

**DAVID AGIUS**  
 'We're talking  
 about Adrian  
 Delia as a  
 possible future  
 prime minister'  
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How to fix the Republic...

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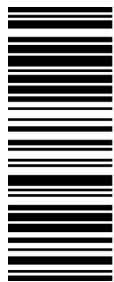
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# Murdered lawyer had loaned More directors €750,000 interest-free

Man arrested  
 and released in  
 Caruana Galizia  
 raids in 2017 was  
 guarantor for  
 loan

**MATTHEW VELLA**

A lawyer who was found dead  
 in a Birkirkara multi-storey  
 garage in 2015, after being  
 shot four times, had been one  
 of the 'investors' in the mys-  
 terious More Supermarkets  
 bust.

Carmel Chircop, 51, was  
 killed in the morning of 8  
 October 2015 as he walked  
 to the Birkirkara garage com-  
 plex, where he died from four  
 gunshot wounds to his upper  
 body.

Since then, little has been  
 disclosed of the ongoing in-  
 vestigations into the murder  
 of a lawyer who enjoyed ex-  
 tensive community bonds and  
 other business  
 relationships.

**PAGE 3**



Ryan Schembri (left) departed from Malta in late 2014 after his supermarket business amassed millions in debt. Carmel Chircop, who was shot dead in 2015, had been one of his creditors



## LABOUR LEADERSHIP

# Chris Fearne's lead eroded by resurgent Abela

**KURT SANSONE**

CHRIS Fearne still leads his rival Robert Abela as the Labour leadership race enters its final week but the distance has narrowed, a MaltaToday survey found.

The survey was held among Labour Party members and puts Fearne's support at 55.4% against Abela's 44.6% when the results are extrapolated on those who declared their voting intention.

However, the results are conditioned by the large percentage of respondents who did not declare their preferred choice for prime minister. Almost six in 10 of respondents (58.9%) were uncertain who they will vote for, while another 9.5% said they will vote for none.

The raw numbers give Fearne 17.5% and Abela 14.1%, pointing to a race that can go from a tight contest to an easy victory for Fearne when the margin of error is taken into account. An internal membership survey leaked to The Sunday Times of Malta last week put Fearne's support at around 65%.



**mt  
 survey**

**PGS 8-9**

**Garofalo**



Not Just Any Plate Of Pasta...

...with Garofalo, it's  
 'La Pasta Di Gragnano'!



ESSENZA DI PASTA.



## LOOKING FORWARD

20  
20**20 things to look out for in the new year***Kurt Sansone's list is the only one you may want to refer back to at the end of the year***1. New prime minister**

The Labour Party elects its new leader on 11 January. The choice is between Chris Fearne and Robert Abela, who have billed themselves as the change candidate and the continuity candidate, respectively. The new leader will become Malta's next prime minister, ending Joseph Muscat's six years at the helm. This will be the first time that the new leader will be elected by the PL's members.

**2. Yorgen Fenech's compilation**

The compilation of evidence against alleged mastermind Yorgen Fenech in the Daphne Caruana Galizia murder will continue and is likely to drag on. The prosecution will want to tie up any loose ends by presenting all the evidence at hand. But we can expect legal contestations by the accused to continue in the constitutional court.

**3. Caruana Galizia murder trial**

The compilation of evidence against three men accused of murdering Daphne Caruana Galizia was briefly re-opened last month to include the testimony of pardoned middleman Melvin Theuma. In 2020, George Degiorgio, Alfred Degiorgio and Vince Muscat could expect to stand trial, where they face a possible life sentence.



## How to fix the

Muscat's bid to create a 'second republic' had long been dead in the water before his premiership crumbled under the weight of the Daphne Caruana Galizia assassination probe. We asked thinkers and opinion-makers how to fix the pieces of the broken Maltese republic...

**Alex Grech**

DID we ever really care about the republic? Let alone want to fix it?

We find ourselves nursing a nationless state with a neo-liberal hangover, fearful of a tanking economy, the loss of jobs in 2020 and the disdain of the international community. Yet – at a historic moment when populism has rooted elsewhere, when liars in public office thrive, win elections, call truth 'fake news', purposely erode trust in experts and public institutions, and unashamedly rule for the benefit of the few – is our republic that much out of sync with the workings of the global post-truth society?

