

The Dialectics of Smallness: State-Making in the South Caucasus

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Abstract

In the field of political science studying certain geographical areas could be one of the methods through which the understanding, verification or the testing of larger theories is accomplished. In other words, area studies could contribute to the understanding of concepts, which govern the study of international relations and political science today.

This paper is an attempt to look at the concept of small states and the extent to which this concept is applicable in the case of the South Caucasus. Moreover the paper will also try to examine the impact that the emergence of the newly independent states of the South Caucasus had on the understanding of the field of international relations. This paper will argue that although the current international system is different, the concept of small state and the issues they face is not, and that the countries of the South Caucasus face problems similar to those that small states have witnessed throughout history.

To do these the paper will raise and try to answer the following questions. First, what is the concept of small state? Second, to what extent can previous work done on the concept of small states be implemented on the Caucasus? And finally, do the countries of the South Caucasus contribute anything new to the understanding of small states?

Defining small states

The increased interest in the study of small states and their foreign policies resulted in the creation of at least one major challenge for scholars working in this field. As new publications appeared on this topic, so did a new dilemma on how to define small states. The problem of defining smallness is epitomized when the need to make a distinction between small states and non-small states. What is meant by this is that it is far easier to make a distinction between small and non-small states when the countries involved are geographically isolated, physically small and do not have natural or human resources, on the contrary the larger the size and capabilities of states, the more difficult the categorization.¹

Some of the criteria used by scholars to categorize states include geographic size, population size and economic development. In a number of cases two or more of these criteria are used simultaneously to arrive to a classification accepted by all, however a general survey of the literature on small states which utilized population size and economic activity as indicators for smallness reveals a discrepancy which extends over individuals as well as over time-periods. For instance writing in 1967, David Vital coupled Gross Domestic Product (GDP) with population size and arrived to the conclusion that small states are those which have a population range of 10-15 million together with a GDP of at least US\$ 300—economically more developed—or a population range of 20-30 million along with a GDP of less than US\$ 300—economically less developed.² This method to indicate state size has been mapped over a wide spectrum ranging from a low of 1 million to a high of 16 million as a maximum population limit for a small state.³ Between 1970s and 80s, the population upper cutoff points have become smaller perhaps reflecting to reflect the population boom in some countries which while were considered small in the past have gradually managed to become quite active on the international scene.⁴ Thus in the 1960s few scholars suggested cutoff points between five to fifteen million, while in the

¹ See Ronald Barston, ed., *The Other Powers: Studies in the Foreign Policies of Small States* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1973), 14-15.

² See David Vital, *The Inequality of States: A Study of the Small Power in International Relations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 7-9 and 52-53.

³ For instance at the two opposite sides of the spectrum, Ronald Barston uses a population limit of 10-15 million, Colin Clarke and Tony Payne, (*Politics, Security, and Development, in Small States*. London; Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1987) use significantly lower threshold of 1 million.

⁴ See Edward Dommen and Philippe Hein, eds., *States, Microstates, and Islands* (London; Dover, N.H.: Croom Helm, 1985), 23-25.

1970s that threshold was between one to three million.⁵ By the mid-1980s and 1990s authors appear to have agreed that smallness is indicated by an absolute maximum population of 1.5 million, with most setting at the level of 1 million, and some as low as 100,000.⁶

While the usage of population as an indicator of a country's overall size in the international system does carry some merits, there are also some problems with this technique. Thus it is true that countries with smaller population would lack the necessary manpower to conduct effective and well developed government agencies and that economically speaking, a country with a small population will have trouble competing with those who have a large workforce. On the other side of the spectrum, with the changing nature of economic and political transactions in the modern era of technological and scientific advances, it seems that the quality, rather than the quantity of the population is what matters for a state's ability to have a regional or even international impact.

It is important to point out that the categorization of states into a hierarchy of small, medium or great is very much dependent on the level of analysis used by scholar while examining any country or region. A country might be classified medium or great when examined on a regional level but the same country might be classified as small when the analysis is done on a global or international level. Another important criterion in determining a country's size is the field of study which the country is being examined in. Accordingly, if a study is dealing with economic issues then some countries might prove to have a significant impact on regional or global level; however the same country might not be of importance when dealing with global military might. For instance the Netherlands, Belgium or the Scandinavian countries all have a significant impact on the global trade and economy, however militarily they are almost non-existent on the global map.⁷ Hence, this impacts the categorization of each of these states as small or large.

The utilization of physical indicators to define size has been associated with the structural approach in the study of international relations where scholars would look at the structure and composition of states and their components to categorize them in the

⁵ Philippe Hein, "The Study of Microstates," in *States, Microstates and Islands*, eds. Edward Dommen and Philippe Hein. (London: Croom Helm, 1985), 24-25.

⁶ See for instance Mark Bray, "Education in Small states: Growth of Interest and Emergence of Theory." *Prospects* 21, 4 (1991): 503-516 and Bray and Packer, *Education in Small States*.

