysed Results

4.1 *The Analysis*

In this chapter, the results or findings presented in Chapter Three are evaluated in relation to the related theories as expounded in Chapter Two. Analysis of the study and comparison with the other studies already referenced will also be discussed before any recommendations and the Conclusion. For easy reference, the researcher has grouped the participants answers into 'history groups' of preference, with the Great Siege group (22 students out of 30) – referring to those that indicated as this period being the most significant for them; the Pre-history group (3 students out of 30) which preferred to look up to Malta's ancient tombs and temples; the British group (2 students out of 30) which are those that held more significance to this period of Malta's history; the French aficionado (1 student out of 30) and the Roman aficionado (1 student out of 30), as the two participants who indicated these periods as their preference and the Would-be history teacher/participant (1 student out of 30) who held no preference to any particular history period.

4.2 *History and Identity*

As indicated earlier, the gender variable and the political affiliation variable will not be delved into, since for the former, the sample size is too small to generate any indication from the results while in the latter the majority of the respondents were not keen and thus refused to answer the optional question.

The main aim of the analysis was to examine whether it is possible to form a peaceful common identity and/or to form a civic and multicultural meaning of national identity for the Maltese youths, the different salient identities and if history-teaching triggered it. The study in general did indicate some problems in this sphere and also why prejudice was leading to discrimination and also to strong political positioning toward specific groups.

Hence it was crucial to specifically analyse the role of history education- which resulted in 25 out of the 30 participants (83.3%) answering that they studied the same book – namely ‘*Grajjet Malta*’ (The Story of Malta) as it provided information about the collective past while it also helped understand the meaning of current equations and promised future. It also plays a major role in the formation of national ethnic religious and regional identities and justification of state policies.

The *Grajjet Malta* series of three books, which the majority of the students studied, containing three consequent eras of Maltese history, were first published in 1977. In the introduction to the series, the Minister of Education Dr Philip Muscat (Labour) said that

the need for a series of books of Maltese history had been felt for some time and he had thus indicated a board made up of the Chair of History at the University of Malta (Professor A. P. Vella) and art and design teacher Joe Mallia to do the *Grajjiet Malta* series which was based on Professor Andrew Vella's book – *Storja ta' Malta* (History of Malta). In the same introduction Dr Muscat said that it was important to note that for the first time in Malta's history, it was the Maltese people themselves who were dictating the course of the country's history and not some other foreigner. Meanwhile another history book which was used in schools, previous to the *Grajjiet Malta* series in the 1950's and 1960's was that of Monsignor Salvatore Laspina *Outlines of Maltese History* which is oft quoted especially in the history time-line in Chapter One, of this study. Most of the pictures and sketches used in the above mentioned books almost always emphasized, the typical dark skin and largish noses of Africans and the similar though slightly lighter skin colour of the Turks. It must be herewith noted that until the Second World War North African nationals were commonly referred to in Malta as 'Turks', a term which did not distinguish Arabs from Berbers, or ersatz Ottoman subjects⁹³, while depicting the Knights of Saint John as the knights in shining armour most of the times. Laspina's book also linked the historical references with the religious aspect of prayers and thanksgiving with regard to the Catholic faith particularly as he indicated that Malta was a 'Christian Fortress'.

⁹³ Wood, J., *The Land of the Turks : North African Adventure* (Melita Historica, 2006 ISSN 1021-6952 Vol. XIV, no.3 pg333-334

According to Korostelina (2002) the three factors which influence salience of social identity are the level of differences (skin colour/facial characteristics), the competitiveness (the Maltese and the Knights overpowering the Turks/corsairs) and the prevalence of group identity over personal identity (the Maltese as one with the Knights). Thus from the analysis of the results of the first three questions, since 22 out of the 30 participants indicated the Great Siege of 1565 as the period which they remembered most, because they said, it was also a victory over the Turks; indicates that more than two thirds of the participants were exhibiting in-group membership while showing negative attitudes towards the out-group thus indicating much pride in their own group – ‘because we were victorious’.

19 of these 22 participants – which favoured the Great Siege period of history, in the following questions 5 and 6 (which pertained to identity and what made them proud to be Maltese), replied that history itself was *what* made them mostly proud, while their identity was that of Mediterraneans/Europeans. Two indicated that the Maltese language made them feel proud.

On the other hand, three of the remaining eight participants, which indicated a preference for the Prehistory period pointed at the Maltese festa, the language, Maltese culture and the fact that the Maltese help each other - as the source of their pride. While their identity, was either simply ‘Maltese’ identity, or ‘uniquely Maltese’ or in one case, of a personal nature: ‘ambitious’.