If we wish to temporarily entertain the idea that we need a system to fix our republic before our politicians get us into a bigger fix, I can only cling to the notion of radical reform to our education system. You've heard it before – some variant of the Finnish system, without exams, with critical thinking and media



literacy included as a component of all compulsory subjects, starting from primary school.

Will parents and teacher unions, themselves the product of a punitive, one-size-fits-all system, support change? Will it happen in my lifetime? I don't think so.

I regularly ask my first-year new media students at University if they are interested in politics and about 2% raise their hands. I ask if they are jaded, if our relationship with systems of power is inexorably tied to the cult of the leader and patronage via the tools of hegemony and clientelism. They blink, since they assume that a new media class is about digital marketing and the holy grail of becoming a 'social media influencer' and little to do with asking questions about society, culture, meaning and power.

We have spent years making sure that discourse about the political is banned from the classroom, with the exception of the teachings of the Church. Why

should we be surprised if young people remain fearful of challenging the right of others to lead them, or the right of their parents to bequeath them a partisan legacy?

Stop demolishing your grandmother's house in the village. Stop converting it into ugly flats. Stop back-building into her garden. Start the process for constitutional change which ensures that our voting system is truly proportional, as opposed to simply favouring the two-party system. Then start asking why new media literacy is not part of the curriculum.

How's that for a sudden fix for the moribund republic?

Dr Alex Grech lectures at the Department of Media and Communications, University of Malta

**Mark Camilleri**

THE country needs a war against the mafia and the rent-seeking elite which have captured the country and also robbed us of the Labour Party in broad daylight while we were distracted doing something else.

Malta has a history of parasitic local magnates and rent-seeking elite. Most of the economic development which took place in the island has taken place thanks to foreign direct investment and foreign capital. Most of the local magnates act like parasites who are not even net-contributors to our economy.

We have to begin cleaning up the local corrupt rent-seeking elite, but we also need to dump all the Labour Party officials and ministers who still have strong ties with these rent-seeking elites.

Simultaneously, we also need to restructure the economy by retaining and increasing the inflow of foreign direct investment and foreign capital, but also ensure that abuses and rent-seeking are purged from the economy. We need to bring back important principles of social justice in the economic restructuring process – we need to build affordable housing and raise the minimum wage.

We, the left in Labour, believe Chris Fearne will deliver, but we will rebel again if he lets us down.

Mark Camilleri is executive chairman of the National Book Council and a Labour Party member





# he Republic...

## Carmel Cacopardo

THE Republic requires much more than a quick fix. At Alternattiva Demokratika we have drawn up a document outlining the various issues which need to be addressed in a Constitutional Convention: ranging from an increased role for Parliament in running the Republic to the President's Office having some real bite. Others have done a similar exercise producing a number of proposals worth considering.

At the end of the day, however, the elephant in the room is clientelism, which is ingrained in practically all things Maltese. It is not a modern phenomenon but it has been capable of adapting itself, such that it is practically ingrained within and around the electoral process.

There is nothing untoward in constituents turning on their MP or district candidate to seek guidance in navigating the bureaucratic labyrinth of government departments and authorities – even though the “customer care” in departments and authorities, nowadays offers reasonable help.

Things take a wrong turn, however, when such contacts between MPs/election candidates start being used for developing short-lists for state benefits with political loyalty contributing to a high position in the per-



ceived short-list. This is resulting in cashing favours into votes and vice-versa.

The basic incentive for such exercises is the nature of our electoral system in which each and every electoral candidate in an electoral district

does not only compete with opposing parties on the basis of vision and ideas. Depending on his contacts and power of incumbency, an electoral candidate can also use the local electoral system to dish out favours post-election or to cash favours already done before the election date.

This is not a new invention. It has been used and perfected since 1921 when the single transferable vote (STV) electoral system was put in place by the British colonial masters. There are various examples which illustrate the manner in which it has been applied. One of the earliest goes back to May 1922, when just six months after the first elections making use of the STV, a motion was brought before the Legislative Assembly accusing the then government of having committed abuses in terms of promotions, transfers, payment of salaries and management of the civil service.

Clientelism in Malta has very deep roots. It prioritises individual interests over the common good. If not checked once and for all not much headway can be made in the long road to achieving good governance in the Republic.

Carmel Cacopardo is chairman of Alternattiva Demokratika – the Green Party

## 4. Keith Schembri's fate

It will have to be seen whether police investigations into the Caruana Galizia murder will lead to further arrests and arraignments, not least that of the Prime Minister's former chief-of-staff Keith Schembri. The new year will seal the fate – either way – of Schembri and possibly that of others who have been mentioned by the middleman and Fenech.