⁷ Omer De Raeymaeker et al, *Small Powers in Alignment* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1974), 19-20.

hierarchy of states. This approach has been the accepted norm for the examination of small states until Annette Baker Fox utilized a behavioral model for defining the size of states. According to her:

... we can think of small states as those whose leaders recognize that their own state's political weight is limited to a local arena rather than a global one, that they are dependent upon outside political forces for much of their security, and that their particular state's interest may be dispensable in the eyes of one or more great powers.⁸

Robert Rothstein had a similar definition of small states:

A small power is a state which recognizes that it cannot obtain security primarily by use of its own capabilities and that it must rely fundamentally on the aid of other states, institutions, processes or developments to do so.⁹

It is apparent that both Fox and Rothstein utilized security and military issues when trying to define small states which, while making it relevant in the Cold War period, became largely obsolete since 1991 where military strength and power are not the sole guidelines of power and strength of states.

It was Keohane who took on the task of providing a more comprehensive definition of small states, one which broke away from the security-oriented study of small states and focused on the influence that a country could have on various regional and international processes.¹⁰ He summarized the categorization of states by:

A great power is a state whose leaders consider that it can, alone, exercise a large, perhaps decisive, impact on the international system; a secondary power is a state whose leaders consider that alone it can exercise some impact, although never in itself decisive, on that system; a middle power is a state whose leaders consider that it cannot act alone effectively but may be able to have a systemic impact in a small group or through an international institution; a small power is a state whose leaders consider that it can never, acting alone or in a small group, make a significant impact on the system.¹¹

Based on Keohane's definition, small states are system dominated units with the inability—either acting alone or in small groups—to make a significant impact on the international system.

According to the examination of the existing literature and the work of scholars on the topic of defining small states, it becomes clear that the usage of the word “small” to categorize states in the international system is one which utilizes physical size. While this

⁸ Annette Baker Fox, “The Small States in the International System, 1919–1969,” *International Journal* 24, no. 4 (1969): 751-752.

⁹ Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers*, 29.

¹⁰ Keohane, “Lilliputians’ Dilemmas,” 309-310.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 296.

classification could have its advantages when examining economic or military systems, small size does not necessarily reflect the ability of a state to pursue a series of policies—both domestic and foreign—to safeguard its own national interests as defined by policymakers in that specific country. Many authors have the tendency to use the terms “small,” “weak,” “failed,” and “insecure” interchangeably to designate states which are economically and militarily poor, do not have strong governments and which mostly do not register on the international relations radar.¹² This lax usage of various terms to denote the same concept feeds into the problem of definition as it was discussed above. Thus the fact that different authors use various terms to denote the same phenomenon is a major reason why the field of studying small states still lacks a uniform concept defining the size of states.

As one of the few authors who conducted detailed analysis of weak states, Michael Handel surveyed over 600 titles (books and journals) and summarized his findings in the following table.¹³

¹² While examples are abundant about the way authors interchangeably use these terms it is suffice to see Miriam Elman’s “The Foreign Policies of Small States: Challenging Neorealism in its Own Backyards,” *British Journal of Political Science* 25, no. 2 (April 1995): 171f1. Elman, just like many of the other scholars, starts her discussion by admitting that the terms used will be interchangeable.

¹³ Michael Handel, *Weak States in the International System* (London: F. Cass, 1981).

Table 1: Michael Handel's criteria to distinguish weak and strong states

| CRITERIA | THE WEAK STATE | THE STRONG STATE |
|---------------------------------|---|---|
| POPULATION | Very small | Very large |
| AREA | Very small | Very large |
| ECONOMY | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. GDP small in absolute terms. 2. Little or no heavy industry. 3. High degree of specialization in a narrow range of products. 4. Small domestic market, hence high dependency on foreign markets for imports and exports. 5. Research and Development very low in absolute terms. 6. High dependence on foreign capital. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. GDP very high in absolute terms. 2. Very large, highly developed heavy industry (including weapons). 3. Very high degree of specialization in large variety of products. 4. Very large domestic market, hence little dependence on foreign export/import trade. 5. Research and Development very high in absolute terms. 6. No dependence on foreign capital. |
| MILITARY POWER | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cannot defend itself against external threats by its own strength; high or total dependence on external help. 2. Total (or very high) dependence on weapon acquisition in foreign countries. 3. A high proportion of strength always mobilized or at its disposal; longer range war potential very low. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Can defend itself by its own power against any state or combination of states; very little reliance on external support. 2. Has full array of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems. 3. Domestic production of all weapons system. 4. Large standing armies, combined with very high war potential. |
| THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Limited scopes of interests (usually to neighboring and regional areas). 2. Little or no influence on the balance of power (or the nature of the system). 3. Mainly passive and reactive in foreign policy.* 4. Tends to minimize risks, especially vis-à-vis the powers. 5. Can be "penetrated" relatively easily.* 6. Strong support for international law and norms of international organizations.* | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Worldwide (global) interests. 2. Weighs heavily in world balance of power; shapes the nature of the international system. 3. Pursues a dynamic and active foreign policy.* 4. Tends to maximize gains (rather than minimize risks).* 5. Relatively difficult to "penetrate" (depends on the nature of the internal political system).* 6. Low regard for international law and organizations; prefers power and summit policies.* |

Source: Michael Handel, *Weak States in the International System* (London: F. Cass, 1981), 52-53.