Another two, whose historical attraction was to the British period and to Malta's independence from the same British, mentioned Malta's democratic principles as part of his identity and to her gender which defined the other's identity. With regard to the pride factor, these two mentioned that Malta was a hospitable country, with its own culture.

The participant who preferred the French period, indicated the Maltese airline as a source of his pride while his identity was that of a 'European'.

Similarly, the participant who indicated the Roman period as his favorite specifically indicated that his social identity, was that of a 'Maltese with all that it entailed'. His pride lay in the 'spectacular' culture which the country boasts thanks to its geographical position.

The one other remaining participant who did not exhibit a preference, is a trainee history teacher, for whom identity meant distinguishment from others, while his pride lay in 'the fact that I live on a tiny island with such personality that sticks out among other countries'.

It seems to be indicative here, though not specifically from this study only, that the chosen part of history which the respective groups indicated, seems to be directly linked with their meaning of national identity. For many the story of the Great Siege, irrespective how colourful the story was drummed into their brains as kids, meant

national pride, the fact that tiny Malta won when faced with the ‘Turkish thousands’ is a source of great pride for the Maltese. Similarly, the group that favoured the British era, seemed more inclined to list democratic values as part of their identity.

Social identity involves much evaluation and comparison between the group/s and in this instance the majority of the participants (22) showed comparison and competitiveness with and against the ‘Turks’ while personally identifying as a unique person or country in terms of the differences with the others. Thus the Maltese, from this instance, emerge as a strong category of people as distinguished from the other social categories. And as the self-categorization (Tajfel) gets stronger, the more depersonalised the ‘others’ become.

The Maltese have thus perceived and behave in line with a self-inclusive prototype; the attraction that they have with the Knights who fought with the Maltese against the Turks and as a consequence of this, they have cultivated prejudice and in-group bias if not also hate-group membership⁹⁴ against the ‘Turks’. Without comparing the phenomenon of the Maltese’ hate against the Turks to membership groups such as for example the *Ku Klux Klan*, one must here note that hate-groups are an extreme form of social identity but at the same time there are some similarities since the Maltese define themselves as mostly European (white caucasian) as opposed to the Turks who were always depicted as ‘dark

⁹⁴ There have been a few incidents throughout the years in sport activities where the Turks and the Maltese supporters in respective football grounds have retaliated against each other with consequences that have resulted in the pelting of oranges to name but one incident. One recent European qualifier football game was unfortunately scheduled to be played on the 8th of September 2007 – on the anniversary of the Great Siege with massive billboards put up around Malta representing the defeat of the Turks at the hands of the Maltese during the same siege. Thankfully good reason prevailed during the game and no incidents occurred. The game ended in a 2-2 draw.

and dangerous'⁹⁵. But not only. The transgenerational transmission particularly of this part of history, with all its misrepresentations and accentuations, may have contributed to making the Maltese identity even more inclusive.

On the other hand, history for the Maltese people may have had such an impact on society to the extent that our history such as our feat in the Great Siege and our heroism when Malta withstood the many German and Italian bombardments during the Second World War, that the Maltese felt they needed to exaggerate it in order to put the same tiny island on the map. This happens as a consequence since many a Maltese may feel 'hurt' when foreigners do not know what and where Malta may be and thus '*the Maltese have wanted to give more force to their identity, even if they arent born in Malta*'⁹⁶. It is also worth noting that different parts of history mean a different identity to others. Even though the sample was very small, the results from this explorative study indicate that the shared reservoirs of some parts of Maltese history bolster the Maltese' self-esteem itself and just like chosen traumas, these parts of history become mythologized over time⁹⁷ and perhaps exacerbated by the fact that particularly the story of the Great Siege itself was never explored from the 'Turk' side.

⁹⁵ Up to a few decades ago, one many times found statues of the Turk slave in many a Maltese home – which statue was used to instill fear into children that they will be beaten up by the Turk if they didn't behave. Such is found in many a local folklore book and common parlance.

⁹⁶ Smith, A.L., *Colonial Memory and Postcolonial Europe :Maltese settlers in Algeria and France* (Indiana University Press -2006) p198

⁹⁷ Volkan Vamik., *Blood Lines, from ethnic pride to ethnic terrorism*. Westview Press (1997) p81

Thus it comes as no surprise that the underlying trend seems to veer towards a certain amount of pride, that despite the size of the country, and what the Maltese endured throughout its colourful history, mainly because of the legacy of the Knights of Saint John, the Great Siege, the Uprising against the French and the British, and also the destroying factor of the hardship endured during the First but mostly during the Second World War, the Maltese people still retained their resilience and are today keeping up with many a developed country's status, standard of living and economic development. Thus history indicates a source of pride for the Maltese.

