

A South African's guide to moving to and making it in Malta: The propaganda of optimism

By  Marcus 'The Maltese Falcon' Brewster

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If South Africa is reality, then Malta is wonderland. Or vice versa, as I've discovered on a visit back to the old country...



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Here's a life lesson from PR: All news has an agenda, which trails it like a shadow. We are mostly blind to these shadows in the sense that we no longer see them unless we specifically examine their contours.

When looking at items in your newsfeed, it can be salutary to ask in whose interest this piece of content has been placed. Of all the discrete events that happen every second of the day, why has this item been picked, written up, packaged and prioritised – and whose agenda does it serve?

If the dominant topic in SA is land expropriation, why has it been introduced? And why now? And who raised it?



#Newsmaker: Marcus Brewster on moving to and making it in Malta

Jessica Tennant 30 May 2018



Through the looking glass

The very fact that I am bringing up the issue is loaded, not because I want to examine this particularly thorny and particularly South African matter, but because I want to highlight its opposite – the hidden agenda behind good news as I go through the looking glass to the other universe in which I reside, the one behind the mirror in Malta.

On the Maltese archipelago, we are fed a steady diet of positive macro-economic news, leavened with salacious details of government corruption and cronyism. (Clearly politics is not clean in any country.)

Just last month, the European Commission announced that it expects Malta's economy to maintain its strong growth trajectory. Such a pronouncement is not neutral – we are wired to read economic growth as positive. So, this positive news agenda does create a halo effect as we shall see.

EU spring forecast

According to the EC, Malta's economy is among the fastest growing economies in the EU, with record-low unemployment and moderate wage growth. The current account and the budget balances are set to remain in surplus.

Domestic demand is expected to become the main driver of growth in 2018, underpinned by the expansion in private consumption and the recovery in investment.

Real GDP growth is forecast to average 5.8% for 2018 as a whole, in a context of favourable labour market conditions and high consumer confidence. The strong performance of the services sector, particularly in areas such as tourism, remote gaming and professional services, is expected to sustain the sizeable current account surplus.

In 2019, investment is expected to pick up further, supported by several projects in the health, technology and telecommunication sectors. With domestic demand projected to remain the main driver of growth, and a modest contribution from net exports, real GDP is set to increase by 5.1%.

Employment creation

The report observes that labour supply continued to increase thanks to the inflows of foreign workers and the rising participation of women in the labour market. Strong economic momentum should further support employment creation, while the unemployment rate is forecast to remain at the record-low rate of 4%.

The increase in the labour supply, it says, has helped to keep wage pressures contained, resulting in stable unit labour costs in 2017. In the near term, higher expected growth in compensation per employee is projected to result in increases of unit labour costs by respectively 1.5% and 1.6% in 2018 and 2019, above the euro area average.

With regard to the EU in general, the European Commission reported that growth rates beat expectations in 2017 to reach a 10-year high at 2.4%. Growth is set to remain strong in 2018 and ease only slightly in 2019, with growth of 2.3% and 2.0% respectively in both the EU and the euro area.

In a statement the Maltese government said it was committed to continue strengthening the basis of the country's economic growth and invest more for the economy to be further strengthened in the future and for wealth to be distributed among all.

As relieved as I am to be surrounded by positive news and living in a society where everyone's lives are materially improved, I am acutely aware that it serves Malta's labour government to trumpet its economic achievements. In the bright light of good news, it's harder to see the cronyism and corruption in the shadows.

ABOUT MARCUS 'THE MALTESE FALCON' BREWSTER

marcusbrewster is a brand synonymous with PR excellence in SA. An industry innovator, leader, and inspiration, Brewster affiliated his multi-award winning boutique firm with larger Level 1 BBBEE marketing/comms agency MediaRevolution for scale in 2016 and went on to launch Marcus Brewster International in Europe the following year. Marcus currently lives on - and actively promotes - the Mediterranean island of Malta. For African, S. African and European PR enquiries, contact marcus@marcusbrewster.com or WhatsApp on (+356) 9931 3322

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