* Characteristics frequently found in the literature of small states, with which Handel does not entirely agree.

Handel did note that his categorization for weak and strong states were the extremes in the sense that he has taken the absolute weakest and absolute super-power to illustrate his points.¹⁴ Based on this table it becomes clear that such a classification is very much dependent on the criteria that a scholar uses. Although Handel does not discuss in detail the possibilities

¹⁴ Handel, *Weak States in the International System*, 52.

of a states being strong in one criteria and weak in another it is obvious that the task of categorizing all states as either weak or strong is an impossible task since there are numerous countries which could fall in the “strong state” category if they satisfy even at least one criteria.

For the purposes of this study, the criteria that used to designate a state as weak will be solely the activity of a given state in the international system and the way it interacts with other states; in other words the foreign policy of a state. Also the terminology to be used to indicate states which are at the bottom of the hierarchy would be, weak rather than small since small is an adjective describing size—and in this case physical size—while weak is an adjective which indicates the lack of capabilities. This having said it should be mentioned that in the context of this study—i.e. the former Soviet space in the South Caucasus—the states examined happen to be weak AND small, thus the reason why the two terms might be used interchangeably is not because of lack of definition but because they coincide.

Finally to operationalize the concept of small and weak state, the definition to be used in this work will be an amalgam of what scholars in the field have previously stated. According to this research a small state is a state with limited resources—be it natural, human or experience in conducting foreign policies—as well as limited power—as defined by the inability of the state to project its interest beyond the immediate geographical neighborhood and the inability to pursue national interests relying solely on its own resources thus depending on alliances or close cooperation with stronger states.

The Countries of the Caucasus as Small States

Based on the definition mentioned above, the countries of the Caucasus could be categorized as such. Compared to their immediate neighbors—Iran, Turkey and Russia—all three countries of the South Caucasus have smaller populations and areas as well as comparatively much smaller GDPs and markets. Consequently the countries of the Caucasus show many of the symptoms that small states suffer from. Furthermore Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia can also be categorized as new states thus adding a new component to the study of these states.

One of the attributes of new states is the absence or the frailty of their administrative institutions to conduct diplomacy or foreign relations. This lack of experience is very much a

factor of the creation of the state itself as well as its experience as an actor on the international stage. Thus Langer and Pöllauer mention two types of new states. The first is the “secession state and the other is remaining state.”¹⁵

In the case of the South Caucasus, all three republics of the region have shown the characteristics of session states, which because of their former status in an empire they were simply administrative units governed mostly from the center, and hence lacked governing elite as well as infrastructure to be able to govern themselves specially in the field of foreign policy.¹⁶ This has various consequences for the formation of the state apparatus (including diplomacy) and its composition at the beginning as well as for the inclusion of the new state in the international community. This is contrasted with the “remaining state”—in this case, Russia—which is formed from the “mutated former central regions” of the former empires.¹⁷ Consequently this new state keeps the majority the central state’s administrative infrastructure and personnel.

In this aspect the three countries of the South Caucasus vary from each other in the methods through which they have been able to set up new elites as well as their diplomatic corps. In the case of Armenia, much attention was given to the role of the Armenian Diaspora in governing the new country. Many diasporans got involved in the government apparatus on various levels. Thus the first and current foreign ministers of Armenia are American-Armenians who had moved to the country after independence.. In the case of Georgia after the nationalist phase of Zviad Gamsakhurdia, the new leader of the country was “brought in” from the former center. Although Eduard Shevardnadze had been the general secretary of the Georgian Communist Party in the past, he was more associated with Moscow than with Tbilisi when he returned to the country to take over its leadership. As another example of the constant acquiring of new elite, a former Georgian Foreign Minister Salome Zurbishvili was a career diplomat in the French foreign ministry before she was offered her position in Tbilisi. After trying its luck with communist reformists and nationalists, Azerbaijan—like Georgia—also settled to import its elite from the former center in the person of Haydar Aliyev.

Regardless of the nature of their creation or independence, small states—because of their size—face a great constraint when it comes to human or natural resources. These

¹⁵ See Langer and Pöllauer, eds., *Small States in the Emerging New Europe*, 13-15.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

limitation in turn influence a country's ability to set up and conduct administrative tasks with success, not to mention the financial burden that might accompany the setting up of a new state apparatus.¹⁸ Because of the lack of resources, small states are hence very much dependent on their political environment and are sensitive to changes in the international system.¹⁹ However it should also be noted that because small countries lack the capacity to influence greatly their environment, they are more likely to adapt their policies to its dictates.²⁰

Yet however costly and pervasive their governments, most inhabitants of small states prefer these liabilities to those they would probably suffer should they lose their sovereignty. Even clustered among supportive neighbors, small states sense the pervasive pressure of nearby larger states and great powers. These outsiders not only interfere in times of crisis; they impinge on the day-to-day livelihood and well being of the state. Small state nationalism is thus not just chauvinism; it expresses a cohesion needed to bolster autonomy against the incursions of larger states, the pressures of global development, and the perils of piracy. To this end, small states indoctrinate attachments to anything national, everything that distinguishes them from other states, their people from other people and keep outsiders from owning local land and other resources.²¹