4.3 History and migration perception

Since pre-colonial times migration has been one economic option for Africans and there has always been good economic logic for this. Chabal⁹⁸ argues that there are three contemporary processes critical to this issue – first is the attitude towards migrants have changed both within and outside of Africa; second is that there are now more Africans diasporas around the world than ever; and thirdly that the ready availability of modern technology has transformed the nature of migration. Attitudes towards African migrants have changed drastically in the last two decades. Where once they were able easily to move to other African countries to work and live, they are now the butt of xenophobic

⁹⁸ Chabal, P., *Africa: the politics of suffering and smiling* (Zed Books -2009) p143.

policies almost everywhere. This situation which is primarily the outcome of an aggressive economic nationalism in countries that have failed to develop, is having perverse consequences. Instead of assimilating those whose economic activities are often valuable, such policies force the Africans underground and in this manner increase illegal economic transactions that led to the further informalisation of the economy⁹⁹. Therefore as one can surmise, Africans have been nomading around for centuries and will continue to do so, irrespective of the border or the sea that might separate them from what they want to achieve – their dream, just like everybody else; the attainment of their basic human needs.

Question 7, 8 and 9 dealt with the issue of migration while the last question referred to marriage with an immigrant.

Half the group of students that favoured the Great Siege period of history (22 of 30) – 11, said that migration meant travelling for good from a country to another and that migration was a current phenomenon while the other eleven indicated that migration always existed. Two of the three students who preferred the pre-history period also indicated their perception that migration was a current phenomenon. The two students who preferred the British period were also split in this regard. The student who preferred the French period said migration was a current phenomenon too but the trainee ‘history teacher’ said it wasn’t. Thus overall, 16 of the 30 students (53.3%) students perceive migration as a current phenomenon, but this perception does not seem to have any

⁹⁹ Chabal, P., *Africa: the politics of suffering and smiling* (Zed Books -2009) p144

correlation with the period of history that they preferred as the numbers are split across the board, or too small to indicate anything.

But when asked whether the migrants should be sent back to their original countries, one third (7 of the 22) of the Great Siege group said the migrants should be sent back while the other 15 said that it depended on the circumstances or whether they were legal or illegal or because 'they left for a reason'. One in particular who was against illegal immigrants staying in Malta, answered that he 'preferred an immigrant to know our (the Maltese) language if they come to Malta since when the Maltese go abroad themselves they have to speak the other language'. Another said that they should only be sent back 'if they cannot integrate', while on the other hand stated the importance of 'diversification' in favour of the immigrants staying on.

The definition, whether legal or illegal stems from the fact that the Maltese government has had a detention policy for all the *klandestini* – or as the authorities refer to them as – illegal immigrants - that are rescued from the Maltese territorial waters or even from international waters. Thus the answers to this question were the most varied. Hence the importance of sticking to the laws (of Malta) proved an important determinant in the answer to this question. It is important to mention that detention, many times eventually transmits itself into psychological frustration with the result that the military barracks or tents where the immigrant-detainees are kept have suffered many a fire and attacks on the Maltese soldiers or between the immigrants themselves, have occurred with negative

results and a death. These occurrences are always reported with prominence in the media as indicated earlier. Therefore, through the advent and advancements of the communications revolution in the last fifty years and also through the diffusion of the internet, so much information may be available for many people apart from books and television and radio. Therefore the more ‘news’ one hears the more one presumes that it might be happening. Hence as a consequence, the participants showed a certain perception about the number of immigrants arriving in Malta – probably also because of the multitude of media reports about skirmishes in the detention barracks and other reports about the influx of the *illegal immigrants* that come to our country whilst on their way to mainland Europe.

Thus in this case it may be a question of *perception* but not of the real and filtered information of the amount of illegal immigrants currently in Malta. In general many Maltese also do not know what defines and who is entitled to benefit from protection such as those applying for a refugee status or those requiring international protection or temporary humanitarian protection. In fact the questions asked to the students made references to migrants, immigrants and third party nationals but only one participant double checked the difference nomenclature in the particular question. As of 18th September 2011, Malta registered the highest rate of asylum seekers applications when compared with the population of each EU member state according to Eurostat, with Cyprus and Sweden registering the second and third highest per capita statistics¹⁰⁰. While

¹⁰⁰ www.maltastar.com 18.9.2011

in 2006, for example, there were 1,270 registered asylum seekers in Malta (MIPEX, 2007)¹⁰¹.

