

Dear Sir/Madam

In my personal capacity, I am submitting the following recommendations for the process of Constitutional reform.

As I have already said in person to the Steering Committee, **Malta is a country at war** - with two main political parties stuck in a generational feud which is ripping us apart.

Malta's Civil War - The Importance of Good Governance

It is not in the interests of the Labour Party, the Nationalist Party or the Maltese public in general for this war to continue. It must be resolved and the reform of the Constitution is an opportunity for that to happen.

What would it mean to end this civil war in Malta? It would mean that it will no longer be the case that when a political party takes power, that it will punish people who voted against it and reward those who supported it. By creating such a high stakes situation, and capturing all independent institutions through the illegal abuse of political power, we are indeed creating a state of civil war.

Why? Because in such a situation, a political party and its followers will do anything to gain Executive power, and will do whatever it takes to keep that power - including corruption and the selling out of the public interest to corrupt businessmen. This is because it is a **Winner Takes All** situation, and the loser is likely doomed to generations in Opposition. Therefore, the two parties will indeed do anything to gain power or remain in government. This has a catastrophic effect on good governance and on the public interest.

The only way to end this civil war is through good governance, which ensures independent institutions and a civil service which does not reward party insiders, but which rewards merit. It must become impossible for

political parties to control independent institutions, appoint judges through the Prime Minister, dictate the actions of the Police Commissioner and so on and so forth. Once the State becomes distinguishable from the political party in government, and once people are held to account for their actions, then there will be a fair playing field with less hatred, less resentment and in conclusion, and end to the state of civil war in Malta.

Party Financing Reform

In Malta's Civil War, if one party goes against the developers as a whole, and tries to end their influence in the Planning Authority, then the developers will swing their support fully behind the rivals of whoever dares to take that measure. In a sense, the businessmen in Malta are the real authority, and through their meddling, the law only applies to those who are too poor to have influence, or who oppose the government. The law never applies to people asking for favours, or to businessmen who buy out the political parties.

Therefore, this is a civil war being fed by money from a ruling clique of business interests, and to get rid of that influence and return to politics which serves the people, we need to reform our party financing laws.

One way to address this concern is with a radical reform of **Party Financing** Laws, which can stem from amendments to the Constitution, making it illegal for businessmen or corporations to donate large sums of money to political parties. This shortfall could be addressed by a small measure of public financing for political parties, monitored by independent watchdogs. There is also currently no real way to ensure transparency of political party finances, due to a recent court ruling which said that the Electoral Commission cannot be judge, jury and executioner when investigating abuses. The Party Financing Laws are therefore in Limbo. We need this systematic corruption to be addressed at the Constitutional level.

Once the influence of corrupt businessmen is removed from Malta's politics, then political parties will be at liberty to pursue the public interest once again.

An End to the Monopoly on Truth

It is not in the public interest for politicians to have such a dominant power over the media as they do in Malta, and to fuel tribal tensions and control people's interpretations of reality and our history. Political parties currently control television, radio and newspapers, and have managed to influence the independent media as well. This has led to a situation where third parties have no presence outside of the newspapers and an occasional 60 second segment on public broadcasting, while the majority of the population is only exposed to twisted versions of reality through NET or ONE News.

People end up resenting one another in our little island because they are not shown people's real motivations on either side of the political divide. Enemies are demonised and ridiculed, and party insiders are held up as gods and heroes. Cults of personality form around people who find they have absolutely no checks and balances on their power.

The Maltese people deserve to be presented with all the facts by truly independent media, and for a platform to exist for all politicians to air their views.

Political parties should not be allowed to control television and radio, while more space needs to be available in public broadcasting, including debates at election time, which include politicians from outside the main two parties.

Renaming Our Country to Malta and Gozo

Gozo has long been ruled like a colony of Malta, with the Gozitan Minister operating like a governor for Malta. Gozitan Members of Parliament are subservient to their political parties which are based in Malta and overwhelmingly seek the Maltese interest at the expense of Gozitan interests.

It is clear to see that Gozitans **do not wish for Gozo to become like Malta**, priding themselves on their distinct identity and landscape. Many fear that a Gozo Tunnel will lead to the wave of overdevelopment which has hit Malta to spread to Gozo. Regardless of one's opinion on the tunnel, Gozo can easily be defended by rigid planning laws and a certain amount of legislative power over its own affairs being further given to Gozo.

Gozo should have a real local government which is not at the mercy of institutions based in Malta.

Furthermore, because Gozitans have a distinct identity, come from a separate island from us and because many Maltese look down on Gozitans - it is imperative that we recognise Gozo as our equal.

The country should therefore be renamed Malta and Gozo, and Gozo given further devolved powers over its own affairs which will protect it from being abused by Maltese businessmen and rampant speculation.

Conclusion

If good governance is addressed as I have outlined above, then politics in Malta will truly reflect the public interest. This will be because there will be a separation between State and Party - and the State, Judiciary and the civil service will operate independently of private interests.

Through party financing reform, even the political parties themselves will be more inclined to operate in the public interest, as they will no longer have to go begging for funds.

By empowering the media and removing political influence from the media, politicians will be held accountable for their accounts by journalists seeking the truth, rather than supposed journalists who have a clear party line to follow, going against which they risk losing their jobs and isolating themselves socially and professionally.

Malta is a country at war with itself - resolving our contradictions, forgiving ourselves and seeking a way for us to move forward together means that we will no longer live in a Winner Takes All country, but rather in a country where all Maltese **and** Gozitans both are part of the same community and family.

Timothy Alden