Malta achieves Independence...

The people of Malta and Gozo are empowered to administer their affairs and destiny without interference, while the fundamental rights and freedoms of every individual gain full recognition.

Ecstatic crowd attends the official celebrations at the Independence Arena

Prince Philip read a message from Queen Elizabeth II and handed over the Constitutional Instruments to Prime Minister George Borg Olivier, who played a leading role in the achievement of this political milestone. In turn, the Prime Minister proudly displayed the constitution to the jubilant crowd. At midnight, the flag of Independent Malta was unveiled with full ceremonial.

This Constitution establishes the national anthem, emblem, flag and language, and acknowledges Roman Catholicism as the official religion.

Queen Elizabeth II has been retained as Head of State with a Governor-General exercising authority on her behalf.

Also, the United Kingdom and Malta signed a ten-year defence and financial assistance agreement. From now onwards, the United Kingdom will be paying the Maltese Government to station military troops here and to make use of the naval and air facilities.

21 September 1964
Malta welcomes its first President...

Notwithstanding the bad weather, the large crowd that gathered in Palace Square cheered enthusiastically as Sir Anthony Mamo waved from the Palace balcony.

Parliament amends 1964 Constitution to appoint a Maltese as President of the Republic

On this day Malta took another fundamental constitutional step forward. The House of Representatives approved a motion presented by Prime Minister Dom Mintoff establishing the Republic of Malta. This replaces the reigning British Monarch by a Maltese citizen as head of the independent island-state of Malta and amends the Independence Constitution to reflect the new status of a Republic within the Commonwealth. Besides, it boosts the autonomy of the judiciary, in particular the Constitutional Court.

Appointed for five years by the House of Representatives, the President resides directly or indirectly in all branches of the State. He forms part of Parliament, appoints the judiciary, and holds executive authority. The latter is commonly delegated to the Prime Minister. The House of Representatives has the authority to remove the President from Office if unable to perform the functions of his Office.

13 December 1974
Malta free from foreign forces...

Centuries upon centuries of foreign military presence came to a close with the winding down of the base at Fort St Angelo and the departure of all British Forces.

Thousands bid farewell from the quaysides and bastions bordering the Grand Harbour

On 31 March, the last remaining detachment of British Forces marched from the foot of Fort St Angelo to the lead ship RFA Sir Lancelot, moored next to the Freedom monument. At 11.55 pm, a leading seaman from HMS London lowered the Union Jack, while a Maltese dockyard worker hoisted the Maltese flag immediately after. The large crowds in attendance at the Birgu waterfront cheered enthusiastically and the Grand Harbour was lit up by a spectacular fireworks display.

The following morning, HMS London sailed out of the Grand Harbour. The ship’s company lined the deck, the Royal Marines band played on the quarter deck and Rear-Admiral Nigel Cecil took his place on the bridge to salute the waving crowd. President Anton Buttigieg saluted the departing forces from Fort St Elmo.

31 March 1979
Malta joins the European Union...
Malta stands at par with Europe’s leading countries on the negotiating table and gains access to outstanding financial assistance to improve the quality of life of its people.

Accession to the EU greeted by spectacular celebrations at the Grand Harbour

Formal accession negotiations commenced in February 2000, and Malta was officially invited to join the European Union (EU) in December 2002. On 16 April 2003, Prime Minister Eddie Fenech Adami and the Minister of Foreign Affairs Joseph Borg signed the Treaty of Accession to the EU. It was also signed by the other nine acceding countries and by the other fifteen Member States. This Treaty was ratified by the Maltese Parliament on 14 July that same year. Eventually, it entered into force on 1 May 2004.

This enlargement is the largest single expansion of the EU, with the total population count shooting up by more than 75 million citizens. Each of the ten newly enrolled member states marked the occasion in style. Malta exploited the imposing setting of the Grand Harbour to stage a grandiose display of pageantry, light projections and fireworks.

1 May 2004