Similarly, when asked if the immigrants had a right to work in the host country and if the participants themselves would hire a ‘foreigner’, 19 (of the 22) in the Great Siege group agreed that immigrants should be given such a right to work, if they had the qualifications *and* if they were legally in Malta. Two of the other three explained that they would give them work if there was no Maltese willing to do the job while the other indicated that a mix of culture would only benefit the Maltese society.

Two of the three from the Pre-history group, were against giving a right to work for the immigrants with the other being in favour. The former stated ‘taking the place of Maltese’ while the other was the only one who distinguished and realised the difference in the nomenclature and thus was favourable to giving a ‘foreigner’ a job but did not give the right of work to an immigrant by the host country.

¹⁰¹ Cutajar, J., Cassar, G., Eds, *Social Transitions in Maltese Society* (Agenda, Miller Distributors Limited -2009) : Deguara, A., *Victims of Poverty* p274. The same article by Deguara also explains that the influx of boat immigrants is largely due to Malta’s geographic location between Africa and Europe, while immigrants who reach Malta cannot proceed to a third country as Malta is obliged by the Dublin II Convention to take responsibility of such immigrants as a receiving country. When in 2001 the Refugees Act came into force it provided for the establishment of a Commissioner for Refugees and a Refugees Appeals Board while in 2007 the Organisation for the Integration and Welfare of Asylum Seekers (OIWAS) was set up. In summer of 2011 the EU’s European Asylum Support Office (EASO) was established in Malta.

The two participants forming the British group were in favour of giving the immigrants the right to work but not if they were in Malta illegally, and it also depended on their qualifications.

The French aficionado's positive reply needed the qualification as to why the illegal immigrant was in Malta while the Roman period aficionado agreed to give the immigrant a right to work, depending on the worker's credentials.

The would-be history teacher also qualified his answer by stating that it all depended on the particular immigrant's circumstances.

This result seemed to indicate yet again, the legality of the issue in hand, as it seemed that most participants were willing to employ the immigrants if they had the papers and copies of their qualifications in hand which is sometimes difficult considering that most of the time these people leave their country carrying barely anything and losing them while perhaps being robbed many times along the way or losing their documents if their boat takes in water during the dangerous crossing from the African shore towards Malta and Italy. Such can be termed as scape-goating since blame by the Maltese participants is being put and punishing the illegal immigrants because of the situation in their own countries. The participants seem to harbour frustration in regard to the immigrants since the immigrants themselves are an easy and available target.

The 9th question dealt with housing an immigrant and eight of the Great Siege group were against any type of housing irrespective since they claimed that their home, was their home. Another eight claimed that it depended on many circumstances, such as if the immigrant was legally in Malta, or it depended on the person's (illegal immigrant or Maltese) character and background. The other six replied that they would take in people for a fee, probably a small fee, if he/she had the money to pay, was legally in Malta with another stating that he had done it before.

The Pre-history group (3) answered negatively and needed to qualify that housing anyone depended on a particular reason (1) or if the person was broke (2), with the other giving a straight no (3). Even though the sample here is rather small to derive any conclusively precise data, it is though indicative that this group showed more prejudice than the other groups and that Malta's rich and marvellous historical past, as one student colourfully explained, may indicate the very justification for prejudice.

Those that favoured the British period (2) were more positive and both answered positively 'for a fee' and if 'they can afford it'. Those that favoured the French and the Roman period both indicated positively but 'for a fee'. While the would-be history teacher, replied negatively.

Tying with the 4th and 5th (preference of nationality and why) questions are the last two questions – which refer to the nationality of the participants' friends and more

importantly with regard to whether the participants would marry (or enter a significant relationship) with an immigrant.

Nearly all, bar two, of the participants declared to have Maltese friends, irrespective of their history-preference group background. Meanwhile 15 all the participants from the Great Siege group and who claimed to have mostly Maltese and/or European friends indicated the English as their most preferred nationality; another two preferred the Americans; three preferred the Swedish; one preferred the French first while only one other had no preference at all. No one preferred the Libyans, the Congolese nor the Turkish first, not even that participant who had Libyan friends and worked with Libyans. It must be noted here that two group preferences seemed to have emerged with the first group showing preference for either the English/Swedish/French/Americans in that order while the rest of the nationalities were not given much importance since most of the participants tended to hurry up with regards to the last indications. In answer to why the English emerged as their favourites, the Great Siege group indicated similar/exposure to culture, food, familiarity, way of thinking, mentality, communication and because they had visited the countries, as the reason for their preference. One participant indicated that he didnt like the French because he would be showing '*bad prejudice on Africans*'.