## 5. Caruana Galizia public inquiry

The public inquiry's nine-month term will come to an end in the second half of the year and its deliberations and conclusions are expected to shed more light on the workings of the State and its failings. Among other aspects, the inquiry will determine whether the State did enough to prevent the murder and offer protection to the journalist.

## 6. Economic blues

The Central Bank of Malta has warned that if political uncertainty persists into the new year, the sudden drop in consumption and the brakes on investment witnessed in December could have an impact on public finances and the economy. The new administration taking over from Muscat in January will have to act fast to rekindle trust in the institutions and end the uncertainty.

## 7. Adrian Delia's future

Opposition leader Adrian Delia may have to deal with rumblings within his party unhappy over his performance. Despite polling data showing the PN posting gains since October, the progress is not proportional to the magnitude of the crisis in the country. Delia has struggled to win the hearts of his own voters, leaving him in a vulnerable state in 2020 as he deals with a new Labour leader and a new challenge from Repubblika.





## LOOKING FORWARD

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### 8. Repubblika's challenge

The civil society NGO looks set to transform into a political party in January, in what could upset the applecart for the PN. Repubblika has grown into an organised entity with a strong appeal to disenfranchised Nationalists who do not see eye to eye with Adrian Delia. Whether Repubblika can widen its appeal and rock the political establishment is uncertain but it will definitely put PN exponents who have cosied up to it in a difficult position.

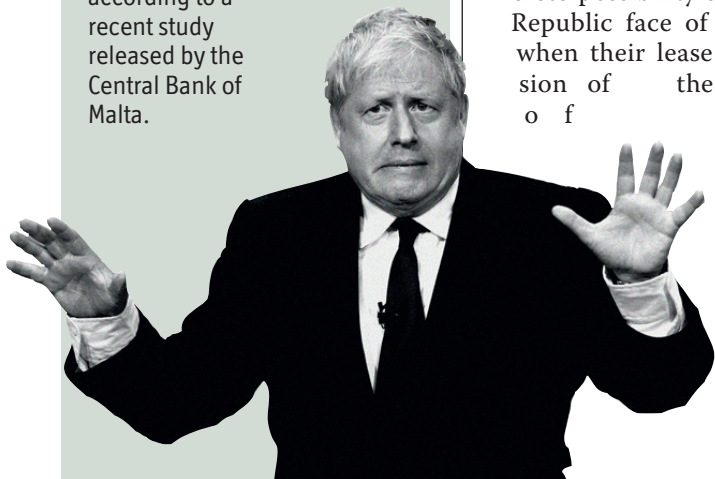
### 9. Euro 2020

The Euro 2020 finals will start on 12 June with the opening match seeing Italy face off against Turkey. For a whole month, we will be regaled with a feast of football but this time there will not be a single host country. Games will be played in 12 cities across Europe with the final and semi-finals being played at Wembley Stadium in London.



### 10. Brexit

The UK will leave the EU on 31 January but for the next 12 months, negotiations will be held to determine the future relationship Britain will have with the bloc. The UK will head into uncharted territory as will the rest of Europe. Uncertainty will impact Malta's economy but this will be contained, according to a recent study released by the Central Bank of Malta.



### Adrian Grima



HAVING all the right institutions, all the right watchdogs and authorities, and trying to make sure they do what is expected of them is fine. But it won't necessarily fix our republic because institutions are run by humans. And humans both shape, and are shaped by culture. And culture, as Helen Spencer-Oatey has said, affects behaviour and interpretations of behaviour.

We do need to rethink the mechanics of our republic because in some crucial ways they have failed us big time. But one of the issues we have been facing since Independence, for over half a century now, is essentially cultural. "To really understand a culture," writes Spencer-Oatey, "and to ascertain more completely the group's values and over behaviour, it is imperative to delve into the underlying assumptions, which are typically unconscious but which

actually determine how group members perceive, think and feel."

What kind of underlying assumptions have allowed us to get into the mess we're in? The convenient partisan blame game won't help. It never has.

Independent Malta has invested heavily in education. Many more Maltese people than ever before read, study and travel abroad. We know all about the mistakes other countries have made in their development model. And yet we have chosen to embrace an economic model based on rabid development

and the commodification of everything. This savage model is ruining our quality of life. You will find all the details in the reams of environmental and social impact assessments gathering dust on the shelves of the authorities meant to protect us from the sharks.

