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Heritage, strategic narratives, and the making of geopolitical pasts, presents and futures at Europa Point, Gibraltar.

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In June 2016, the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union. Perhaps the most memorable result was the first to be declared – not only because of the enormity of the consensus expressed, but also because, somewhat counter intuitively, the result came from outside the United Kingdom altogether. Voters in the British Overseas Territory of Gibraltar—a rocky Mediterranean promontory, ceded to Great Britain by Spain in 1713—expressed an overwhelming 96% support for remaining within the European Union; the single largest majority of any of the returning areas in the EU referendum (Garcia, 2016).

The Gibraltar result was a direct reflection of the critical importance of the EU for the lives, livelihoods and future prosperity of Gibraltar's 32,000 inhabitants – many of whom rely on the freedom to move across the frontier with Spain. With the UK's withdrawal from the EU beginning in 2019, and the concomitant forfeiture of the EU as an impartial 'guarantor', there are real fears in Gibraltar that Spain will reactivate its sovereignty claim by, for example, renewing restrictions on the Spain-Gibraltar frontier, while seeking to influence the Brexit negotiations by challenging Gibraltar's low-tax economic model – a policy that has led to Gibraltar's emergence as a global centre for banking, insurance, and online gambling and gaming services.

While looking to the United Kingdom for assurances about the future of the UK-EU relationship (and therefore Gibraltar's future relationship with the EU), it would be wrong to see Gibraltar as a bit part player in defining its own future direction, priorities, policies and international relationships. Since adopting the Gibraltar Constitution Order in 2006, Gibraltar has made a very deliberate effort to cast off any sense that it is a 'colony' of the United Kingdom, and instead presents itself as a self-governing, self-determining, democratic 'country', albeit with close ties to the UK in terms of defence and foreign policy. Critical to this strategic refashioning has been the promotion of distinctly Gibraltarian histories and 'heritages' that support and help make possible particular geopolitical futures.

Gibraltar's landscapes and seascapes provide a particularly vivid record of the territory's military, imperial, commercial and cultural histories, and their ongoing legacies. Writing in 2005, the geographer David Lambert invoked the work of Gareth Stanton, who characterised Gibraltar (in distinctly Goffman-inspired terms) as a 'total institution' – a closed social system in which 'the dominance of the colonial/military establishment has been evident in the tardiness of the constitutional development, the physical landscape of the place and the very atmosphere' (Lambert, 2005: 213). In the two decades since Stanton's initial observation, the civilian-military relationship in Gibraltar has been substantively redressed with profound implications for the 'atmospherics' and physical landscapes of the territory. Constitutional reforms (beginning in 2006) led the 'House of Assembly' to be restyled as the Gibraltar Parliament and the powers of the London-appointed Governor were substantially reduced and transferred to elected local representatives. Similarly, Gibraltar's Chief Minister was placed in primary charge of the

territory's 'Crown Land' (including areas controlled by the Ministry of Defence) – opening up land for civilian occupation and redevelopment.

These legislative restructurings suggest that more nuanced, pluralistic and situated readings of Gibraltar's landscapes and institutions are required if we hope to make sense of the territory's shifting geopolitical narratives, heritages, and senses of 'national' identity (Gold, 2004). In suggesting (and attempting) such a reading, we draw on Squire (2016), who used key sites within and around Gibraltar (including 'the Rock', the border/frontier with Spain, and Gibraltar's territorial waters) to open up a nuanced account of Gibraltar's 'elemental' geopolitics. We propose a somewhat different approach to think about the interactions between geopolitics and terrain/territory by examining one site in Gibraltar: Europa Point. This popular recreation site has become home to key institutions, development projects and international investments that, together, reveal contemporary and future-looking (geopolitical) narratives about Gibraltar, often drawing on Gibraltar's history and traditions—that is to say, 'heritage'—to perform, what Dodds (2017) has called, 'sovereignty labour'. The narratives that materialise within this peculiarly mundane 'heritage landscape' (see Atkinson, 2008) address and respond to the challenges of nation-building in a territory where sovereignty is disputed and where Brexit represents, according to some, an 'existential threat'.

Europa Point is Gibraltar's most southerly point (and is one of the most southerly points of the European mainland), and, on a clear day, offers views that extend across the meeting-point of the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean, to Morocco, Spain and the Spanish enclave of Ceuta, located in the north-west of the African continent. For Gibraltarians, Europa Point is also important as one of the last 'open spaces' on the increasingly congested and urbanised peninsula. Nonetheless, in 2002, the Gibraltar Government spent £4.4 million on Europa Point's redevelopment, with new coastal walkways and children's play parks, while re-siting memorials and historical objects from elsewhere in the territory. It is a lively and complex site of geopolitical narrative-making, which we seek to open up through a selective focus on only three features of the landscape: the recently-inaugurated University of Gibraltar (opened 2015), the Ibrahim-Al-Ibrahim Mosque (opened in 1997), and the under-construction sports complex and future venue for the 2019 Island Games.