Based on the above observations it is safe to say that one of the major problems that small states face is the lack of resources—both human and natural. These shortcomings, especially the limited pool of human resources, directly influence the state's ability to allocate personnel and develop strong institutions for the conduct of their foreign policies. Maurice East elaborates this point when he states, “the result of all these factors is that, compared to

¹⁸ These ideas are explored in detail by Maria Papadakis and Harvey Starr, “Opportunity, Willingness and Small States: The Relations between Environment and Foreign Policy,” in *New Directions in the Study of Foreign Policy*, eds. Charles F. Hermann, Charles W. Kegley, Jr. and James N. Rosenau (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1987), 423; as well as by Letterio Briguglio, “Small Island States and the Globalization Process,” in *Small States in the Emerging New Europe*, eds. Josef Langer and Wolfgang Pöllauer (Eisenstadt: Verlag für Soziologie und Humanethologie, 1995), 110.

¹⁹ Samo Kropivnik and P. Jesovnik. “Small Countries in the Global Economy: Slovenia, an Exception or the Rule?” *Journal of International Relations* 2, no. 1-4 (1995), 67 and Papadakis and Starr, “Opportunity, Willingness and Small States,” 423.

²⁰ See, for example, Michael Handel, *Weak States in the International System* (London: Frank Cass, 1981); Keohane, “Lilliputians’ Dilemmas” and Raimo Väyrynen, “Small States in Different Theoretical Traditions of International Relations Research” in *Small States in Europe and Dependence*, ed. Otmar Höll (Vienna: Braumuller, 1983).

²¹ Clarke and Payne, *Politics, Security, and Development*, 43-44.

large states, small states have a smaller proportion of an already small resource base to devote to the international sector.”²² Furthermore, if a small state is also a new one then this problem is more emphasized having direct limitations on a country’s ability to develop a strong foreign policy apparatus and hence limit its ability to formulate and implement a successful foreign policy.²³

Security of Small States

One of the most important issues that states in general, and small ones in particular, face is the concept of security. Because of their vulnerability, weak military strength, as well as lack of resources, almost since their formation, small states face the dilemma of how to find security guarantees for their existence.²⁴ Surprisingly, small states have proven to be very adaptable to changing international and security systems.²⁵

In the viewpoint of realists and neo-realists, a state functions only as a mechanism for satisfying its own interests. Seeking greater security is almost exclusively the only goal of any state.²⁶ The idealist or transnational school, which developed in opposition to the realist position, considers that international relations essentially exist to seek peace and reconciliation rather than power and superiority. In the future this peace could be based on developing mutual understanding and cooperation, the global democratization of international affairs, rather than looking for a balance of power.²⁷ However it is possible that shared aspects of the realist power position and the idealist peace position may be found.²⁸ No matter how paradoxical it seems, the concept of national security in international relations theory has not been clearly defined or adequately developed. The explanation is quite simple: during the Cold

²² Maurice East, “Size and Foreign Policy Behavior: A Test of Two Models,” *World Politics*.25, no. 4 (July 1973): 558.

²³ Papadakis and Starr, “Opportunity, Willingness and Small States,” 424.

²⁴ See Väyrynen, “Small States: Persisting Despite Doubts,” in *The National Security of Small States in a Changing World*, eds. Efraim Inbar and Gabriel Sheffer (London: Frank Cass, 1997), 41.

²⁵ Papadakis and Starr, “Opportunity, Willingness and Small States,” 422.

²⁶ See for example, Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993), 3-17.

²⁷ See for instance, David Mitrany. *The Functional Theory of Politics*, New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1975) and Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, eds. *Transnational Relations and World Politics*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971.

²⁸ Buzan, *People, States and Fear*, 251.

War security almost exclusively was considered a military category, understanding by that primarily: national military defense, deterrence and the necessity for disarmament.²⁹ The new international situation after the end of the Cold War, allowed the reassessment of security studies. Threat of global level confrontations is continuously receding. Along with that the military component in the security concept has lost its former decisive role.

The latest theoretical studies and international relations theories deal with non-military security aspects of states' national security dilemmas. Fischer points out that efforts to avoid war have to begin several steps before its beginning. He also emphasizes that it is becoming more important to eliminate potential sources of military conflicts and war, which frequently are rooted in economic, ethnic, religious, or ideological spheres, human rights violations, or other problems.³⁰ Other scholars have argued to pay more attention to determining the sources of threats and the state's own role in their creation, emphasizing that at this level national security problems are more economic, political, and social rather than military.³¹

The efforts by small states to influence the international system and to attain the realization of their security interests is reflected in their implemented security policies, which are inseparable from their foreign and domestic policies. National security policy could be categorized as a political activity carried on by an actor in the international system to achieve its goals and to balance or counterbalance threats from other actors.³² However it should be kept in mind that a state's security policy is determined in the first instance by the features of the international system, not by the state itself.³³ Small states have to take special notice of this, considering their own limited role in the international system.

There are also instances when the security of small states is very much dependent on regional or international great powers and their position—geographic or political—vis-à-vis

²⁹ Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, 451.