Two from the Pre-history group also indicated the English (Americans, French and Swedish to follow) as their preference while one had no preference at all and stated that they were 'all the same' to him. One from the British group also had no preference while the other, preferred the British and the French, Americans and Swedish, in that order.

Similarly also those that preferred the French and the Roman period indicated the English as their preference while the would-be history teacher had no preference. The latter did not answer the question with regard to marrying an immigrant while the participant who preferred the French period replied negatively. On the other hand, the participant who preferred the Roman period indicated 'why not' for his answer to this question. The British period group were split between preferring Swedes to marry or an immigrant while the Pre-history group replied negatively (1) or because it depended on the characteristics (2) of the person.

Six from the Great Siege group replied 'why not' while only three agreed to marrying an immigrant if they 'loved' the person; another three replied negatively while 12 said the issue depended on many factors such as legality of their stay in Malta, but mostly without qualifying what criteria would shift their decision in favour of marrying an immigrant. Thus, without going into the cognitive theories of stereotyping, it seems that the Maltese students perceive their personal identity, the definition of their own self through their social identity which is contextualised through the particular history period which they prefer, but at the same time, the mental representation of a historical event that induces feelings of success and triumph, what Volkan calls 'chosen glory' has certainly fulfilled its hypothesis in this instant considering that most of the Maltese students were brought together to form a large group (22 out of 30) together who remember the Great Siege as a triumph over the Turks and hence not one participant indicated the Turks as their favorite

nation/al since the Great Siege victory, also remembered by a public holiday was a ‘deserved’ victory over the other group¹⁰².

4.4 *Conclusions from this study*

Thus from this study, the Maltese university students do show some prejudice against foreigners but particularly illegal immigrants. If Volkan is of the opinion that a chosen glory, is ‘reactivated as a way to bolster a group’s self-esteem and like chosen traumas has become heavily mythologized over time’ – then the mental representation of the Great Siege (for example) as a historical event that has instilled in the Maltese, a sense of success over the Turks, is a veritable example¹⁰³. Maltese politicians use this method in their speeches too on occasions such as the remembrance of the Great Siege or of that of Malta’s Independence and hence the group which favoured the latter period, could feel more self-esteem because their tiny country managed to free itself from all the dictators and colonizers and stood on its own feet despite all. Volkan argues that both chosen glories and chosen traumas are easily absorbed by the children of a group. But he also points out that chosen glories influence identity less pervasively than chosen traumas, however, he continues, because their effect is less complex¹⁰⁴. Thus since the Great Siege itself can be termed as a chosen glory and a chosen trauma, since many Maltese suffered and/or died in the process to maintain the country under siege, the absorption here could

¹⁰² Volkan Vamik., *Blood Lines, from ethnic pride to ethnic terrorism*. Westview Press (1997) p81

¹⁰³ Literature research from this point of view was limited to the researcher to online libraries.

¹⁰⁴ Volkan Vamik., *Blood Lines, from ethnic pride to ethnic terrorism*. Westview Press (1997) p82.

be total since the pictures in named history books depicted the fighting of the Maltese against the Corsairs or Turks were negatively represented against the Corsairs and Turks.

Thus this study seems to indicate that the chosen glory/trauma of the Great Siege or even the survival of another siege in the Second World War, can be termed as events that succeeded in making positive changes to Malta and thus the shared mental representations for these instances of history are powerful ethnic or perhaps large-group markers of the Maltese as Volkan would term it.

On the other hand, while with regards to the question of fee, these answers cannot be exclusive to whether these participants showed tolerance tendencies but it could also infer a certain financial situation which is commonly prevalent amongst university students who would feel much more comfortable to flat-share than any other segment of a society.

Thus this study seems to indicate that the representation of the history of Malta as passed on through the generations of peoples and books, has had an influence and may have increased prejudice against certain nationalities such as the Turks and perhaps even the Libyans and Congolese. The specificities of what is at the root or adds to this prejudice; the words (uttered by politicians), the books (particularly historic), the symbols (such as the George Cross on the Maltese flag), is the subject of an indepth study in Maltese identity.