Our current Minister for the Environment has patronisingly warned us to steer clear of "false nostalgia" when we protest about overdevelopment and the stranglehold of interest groups. That's very convenient. What we're talking about here is quality of life. For everyone. Whoever they are. Wherever they



### Michael Grech



LET me ask another question: what is the Republic? The most obvious platitudinous answer would be: "We are the republic". But then it becomes pertinent to ask: "Who are the 'we'?"

The cliché the original question involves is evident if one then asks: "What is it concerning 'us' that needs fixing?"

MaltaToday's invitation to address the question asked us to consider it in light of issues that concern "public life in Malta: parties and financing, broadcasting, the electoral system, the courts and police, good governance in ministries and the public service."

But this reflects a middle-class bias which, somehow condescendingly, presumes that our concerns and issues are the issues of the Republic simpliciter... That other members of the Republic may have other issues which they would – rightly – prioritise in terms of fixing: issues concerning the inability to make ends meet of a sizeable chunk of the population; the concrete possibility some members of the Republic face of ending up homeless when their lease terminates; the erosion of the spaces where many of us live; and, if 'the Republic' is also made to include people who come from abroad and who are contributing to the Republic through their work and activities, issues that concern their vulnerable legal sta-

tus and, possibly, that of their loved ones... is excluded a priori.

So since (perhaps in my wishful thinking rather than in actual fact), for various moral, political and religious reasons, I would like to think of myself as supporting these most vulnerable members of our Republic, I would answer the question "How do we fix the Republic?" by suggesting that wages and welfare are increased substantially, that measures are adopted to curb the price of rent, that public spaces are defended and enhanced, and that the rights and well-being of people who are vulnerable because they were not born on our islands are safeguarded.

Reforming ministries and the public service, regulating party financing and broadcasting, changing the electoral system, and dealing with problems that concern courts and police will, in itself, achieve nothing in relation to such issues. Still, though not the most important issues on the Republic's agenda, matters concerning the financing of political parties, broadcasting, the electoral system, the courts and police, good governance in ministries and the public service, are important and also need to be addressed. Here, however, I do not want to discuss in details what I believe ought to be done (for instance regarding party financing, I believe that there ought to be limits to the donations or sponsorships an individual or group may contribute to a party; that a law be enacted so that broadcasting outlets are forced to dis-

close the individuals or groups that own them; that magistrates and judges are appointed following an examination rather than by politicians) or what I consider to be non-starters (like the silly idea that to prevent corruption, the salaries of politicians ought to be heftily popped up, as though corrupt politicians take bribes out of poverty!

What I would like to point out is that any institutional reform, though necessary, will not be sufficient for good governance. That unless a number of circumstances are addressed on the ground, circumstances that concern features like the clientelist culture which has been dominant on our islands for centuries; and others that concern the economy (both at end where people are scraping a living and at the other end where people are competing for a tender – political patronage is advantageous if not indispensable)... any top-down reforms are bound to fail.

*Michael Grech teaches philosophy at the Junior College of the University of Malta*



LOOKING FORWARD

Claire Bonello



LET'S start off by admitting that "the Republic" didn't just fall apart this last year. It's been an inevitable downward rush as nearly everybody took leave of their senses and started acting irrationally.

I say "nearly" everybody because there were those who kept on pointing out that this crazy "economy-on-steroids Mega Malta" was an unsustainable, inequitable bullshit story which should have set alarm bells ringing. These people were ignored and ridiculed as boring sticks-in-the mud standing in the way of progress. What brought about this crash is the irrationality which possessed so many sectors.

In the first place, it is irrational to have this all-out adulation for one person and give him unfettered powers. This is a recipe for disaster and it holds true for all politicians of whatever stripe. Endowing a politician with God-like stature is inherently dangerous as it inevitably brings about the bypassing of all regulatory checks and balances. Fandom belongs to the realm of Jurgen Klopp, Daniel Craig and Cristiano Ronaldo admirers and stops there – it should not extend to our rulers. And I say this because this sycophantic adoration of ministers continues unabated, with people tripping over themselves to post arse-licking congratulations for every non-event posted by ministers.

With this silly level of adulation, how are we going to keep these ministers in check? They'll simply rely on their 'prosit ministru' party to justify their obscene decisions. So that's one thing we should put a stop to - stop salivating over ministers and start scrutinising them properly.