i) University of Gibraltar

When the EU referendum result from Gibraltar was announced to the international media the footage did not show the anonymous interior of a gymnasium, or local government building (as is typical in UK counts), but instead provided a glimpse of one of Gibraltar's newest and arguably most important institutions: the University of Gibraltar. Officially opened in 2015 at its Europa Point campus, the University of Gibraltar is the only fully-fledged university in any of the UK's overseas territories. It is held up as a powerful statement of the Gibraltarian Government's commitment to the educational development of its young citizens and is both a symbolic and material continuation of the constitutional reforms that have taken hold since 2006. Costing £10 million, and housed in repurposed and sensitively redeveloped former-military buildings, the University is a significant investment in Gibraltar's 'human capital' and can be seen, as has been the case elsewhere around the world (in Australia, Malaysia or Tanzania to name but a few), as an important statement in Gibraltar's emergence as a self-governing, self-determining, self-reliant, and self-educating

nation-state (Marginson, 2002). As the Chief Minister, Fabian Picardo, observed in 2014, 'I think our strength as a small cluster of 30,000 people comes from the talent that Gibraltar has been able to nurture, whether it's in politics, whether it's in the arts.... And that's why we consistently punch above our weight.' This tradition of nurturing and stewarding the indigenous capabilities of Gibraltarians is, through the University, also being put to more outward-looking and forward-looking purposes, with the provision of a Government-funded 'Commonwealth Scholarship' to promote Gibraltar as an educational destination for international scholars from around the Commonwealth and beyond.

ii) Ibrahim-Al-Ibrahim Mosque

Arguably the most predominant feature of Europa Point is the one that appears, somehow, most 'out of place' – a dazzlingly-white Mosque with domed roofline and a 71-metre-tall minaret that dominates the headland position. While only constructed in 1997 (with £5 million of Saudi finance), the building draws critical attention to Europa Point as a sacred site, and a space of historical religious contestation. The nearby Catholic 'Shrine of our Lady of Europe', for example, is a converted (and physically reoriented) 13th century Moorish mosque, built by the Spanish to mark the complete 're-conquest' of Spain and the claiming of the whole European continent for Christianity. The Gibraltar government's support for the new mosque represents a formal refutation of the 'Reconquista' narrative (and legacy) and is an attempt to embrace Gibraltar's 'historical Arabic legacy' by acknowledging the pan-Mediterranean identity of Gibraltar and Gibraltarians (Gibraltar Chronicle, 1997: 1). As the then Chief Minister, Peter Caruana, declared at the inauguration ceremony: 'We in Gibraltar have developed our unique and distinct identity as a people over the last 293 years. We are, in origin, a mixture of peoples from many and various parts of the Mediterranean and Great Britain. These differing racial and cultural backgrounds have long ago fused a cohesive people, small in number, but immensely rich in heritage, culture, history and national pride'. Gibraltar's embrace of a narrative of 'openness' and religious 'tolerance' can be read not only as a device through which the territory might be positioned in opposition to its 'troublesome' northern neighbour (see Lambert, 2005), but also a significant shift in Gibraltarian identity politics from a bounded sense of 'ethnic nationalism' prominent during the military-colonial period, to a more expansive 'civic nationalism' that has emerged in more recent decades. This shift also elides with a subtle reorientation in Gibraltar's international relations, and a desire to project itself, and its services, beyond Europe. The Ibrahim-Al-Ibrahim Mosque, has thus become an icon through which Gibraltar's reputation as a financial centre has been strategically projected into new and lucrative markets across the Islamic world (O'Reilly, 1999).

iii) 2019 Island Games

As Rofe and Dichter (2016: 207-8) contend, 'Examples of the significance of sport to diplomatic practice are plentiful if routinely overlooked...[in part] because sport is seen as trivial or peripheral amid the crises that define global affairs'. Yet for Gibraltar, sport has been anything but peripheral and is a crucial way the territory acquires political autonomy and international recognition. National membership of global and regional sporting authorities such as the IOC and UEFA make highly significant statements about their (geo)political legitimacy and national identity in the face of Spain's territorial claim. Arguably, this diplomatic environment will be even more challenging after the UK has left the EU and Gibraltar has lost the security and reassurance its membership provides (Benwell

and Pinkerton, 2016). Seen in this light, the decision to accept Gibraltar into the UEFA Congress in May 2013 appears especially prescient and the Chief Minister did not understate the importance of the decision when he remarked: 'I think there are four important days in the lives of people in Gibraltar. They remember where they were when Kennedy died, when man landed on the moon, when Kaiene Aldorino won Miss World and when the GFA [Gibraltar Football Association] got into UEFA'. Struggles for sporting recognition are also strengthened by the competent hosting of international tournaments and in 2019 Gibraltar is set to play host to the Island Games (rather incongruously perhaps given it is not an island). The iconic venue for the games is being constructed at Europa Point and the sporting practices and performances that unfold here will make bold statements about Gibraltar's political, cultural and national identity in a post-Brexit era.

Europa Point is not a typical site through which narratives of nation-building or heritage might usually be examined. Unlike museums and 'heritage landscapes' in which history is neatly curated and narrated for touristic audiences, Europa Point is revealing of the kind of everyday heritage-making critical to a small state confronted with significant and ongoing geopolitical challenges. Through the institutions and development projects sited at Europa Point, narratives of religious tolerance, responsible governance and stewardship, and participation in (and recognition by) the international community have been put to work in the service of making distinctly Gibraltarian futures. It would be remiss, however, to think that these practices begin and end within small, contested, or 'proto' states in the midst of nation-building projects. All states make appeals to the past in order to narrate current policy and as a foundation for projecting geopolitical futures, and have thus enrolled 'heritage' as a strategic state practice. In the Brexit-obsessed United Kingdom, to give one notable ongoing example, we are bombarded with claims to a future #GlobalBritain outside the European Union, but what is striking about this strategic narrative are the historical appeals to 'old friendships' and 'historical alliances' with Britain's former colonial possessions, and their simultaneous (and unproblematic) translation into future-looking, strategic 'opportunities' for trade, commerce and 'modern partnerships'. Heritage, with its ability to link the past, present and future, provides a fruitful lens through which such geopolitical narrative-making might be examined and critiqued, and thus offers useful opportunities for further critical scholarship.

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