4.5 Results from the other studies

A study conducted by the popular television programme *Xarabank*¹⁰⁵ in 2004 concluded that Maltese people were racist. 69.5% of respondents said that they would be very disappointed if their daughter or son married an Arab and 40.6% said that they would react badly if an Arab became their neighbour. This telephone survey also revealed that 47.4% of respondents said they were concerned about different cultures infiltrating in Malta, there was no significant gender difference on this issue, but there was however a difference between generations. Respondents in the age cohorts 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, and 65+ ranged between 45.9% and 60.7% but in the case of the 17-24 and 25-34 age cohorts, it was much lower 27.3% and 23.7% respectively¹⁰⁶.

Ethnic conflict is often framed around the most visible and mundane aspects of everyday life – customs such as food, clothing and speech. These external manifestations of identity are readily contested when one group seeks to control the behaviour of another¹⁰⁷. Thus, the question begs itself, do the Maltese, who are in charge of their own destiny after many centuries of being ruled by foreign legions now want to control the immigrants who come to Malta?

¹⁰⁵ Xarabank translates into 'bus'; this is a long-running weekly discussion tv programme. The production team sometimes conducts telephone polls on a small sample of the population.

¹⁰⁶ Engebakken, Nina Cecile, Maltese University students' attitudes toward Arabs: a study on social psychology of prejudice B.Psy. (Hons) April 2006. pg 22.

¹⁰⁷ Howard Ross, M., *Cultural Contestation in Ethnic Conflict*, Cambridge University Press (2007). Pg127

From the results of this study it is indicated that the Maltese students favour the white Europeans, since they see themselves as Europeans too while they do not show much kinship with the Libyans nor the Turks and even less with the Congolese. Even Engebakken concluded similarly in 2006 as her study also pointed to high prejudice¹⁰⁸ against the Arabs by the student participants, while indicating intergroup contact as a way of reducing prejudice considering it is also a very heavily studied technique¹⁰⁹. She also noted that Maltese students see Arab nationals as a threat to their identity for reasons such as religion. More specifically her study highlighted that there seemed to be a tendency for Catholics to be more prejudiced than the rest¹¹⁰. The latter can be understood in the light of the Knights of Malta who championed the Catholic religion as indicated in Chapter One.

In this Chapter the analysis of the study and in comparison the results of similar studies were indicated in order for a better view of the situation to be grasped and to contextualise the very nature of the study itself.

According to John F Bradley, *'since the day that Adam and Eve had to leave the Garden of Eden in search of a new home, members of the human race have been forced to wander about the earth in search of new lands or better societies'*.

¹⁰⁸ Engebakken, Nina Cecile, Maltese University students' attitudes toward Arabs: a study on social psychology of prejudice B.Psy. (Hons) April 2006.p47

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.p25

¹¹⁰ Ibid.p.48

And to most people, particularly in this context: the African people, whether those who want to migrate to Europe or not, this has certainly been a phenomenon since time immemorial. Much as Africans nowadays undoubtedly feel themselves to be the citizens of a particular country, they also function within an international, and even global setting. Indeed, the assumption that the existence of the nation-state marking the 'natural' boundaries of regular economic activities is wide off the mark. Africans have always moved in search of work, goods and land, and it is not the erection of colonial territorial borders, later solidified into national frontiers, that has stopped them doing so¹¹¹. Thus, the need for a reduction of the salience of categorization should come as no surprise in order for the immigrants to be helped to integrate better with the Maltese population, since there is no stopping the very nature of migration itself as indicated earlier.

¹¹¹ Chabal, P., *Africa: the politics of suffering and smiling* (Zed Books -2009) pg142.

CONCLUSION

Chosen trauma or identity?

Conflict is perennial, not just where one's list of basic human needs, as extolled by the conflict scholar John Burton, are not being met but also where borders and border control continue to present the physical boundary to a better standard of living or to the freedom from persecution and basic human rights which each and every human being should have a right to – irrespective of race, colour or ethnic origin.

While this is being written, and similarly on each and every day, there is someone, somewhere, planning to leave the everyday horror or the inequality suffered in his or her African country, to risk his or her life and attempt to take-on one of the world's most dangerous migration routes – the route that starts from somewhere in the African continent, and takes the would-be migrants through deserts, deaths and droughts, towards the North African shores and to the crossing of the dangerously gusty Mediterranean Sea and the other southern European countries. Within each and every one of these persons lies the dream, the hope, that someday they will have a new beginning, in a better world – just like the rest of the people in other countries. The tragedy for the Africans though

exacerbates when they start being usurped by the human traffickers on the *lampa-lampa*¹¹² trips while they have hardly any if at all information on the prejudice and xenophobia that awaits them on their landing on the foreign shores.