³⁰ Dietrich Fischer, *Nonmilitary Aspects of Security: A Systems Approach* (Brookfield, VT: Dartmouth Publishers, 1993), 7.

³¹ Bary Buzan, *People, States and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1983), 253.

³² See, Bengt Sundelius, "Coping with Structural Security Threats," in *Small States in Europe and Dependence*, ed. Otmar Höll, (Vienna: Austrian Institute for International Affairs, 1983), 283.

³³ Michael Mandelbaum, *The Fate of Nations. The Search for National Security in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988), 2.

spheres of influence devised by great powers.³⁴ Even though the security of small states to a great extent is determined by bigger powers and the international system, these states still exercise some influence on their security policies. This has been apparent in the way scholars have dealt with this specific issue in the small state literature.³⁵

Based on the survey of literature, Amstrup narrows down the options that small states have when it comes to security policies. Thus according to him small states have an option of a) neutrality; b) developing alliances and/or c) become members in international organizations. These possibilities correspond widely to the whole foreign politics behavior of (small) states. Amstrup's categorization is particularly valuable for its practical substantiation of individual choices with concrete examples of scientific studies. It is necessary to add here that small states as a rule realize the security gains of international associations.³⁶

Correspondingly, by joining various alliances or relying on the support of more powerful states, small states invariably lose some of their autonomy, which is an important part of their national security agenda. In this case the Caucasus offers an interesting case of alliances and camps. In the case of Armenia, over the years the country has been more entrenched in the Russian sphere of influence and consequently the "Russian Camp" of course as a result of Armenia's security concerns forging closer cooperation with its major ally Russia has come with a price of losing some of its sovereignty. Thus over the past several years numerous economic and military agreements have made Armenia heavily dependent on Russia. The "Assets for Debt" scheme which witnessed the transfer of three Yerevan research institutes of computers, automated control systems, materials science, and also the property complex of the Hrazdan thermo power station, to the Russian side in return of Armenia's \$93 million debt to Russia.³⁷ As a sign of further dependence on Russia, the running of the production and financial activities of the Armenian nuclear power station was also handed over to a Russian company.³⁸ In the same token Georgia also found its security guarantees in joining alliances, albeit non-Russian one. Over the past several years Georgia has been a keen

³⁴ Trygve Mathiesen, *The Functions of Small States in the Strategies of the Great Powers* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1971), 67-129.

³⁵ Amstrup, "The Perennial Problems," 170-173.

³⁶ Gärtner, "Small States and Concepts of European Security," 189.

³⁷ "Armenia in Russia's Embrace," *The Moscow Times*, March 24, 2004.

³⁸ "Resurgent Russia Flexes Economic Muscle in Armenia," *Agence France Presse*, March 30, 2003

participant in North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and its activities. Needless to say these alliances in the South Caucasus have acted more as tension creators rather than tension breakers since the countries of the Caucasus have found themselves in opposing camps. Moreover the rivalry of regional and international powers has taken a new form of quasi-Cold war in the region where various international and regional actors fight for influence in the South Caucasus and only shy away from proxy wars because of fears of destabilization in countries neighboring the Caucasus.

Because of their dependence on the external political system as well as their sensitivity and vulnerability to changes in that system, small states tend to focus tremendously on the issue of cooperation with other states as well as other entities in the international system, particularly international organizations.³⁹

The most obvious choice for membership in any international organization for small countries is the United Nations. Membership in the UN provides small states to take part in a multitude of political, social, economic and cultural issues all within the mechanism and network of the UN. Such activities also cut down the cost of participation in international processes, which is a huge issue for them given their limited financial resources. However this does not mean that membership in international organizations are without any financial responsibilities, and although in such organizations the financial requirements—such as membership dues—from small states are considerably lower than that of larger states, many small states choose not to seek membership because of the financial burden that joining these organizations could bring with them.⁴⁰

One final issue that needs to be noted is that small state participation in international organizations and conferences seems to be of a very high rate. Thus it is not surprising to find that the chairpersons and presidents of many UN or other international committees or conferences are representatives of small countries.⁴¹

The Foreign Policy of the Small and the New

³⁹ Väyrynen mentions this idea explicitly when he says: “Usually, international institutions are the best friends of small states.” Väyrynen, “Small States: Persisting Despite Doubts,” 42.

⁴⁰ See Bray and Packer, *Education in Small States*, 241-242.

⁴¹ For more discussion on this issue see, Amstrup, “The Perennial Problems,” 164 and Fox, “The Small States in the International System,” 784.

Most often the size and power of a state are the factors most considered when determining a state's influence on the international scene. While their limited size constraints their human and natural resources and hence curtails their power to influence in international politics.⁴² These limitations, for instance, influence a country's ability to set up and conduct administrative tasks, not to mention the financial burden that might accompany the setting up of a new state apparatus.⁴³ As such, small states are much dependent on the regional and international environment and are, in turn, sensitive to the changes in the international system.⁴⁴ However while small powers lack the capacity to significantly influence their environment, they are more likely to adapt their foreign policies and priorities to the dictates of that larger system.⁴⁵

Does size matter?