Another thing that we should do to "fix the Republic" is to stop imagining that tinkering with the Constitution - or even its wholesale reform - can be some kind of silver bullet to end the lack of enforcement and culture of impunity. It won't. We have laws and rules in place - they are adequate if not perfect. Unfortunately they are mostly disregarded by people in power and decision-makers with no spine and no balls - soulless jellyfish who cause immeasurable distress and injustice to everyday citizens through their inaction and cowardice. A law rendering them personally liable for their decisions would be a good way to shake things up.

In the meantime, we have to continue shouting the words which the Italian Coast Guard Gregorio de Falco told Captain Francesco Schettino as the latter crashed and sunk the cruise liner under his command: 'Vadi a bordo, cazzo!' (Go back on board, d\*\*\*head). We should demand that our politicians assume their responsibilities and steer the ship of state safely to port, instead of preening around snapping selfies.

*Claire Bonello is a lawyer and environmental campaigner*

way forward, I suppose, is for common people who have the common good at heart to reclaim and reconstruct the Republic. It will take more than a redefinition of the role of the prime minister, or the creation of yet another authority to do so. We need to define, or redefine our community. So the National Cultural Policy launched in 2010 is another good place to start. We need to redefine the culture of community that will shape the kind of nation we want.

*Prof. Adrian Grima is a writer and associate professor in the Department of Maltese, University of Malta*

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11. US election

In November, the US will elect a new president. The outcome will impact the world economy, especially if incumbent Donald Trump wins and pursues a disruptive international agenda. Who will win the election is hard to predict at this stage, especially since the Democratic Party's field of potential candidates is still wide open. Maltese descendent Pete Buttigieg, a Democratic candidate, will capture imagination domestically.

12. Pay transparency

The government has pledged to tackle the gender pay gap by implementing a policy of pay transparency. Incoming Equality Minister Edward Zammit Lewis placed this on his agenda when appointed minister last summer but whether he will deliver on the proposal this year remains questionable. Employers are opposed to the principle but the matter is also on the agenda of the incoming European Commission headed by Ursula von der Leyen.



13. Tokyo Olympics

The premier world sporting event, the summer Olympics and paralympics, will be held in the Japanese capital. The events kick off on 24 July and end on 9 August. Malta will have its own small contingent at the games and with no Olympic medal to its name yet, it is unlikely Tokyo will bring about a change in fortunes.





## LOOKING FORWARD

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## 14. Malta's space strategy



The global rush to send robotic probes to Mars will pick up pace this year as the Red Planet becomes humanity's next frontier. Malta plays no part in space exploration but the country will adopt its own space strategy in 2020 to capitalise on the commercialisation of the sector, which is predicted to generate \$2.7 trillion worldwide in the next 30 years.

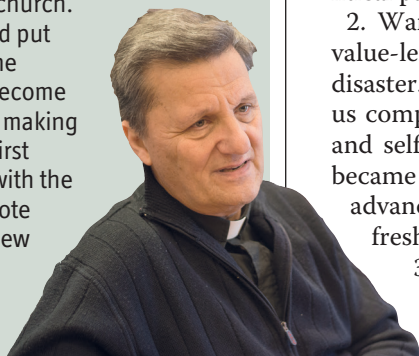
## 15. Gozo tunnel



This should be the year when material progress is registered on the proposed tunnel between Gozo and Malta if the new prime minister keeps this top of his agenda. The government should be in a position to issue the conceptual design and international tender, while initiating the planning application. A tunnel cannot come too soon for many Gozitans but remains a big bone of contention for the environmentally conscious.

## 16. A voting cardinal

Gozo Bishop Mario Grech will take up his new Vatican job as secretary general of the synod of bishops in August. Appointed to this role by Pope Francis last October, Grech will be leading one of the highest pastoral organs of the Catholic church. This could put him on the road to become cardinal, making him the first Maltese with the right to vote when a new pope is chosen.



## Carmen Sammut



THE Republic is pushing 50 and it urgently needs a new health regime. Unprecedented crises have shown that the two traditional political pillars are now standing on shifting sands. Smaller parties have not gained ground and in 2019, the far-right emerged as the third party. Most Maltese are fatigued by decades of polarised politics.