Thus if the rest of the world, particularly the Europeans, are willing to understand and reconcile this African migration, then perhaps the ill-conceived prejudice, the xenophobic fears, the racist attitudes, the notion of *us* against *them*, would not be manifested when people want to move to greener pastures just like the members of the animal kingdom habitually do. And this irrespective whether new light is shed on the phenomenon of irregular migration as is currently being indicated particularly by the Libyan Transitional National Council that discovered documents showing that the Gaddafi regime was behind the irregular immigration phenomenon and used it to create difficulties in Europe and Malta.

Intimately related with the immigration phenomenon in Malta, is the historical aspect with regard to the display of prejudice by the Maltese nationals (students in this study) towards the North Africans. As already pointed out, all the North Africans and other people of slightly darker-than-olive skin were popularly referred to as ‘Turks’ by the Maltese way back until the first half of the 20th C. In fact one notes various denigrating

¹¹² Lampa-lampa is slang for escape by sea from North Africa to Europe and since the place that most survivors reach is the Italian island of Lampedusa, the name Lampa is a phonetic adaptation by the Africans.

Maltese expletives referring to the ‘Turks’, particularly one epithet ‘*Haqq it-Torok*’¹¹³. And as already discussed in Chapter One and Chapter Three, there is a negative connotation which is directly linked to all the historical interpretations in respect of the Great Siege of 1565 – the *chosen glory* of the Maltese which is negatively intertwined with the *chosen trauma* of the lost lives during that dark period when the Maltese were under siege, which could also be termed as the siege of the Muslims against the Christians.

Therefore the suggestion for the erection of a museum to commemorate the Great Siege, is more than timely when in 2015 Malta commemorates the 450 anniversary since the Maltese triumphed over the ‘Turks’. As was referenced throughout this study, and which is found in books, literature, paintings and many maps, the Great Siege, is the *one* historical moment that the Maltese students, according to this study, mostly remember. It is referred to as a turning point in Malta’s history, so why shouldn’t this upcoming anniversary prove to be the connection between the past and the present, the old and the new, the Maltese and the ‘Turks’ (in all the shades) and thus a new turning point in Malta’s history?

It is an opportunity for history to be re-told while representing a certain identity management, reduction of the salient identity and demythologization of the Great Siege story itself. The time would certainly be ripe for academics from Malta and from Turkey

¹¹³ Translates into ‘blame the Turks’. It is important to note though that the Maltese word ‘*Haqq*’ which is derived from an Arabic word – means ‘justice’ in Arabic.

to make more contacts and to present an acceptable version of the historic event. Only Professor Arnold Cassola researched this particular historical period from the Turkish end of the Maltese opposition to the Ottoman Empire in the 16th C. Thus a call for a definitive book on the history of the Great Siege was also recently made by the Maltese representative to UNESCO which would also involve both the Maltese and the Turkish governments but also the Order of Malta.¹¹⁴

The *definitive guide* to the Great Siege of Malta, must then also contain pictures and sketches which would be truer to the nature of the respective population's physical characteristics and not as depicted in the older books as dark, gnarled and ugly.

Similarly, a new set of school history books should also reflect a more unbiased truth of the history of the Great Siege.

Identity management thus calls for an increase in identity awareness, which should also include information about who the Maltese are and the role of identity as a possible source of conflict or tolerance. Identifying Maltese people who made great progress in their careers, especially if they were not from the military field nor patriots during sieges or wars would be beneficial as thus would indicate that the Maltese do not need to distinguish from others because of their size and because they won the battle against the

¹¹⁴ <http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20110828/opinion/Great-Siege-anniversary.382162>

Turks. There is more to the Maltese than that. Thus, an increase in group esteem and positive in group image would be beneficial at this point in time as it would help revive in group identity.

Historical education is the first means to achieve this above aims. Demythologization of what the Maltese history really is – the telling of stories to kids that the Turks were not always the ogres and that the Knights of Saint John were also mercenaries would be a start. A replica of the Sword of Grand Master La Vallette, which was stolen by General Bonaparte and which now stands at the Musee' de Louvre in Paris could be made in order for healing to take place and for negotiations for its return to start and hopefully happen.