Several shared features come into play when examining the foreign policy behavior of small states, some common features could be extrapolated. These shared features include:

- Low levels of overall participation in world affairs;
- High levels of activity in intergovernmental organizations;
- High levels of support for international legal norms;
- Avoidance to the use of force as a technique of statecraft;
- Avoidance of behavior and policies which tend to alienate the more powerful states in the system;
- A narrow functional and geographic range of concern in foreign policy activities;

⁴² See, Werner Levi, *International Politics: Foundation of the System* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota press, 1974), 104-109; Rudolph Rummel, "Some Empirical Findings on Nations and Their Behavior *World Politics* 21, (January, 1969), 226-241; East, "Size and Foreign Policy Behavior," 556-577.

⁴³ These ideas are explored in detail by Maria Papadakis and Harvey Starr, "Opportunity, Willingness and Small States: The Relations between Environment and Foreign Policy," in *New Directions in the Study of Foreign Policy*, eds. Charles F. Hermann, Charles W. Kegley, Jr. and James N. Rosenau (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1987), 423; as well as by Letterio Briguglio, "Small Island States and the Globalization Process," in *Small States in the Emerging New Europe*, eds. Josef Langer and Wolfgang Pöllauer (Eisenstadt: Verlag für Soziologie und Humanethologie, 1995), 110.

⁴⁴ Samo Kropivnik and P. Jesovnik. "Small Countries in the Global Economy: Slovenia, an Exception or the Rule?" *Journal of International Relations* 2, no. 1-4 (1995), 67 and Papadakis and Starr, "Opportunity, Willingness and Small States," 423.

⁴⁵ See, for example, Handel's *Weak States in the International System*; Keohane, "Lilliputians' Dilemmas" and Raimo Väyrynen, "Small States in Different Theoretical Traditions of International Relations Research" in *Small States in Europe and Dependence*, ed. Otmar Höll (Vienna: Braumuller, 1983).

- Frequent utilization of moral and normative positions on international issues.⁴⁶

This model is based on the traditional understanding of the limited resources—human capital to establish large diplomatic missions or large armies and natural resources to have a say in the global economy—of small states. These limitations call for their economical use in the foreign affairs sphere as well, but the overall power deficiency requires cautious, careful, low risk policies, while simultaneously looking for and utilizing available means to enlarge international impact and advance national interests. The lack of resources also prohibits small states from maintaining a sufficiently large foreign affairs department, including the diplomatic corps. The relatively few foreign affairs personnel, on its own, makes it necessary to narrow the scope of addressable foreign affairs issues, which are at times considered functionally and geographically limited.⁴⁷

The impact of small size and its relations with the economic development of the state could be summarized in the following points:

- Limited natural resources endowments and high import content;
- Limitation on import substitution possibilities;
- Small domestic market and dependence on export markets;
- Limited ability to influence domestic prices;
- Limited ability to exploit economies of scale;
- Limited possibility for domestic competition;
- Marginalization in international trade;
- High costs of public administration and infrastructural development due to indivisibility of overhead costs.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ East, “Size and Foreign Policy Behavior,” 557.

⁴⁷ See for example, Barston, *The Other Powers*, 13-26.

⁴⁸ Briguglio, “Small Island States and the Globalization Process,” 113. For an economic perspective of small states see; Edward Dommen and Philippe Hein, eds., *States, Microstates, and Islands* (London: Croom Helm, 1985); Bimal Jalan, ed., *Problems and Policies in Small Economies* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1982); A. D. Knox, “Some Economic Problems of Small Countries,” in *Problems of Smaller Territories*, ed. Burton Benedict (London: Athelton Press, 1967), 35-44; Edward A. G. Robinson, ed., *Economic Consequences of the Size of Nations; Proceedings of a Conference Held by the International Economics Association* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1960); Percy Selwyn, ed., *Development Policy in Small Countries* (London: Croom Helm, 1975); and Paul Streeten, “The Special Problems of Small Countries,” *World Development* 21, no. 2 (February 1993): 197-202.

Yet, however costly and pervasive their governments, most inhabitants of small states prefer these liabilities to those they would probably suffer should they lose their sovereignty. Even clustered among supportive neighbors, small states sense the enveloping pressure of nearby larger states and great powers. These outsiders not only interfere in times of crisis, but also impinge on the day-to-day livelihood and well being of their small neighbors. Nationalism in small states is often an expression of a cohesion needed to bolster autonomy against such incursions, the pressures of global development and the perils of piracy. As a result, small states indoctrinate attachments to anything national, which helps distinguish them from other states, their people from other people and prevent outsiders from owning local land and other resources.⁴⁹ However this does not automatically imply that small states become externally aggressive and demanding in their foreign policies, for they understand too well the limits of their power and their place in the international system to risk heightening tensions. For small states with their restricted capacities to get involved in a conflict or to deliberately aggravate relations with more powerful states, often means to also endanger their own autonomy. Therefore they endeavor to avoid getting involved in conflicts at all costs.⁵⁰ That also prescribes small state behavior in the international system on the whole, as cautious and careful, with the accompanying effort to avoid high-risk actions in foreign relations.