In 2013 many voters were genuinely willing to suspend their disbelief and to hope for improved governance. Instead, everything indicates there was a betrayal of trust. I am not surprised that many are facing ample dissonance. The crisis of public trust cuts across the political divide, where key figures seem to be trapped in hubris. At this point everyone seems to be talking about Constitutional reform, but we must tread carefully, lest we repeat Italy's malaise after tangentopoli.

The chilling accounts around the murder of Daphne Caruana Galizia have rendered the rot transparent and indicate areas where parties must act. Court hearings exposed the incestuous relationship between politically

exposed people and leading business players, and in turn, how these befriended individuals who dabble with the criminal underworld. The stories that are emerging are surreal and more sickening than we ever expected.

On top of this, we were brutally awakened to the vulnerabilities of small states in the context of global wheeling-and-dealing. It is extremely easy to destabilise a microstate, exploiting the foibles of individuals in power. The Republic's reputation is now severely tarnished, and this impacts on our image and identity.

But not all is dark and murky. In mythology, the Phoenix regenerated from ashes. Our Constitution is based on sound communitarian and social principles and emphasizes fundamental rights and freedoms. The main questions revolve around the composition and roles of Parliament, the Executive and the Judiciary. Then there is a much-needed review of other articles that include those pertaining to Local Councils and Constitutional bodies

like the Broadcasting Authority.

Most of our challenges are linked to demographic pressures and smallness and so external models may not always fit like a glove. The state needs to reconnect with civil society and academia on crucial issues like waste-management, mobility, the protection of the natural environment and the preservation of urban and rural areas, including hamlets. Civil society is also crucial to sustain the pace of the civil rights agenda and issues that are related to gender equity and social inclusion.

In this hall of mirrors, we must step out of our echo-chambers. We need good leaders, a wider range of critical thinkers and public intellectuals and more trust-worthy media so that we are equipped to remain vigilant and avoid further delusions. We must all play a part to fix the Republic.

*Carmen Sammut is associate professor and pro-rector of the University of Malta*

## Andrew Azzopardi



HOW do we fix the Republic? This is the same question that we posed a couple of weeks ago when the Faculty for Social Well-being hosted an open dialogue and over 100 people from various walks of life came to the University of Malta to discuss how best to untangle this socio-political mess.

At this point I believe the first thing we need to hang on to is our anger and to avoid slipping into smugness. If we mellow down, that space will be filled by the insolent forces saying "the economy is doing well" or "that Malta has always been like that and cannot change" mantra – and we are simply back to square one: complacent and self-absorbed.

These are seven quick reflections that should help us re-calibrate our Republic:

1. We lack direction, which is a crucial ingredient in a republic. This is a country destitute of leadership whether at local or national level, whether it is in the Church, the social partners or within political parties.

2. Warming up to a neoliberal, value-less political discourse spelt disaster. These last years have left us completely devoid of unselfish and self-sacrifice politics and life became simply a case of personal advancement. We need a refreshed direction.

3. We need to urgently address the misogynist po-

litical landscape that has short-changed us of a great deal of latent potential. We need more, many more, women at the helm.

4. It is not true that 'we' did not allow the institutions to work. It's those institutions that faltered that are culpable when they did not work because they lost their trustworthiness. A number of institutions like the National Audit Office, the Ombudsman, academia, civil society, the Standards Commissioner are working effectively because they have retained their integrity.

5. This easy access of citizens to politicians and people in power is lamentable and inexcusable, it needs to change. Our electoral law needs to be burnished from the bottom up.

6. The business community has too much influence on the political class. We need to create a firewall between the two.

7. I am of the opinion that healing our republic needs a thorough Constitutional rethink. There has never been such a timely opportunity to start this process which could look at the gaps we have in our governance and government and heal the pus that surfaced in our wounds.

*Andrew Azzopardi is Dean of the Faculty for Social Well-being, University of Malta*





## Raisa Galea



CLIENTELISM is one of Malta's societal ills enabling corruption and endangering democracy. Beneficiaries of clientelistic networks do not challenge abuses of power perpetuated by their patrons since clients' prosperity depends on the patrons' success.

Clientelism itself is sustained by the district-based electoral system. A reform originally proposed by Godfrey Pirota to abolish the electoral districts and run elections with one national constituency would be an effective way to weaken clientelism. This result could also be achieved through different means. Giving non-Maltese residents a right to vote or introducing accessible paths to obtaining citizenship by naturalisation could have a major revitalising effect on Maltese

society and politics.