Perhaps this study of Maltese students conforms more to what Eriksen proposes – that ethnicity is best seen as a set of socially constructed group and interpersonal performances that communicate to self and others the boundaries between groups, which are not fixed entities but rather collectives of influx¹¹⁵. An implication of this position would be that group identity is conceptualized as both conscious and strategic – meaning that individuals are aware of their multiple social identities and deploy them situationally in order to achieve personal and group goals. Thus in this case, it would seem that the Maltese use the history to enhance their self-esteem and also the nation's self-esteem – further indicating perhaps that the Maltese, individuals or as a group are resilient and tough die hards.

¹¹⁵ Ashmore Richard D., Eds, *Social Identity, Inter-group Conflict, and Conflict Reduction Volume 3*, Oxford University Press (2001) p215

One must here put in context the conflict that the Church in Malta has had with the State. Considerable influence was always exercised by the Church upon the State and when the State under the tutelage of Genral Bonaparte tried to separate the two, Malta witnessed the Maltese priests uprisings. Thus the Catholic religion, also through the strong influence of the Knights of Saint John, flourished to a point where Malta was identified as the last stronghold of Christiandom as indicated in Chapter One. Can the Catholic religion be said to be intertwined with Maltese identity itself? (as a couple students replied when asked about their identity – not just when they were asked about their religious affiliation) Although national identity is carried by the individual members of a national group and can thus be studied as a property of individuals. But on the other hand, can the Maltese be termed as belonging thus to a system of moral perceptions (Collective Axiology : Rothbart, Korostelina)? And that they have to behave according to their generality?

Although this study was limited to university students, the comparison with the other studies, both current and older, European-wide or done specifically in Malta, it is certainly clear that both the Maltese Government and the Maltese society at large, need to work together in order to create more favourable conditions towards the integration and the acceptance of the migrants in Malta, especially since the Maltese are known to have had quite a few migratory periods during the course of history. Walls of wrong

perceptions need to fall, since it is inevitable that the Africans will continue to travel up North, irrespective of sovereign borders and cultural boundaries.

APPENDIX 'X': SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaire : *Blame it on history*

Part A

Q1 gender

Q2status

Q3religious affiliation

Q4age group

Q5political affiliation(optional)

Part B

Key coding

Numerical and lettering (code kept in another location)

Part C

Q1 do you like Maltese history? And why?

Q2do you remember which Maltese history books you had and studied at school? Please name them if you remember.

Q3what do you remember most from Malta's history? Explain the particular choice?

Q4which nationalities do you prefer in order from 1 most to 6 least
(Swedish/Libyan/Turkish/English/Congolese/French/Americans)

Q4why do you prefer one nationality from another? Any reason? Please explain.

Q5what do you understand by identity? Do you have an identity? What identity do you have?

Q6What make you proud to be Maltese?

Q7what is migration? Is migration a current phenomenon? Should migrants be sent back to their original country? Explain your answer.

Q8should immigrants be given a right to work in the host country? Would you hire a foreigner in your own company (if you have one)? Explain your answer.

Q9would you house an immigrant in your home? For free? For a fee?

Q10 who are your friends? Are they all Maltese? Any foreigners? Which countries?

APPENDIX 'Y': INFORMED CONSENT FORM

RESEARCH PROCEDURES: This research is being conducted to explore and identify triggers and the extent of the issues that may have contributed to prejudice that Maltese University students may have with regards to other nationalities. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in an interview with Susan Mercieca, the researcher of this study. With your consent and agreement, the interview to be held at the University Campus will be archived as documents or recorded through a digital audio recording device. Total time of the interview should last approximately 30-45 minutes.

RISKS: There are no foreseeable risks for participants living in the United States nor those living in Malta which are the subject of this research.

BENEFITS: There are no benefits to you as a participant other than to further explore any prejudice that one might have with regard to other nationalities.

CONFIDENTIALITY: The data in this study will be confidential. Names and other identifiers will not be placed on surveys or other research data. Your name will not be included on the surveys and any other data.

PARTICIPATION: Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reasons. If you decide not to participate or if you withdraw from the study, there is no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. There are no costs to you or any other party.

CONTACT: This research is being conducted by Susan Mercieca, Master's student at the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University. She may be reached at (356) xxxxxxxx and suemercieca@hotmail.com for questions or to report a research-related problem. Mercieca's supervisor and Principal Investigator is Professor Karyna Korostelina, and she may be reached at ckoroste@gmu.edu. You may contact the George Mason University Office of Research Subject Protections at 703-993-4121 if you have questions or comments regarding your rights as a participant in the research.

This research has been reviewed according to George Mason University procedures governing your participation in this research.

CONSENT: I have read this form and agree to participate in this study.

Name

Date of Signature

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CURRICULUM VITAE

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