To compensate for their unequal position in the international system, small states further strive to utilize the help of international legal norms and institutions. The legal rights of national sovereignty and equality very often are the most important tools that small states have to resolve urgent problems at the international level. The actual inequality of states in the international system is the basis for small states to call on legal norms and moral principles to defend their national interests.

The limited pool of human resources, directly influence the state's ability to allocate personnel and develop strong institutions for the conduct of their foreign policies. As a result small states devote a decreased proportion of an already small resource base to the international sector.⁵¹ Furthermore, if a small state is also a new one then this problem is more

⁴⁹ Clarke and Payne, *Politics, Security, and Development*, 43-44.

⁵⁰ David Vital, *The Survival of Small States: Studies in Small Power Great Power Conflict* (London, Oxford University Press, 1971), 12.

⁵¹ Maurice East, "Size and Foreign Policy Behavior: A Test of Two Models," *World Politics*.25, no. 4 (July 1973): 558.

emphasized having direct limitations on a country's ability to develop a well-built foreign policy apparatus and hence limit its ability to formulate and implement a successful foreign policy.⁵² Their limited diplomatic resources leads small states to identify potential threats at an earlier stage and thus take preemptive measures. While last-moment problem solving leads to hard decision and political vulnerability, the lack of such institutions and bureaucracies lend itself a high degree of personal intervention and a corresponding *ad hoc* approach to issues.⁵³ In short, the foreign policy of small states is geared towards resisting pressure from larger powers to preserve their territorial integrity and sovereignty, while balancing their national identity.

Securing smallness

As of their formation, one of the most important issues that states in general, and small ones in particular, face is security guarantees for their existence because of their weak military strength and lack of resources.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, small states have proved to be very resourceful and adaptive to the changing international and security systems and developed mechanisms to safeguard their interests and security.⁵⁵

According to realists and neo-realists on the one hand, a state functions only as a mechanism for satisfying its own interests. Seeking greater security is almost exclusively the only goal of any state.⁵⁶ The idealist or transnational school, on the other hand, considers that international relations essentially exist to seek peace and reconciliation rather than power and superiority. In the future this peace could be based on developing mutual understanding and cooperation, the global democratization of international affairs, in lieu of looking for a balance of power.⁵⁷ However it is possible that shared aspects of the realist power position and the

⁵² Papadakis and Starr, "Opportunity, Willingness and Small States," 424.

⁵³ Clarke and Payne, *Politics, Security, and Development*, 20 and East, "Size and Foreign Policy Behavior," 559-560.

⁵⁴ See Väyrynen, "Small States: Persisting Despite Doubts," in *The National Security of Small States in a Changing World*, eds. Efraim Inbar and Gabriel Sheffer (London: Frank Cass, 1997), 41.

⁵⁵ Papadakis and Starr, "Opportunity, Willingness and Small States," 422.

⁵⁶ See for example, Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 3-17.

⁵⁷ See for instance, David Mitrany, *The Functional Theory of Politics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975) and Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, eds., *Transnational Relations and World Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971).

idealist peace position may be found.⁵⁸ No matter how paradoxical it seems the concept of national security in international relations theory has not been clearly defined or adequately developed. The explanation is quite simple, thus during the Cold War, security almost exclusively was considered a military category, understanding by that primarily: national military defense, deterrence and the necessity for disarmament.⁵⁹ The latest theoretical studies and international relations theories deal with non-military security aspects of states' national security dilemmas. Efforts to avoid war seem to begin several steps before its outbreak by eliminating potential sources of military conflicts and war, which frequently are rooted in economic, ethnic, religious, or ideological spheres.⁶⁰

National security policy could be categorized as a political activity carried on by an actor in the international system to achieve its goals and to balance or counterbalance threats from other actors.⁶¹ However, a state's security policy is determined in the first instance by the features of the international system, not by the state itself.⁶² Small states have to take special notice of this, considering their own limited role in the international system. Apart from the inability to influence the international system, the security of small states is very much dependent on regional or international great powers.⁶³ Relying on the academic literature dealing with the security issues of small states, three options seem to dominate the strategies of small states to achieve security guarantees. These are a) neutrality; b) developing alliances and/or c) becoming members in international organizations.⁶⁴

The option of neutrality in international relations is one of the oldest strategies often utilized by small states. Neutrality is a status chosen by a state confronted by an imminent or

⁵⁸ Bary Buzan, *People, States and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1983), 251.

⁵⁹ Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 451.

⁶⁰ See for instance Dietrich Fischer, *Nonmilitary Aspects of Security: A Systems Approach* (Brookfield, VT: Dartmouth Publishers, 1993), 7 and Buzan, *People, States and Fear*, 253.

⁶¹ See, Bengt Sundelius, "Coping with Structural Security Threats," in *Small States in Europe and Dependence*, ed. Otmar Höll, (Vienna: Austrian Institute for International Affairs, 1983), 283.

⁶² Michael Mandelbaum, *The Fate of Nations: The Search for National Security in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988), 2.

⁶³ Trygve Mathiesen, *The Functions of Small States in the Strategies of the Great Powers* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1971), 67-129.