Extending the right to vote in national and local council elections to foreign residents, including third country nationals, could cause a significant blow to clientelism. Since non-Maltese residents move to Malta

*Beneficiaries of clientelistic networks do not challenge abuses of power perpetuated by their patrons since clients' prosperity depends on the patrons' success*

alone or together with a small number of family members, they do not belong to extensive family networks which form the foundation of the clientelist structure. And this is why they are more likely to vote for policies and principles rather than immediate personal favours.

entific analysis of its social structures and networks, but also of agency, of people's everyday lives, affiliations, aspirations, concerns, identities, commonalities, differences and plural realities. We should investigate the intersection of political, economic, cultural, social, ecological and other factors.

Such analyses can nourish concrete proposals for change such as Constitutional Reform. We should ensure that the constitution gives due importance to Malta's small size: For example, the proximity of politicians to electors, the multiple hats people wear, and the personalisation of politics cannot be ignored.

The methodology of constitutional reform should foster deliberation. To date it is not clear what type of methodology is being adopted. There should be an expert review of possible methods of consultation; transparency in the analysis of public feedback; peer review of the entire process; and impact assessments of proposals that are followed through. Qualified experts, citizens, civil society, constituted bodies, minorities and political parties should have ample space and time to deliberate, beyond quick fix solutions and sloganeering.

Some areas which I believe should be given priority within constitutional reform include accountable governance,

Considering that a large number of non-EU residents are paid minimum wage and thus not prospering, their inclusion into the electorate could finally revive the real left-of-centre politics. The needs and demands of this – least affluent – section of the population would have to be addressed by the political parties, which in turn would benefit the interests of lower-class Maltese people, making them a force to be reckoned with. It would also prevent politicians from scapegoating foreign workers and pandering to xenophobia.

I am not versed in law enough to suggest a legal pathway to implementation of this reform. This might require another amendment which would guarantee transparency of obtaining citizenship by naturalisation, since the Minister for Home Affairs and National Security currently has the discretion regarding the grant of citizenship, which makes the process rather arbitrary and vulnerable to abuse.

*Raisa Galea is editor of IslesOfTheLeft.org*

*Through constitutional reform we can help avoid having prime ministers who have excessive power and lack of accountability*

institutional autonomy, finance of political parties and candidates, professionalisation of parliament, individual rights and responsibilities, checks and balances, press freedom, political education, structured and evidence-based policy making, the role of civil society and the mainstreaming of sustainable policy.

Through constitutional reform we can help avoiding having Prime Ministers who have excessive power and lack of accountability. But let us also keep in mind that in a liberal democracy a governing formation can only be replaced by another one – and this requires people's support.

*Michael Briguglio is a sociologist and senior lecturer at the University of Malta*

## Michael Briguglio

I believe that if we want to 'fix the republic', we should first try to understand the status of Malta's democracy. We should ground our analysis into the realities of a small island state.

We should give due importance to evidence-based social sci-



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### 17. Libya's troubles intensify

Turkey's decision to send soldiers to the North African state, could see Libya's internal strife intensifying. Turkey is aligned with the UN-recognised Government of National Accord based in Tripoli. Military support could strengthen the GNA in its fight to keep the Eastern-backed General Khalifa Haftar and his self-styled army at bay. Malta may see the strife on its doorstep develop into a full-blown military escalation.

### 18. Football's new dawn

The Maltese national football team starts training under new Italian coach, Devis Mangia, who will also be in charge of the Malta Football Association's coaching set up. The holistic make-over will include the formation of a Malta XI team to compete in the Italian Pro Lega league in a bid to groom a crop of young Maltese players. Success will only start to be measured in March 2021 when the qualifying tournament for the next World Cup commences.

### 19. A new energy plan

A damaged interconnector has exposed the weakness of Enemalta's back-up option, which relies on aged diesel plants at Delimara. In 2020, the company will be working on drawing up its energy plan for the next 15 years. The plan will outline whether the company should invest in a new interconnector cable, a new gas plant, batteries to store electricity from solar farms, or a mix of these. It will also outline the timeframes for these investments.

### 20. Expensive streaming war

IPTV subscriptions, which include Netflix, covered almost 17% of the population, according to a Broadcasting Authority survey last October. But in 2020 expect Netflix to face competition from the likes of Disney+, Amazon Prime and Apple TV Plus. Consumers may have to fork out more in monthly subscriptions to watch their favourite movies and series that may be playing on different platforms.