⁶⁴ See Amstrup, "The Perennial Problems," 163 and Gärtner, "Small States and Concepts of European Security," 189.

existing war and accepted by the belligerents in that war.⁶⁵ A state that declares itself neutral is doing no more than declaring an intention to claim neutral status if and when war occurs.⁶⁶ During the bi-polar power system of the Cold War, states which claimed neutrality emphasized their political choice by not joining any military or political alliances. In today's world, neutrality often rests on a particular state's historical traditions and on the deep-rooted public attitude towards neutrality as a guarantor of independence. This renders neutrality a matter of more politics rather than policy.⁶⁷ Although this option is a byproduct of the Cold War, it still provides a form of security to small states as they choose to not take sides with regional powers or alliances.⁶⁸ Over the years since 1991, however, neutrality has shown some questionable tendencies. For example it has acquired such new forms as self-isolation or political and economic dissociation from the international system. As the new international system takes shape and develops, protests invariably will grow from individual members against the system's restrictive nature, with an increased tendency for states to self-isolate and possibly develop new forms of neutrality. In a system where the defining paradigm is "you are either with us or against us" the meaning of neutrality has essentially changed and its future perspectives are rather uncertain.⁶⁹

Joining regional or international alliances is another strategy used by small states to find security guarantees. A regional group with a large membership poses little threat to its smaller members and could in fact guarantee their security if its membership were a pluralistic one.⁷⁰ Such an organization could supply the funding and training facilities required to provide small states with professional well trained and well equipped force capable of handling most security threat. By joining an alliance small states gain additional guaranties for their security, while simultaneously losing some of their autonomy, an important part of their national security agenda. In an alliance, small states may be exposed to additional risks that perhaps on their own they may have avoided. Furthermore the alliance agreement does not always create

⁶⁵ Sheila Harden, ed., *Neutral States and the European Community* (London: Brassey's, 1994), 144.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 145.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 145 and 156.

⁶⁸ Roberto Espindola "Security Dilemmas" in *Politics, Security and Development in Small States*, eds. Colin Clarke and Tony Payne (London; Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1987), 76.

⁶⁹ Harden, *Neutral States and the European Community*, 93.

⁷⁰ Roberto Espindola "Security Dilemmas," 77.

confidence that small states will receive military help when in need.⁷¹ There are three main mechanisms through which states join alliances: 1) bilateral alliance with a great power; 2) alliance with other small power states; 3) multilateral (mixed) alliance with great powers and other small power states. The first two options seem to have more liabilities than the third one in that an alliance with a great power might result in the total dependence of the small state on its larger partner and thus risk to lose its sovereignty. In the case of small states creating alliances, the major problem would be that the collective power of small, weak and new states would remain inefficient to counterbalance the strength of greater powers. Multilateral alliances seem to have the right mix to keep the small states in the alliance autonomous enough to not feel threatened while at the same time the presence of a larger power give that alliance enough weight to shield the junior partners in the alliance from the threats of other regional or international powers.⁷²

Yet another byproduct of small states joining international organizations is that they are enabled to internationalize their security interests and widely utilize legal and moral norms to influence other members of the international system. At present, many of the new states in the current international system, gear up their diplomatic activities to be included in such organizations to become a part of the international community at large. Consequently a large number of international organizations include small states as members.⁷³ The presence of small states in international organizations allows these countries to be involved in various political processes which otherwise they would not have been able to be a part of.⁷⁴ One of the organizations with the most sought after membership for small states in particular is the United Nations Organization (UN), which provides opportunities to take part in a multitude of political, social, economic and cultural issues all within its internal mechanism and networks. Such activities also cut down the cost of participation in international processes, which is a burdensome issue for them given their limited financial resources. However this does not mean that membership in international organizations are without any financial responsibilities, and although in such organizations the financial requirements—such as membership dues—from small states are considerably lower than that of larger states, many

⁷¹ Amstrup, “The Perennial Problems,” 171-172.

⁷² Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers*, 244.

⁷³ See Bray and Packer, *Education in Small States*, 21.

⁷⁴ Fox, “The Small States in the International System,” 753.

small states choose not to seek membership because of the implied financial burden.⁷⁵ Small states which subsidize membership dues and become involved in regional and international organizations demonstrate a high rate of participation in those institutions or in conferences. Unsurprisingly, therefore, the chairpersons and presidents of many UN or other international committees or conferences are representatives of small countries.⁷⁶ According to one scholar “international institutions are the best friends of small states.”⁷⁷

Conclusion

The existing literature on small states is still highly fragmented. The initial interest that followed the creation of new states—most of which happened to be weak—after the fall of the USSR and Yugoslavia gave the study of the field some impetus however that interest soon waned with the coming to afore of issues much more important for the international community such as international terrorism and security. However for those who are interested in studying the countries of the South Caucasus the previous work on small and new states could provide some guidelines in studying the foreign policy constraints of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. Since these countries have the characteristics of small states surrounded by stronger powers and because of their limited resources, they tend to rely on alliances and international organizations to safeguard their security vis-à-vis what they consider to be hostile neighbors.

⁷⁵ See Bray and Packer, *Education in Small States*, 241-242.

⁷⁶ For more discussion on this issue see, Amstrup, “The Perennial Problems,” 164 and Fox, “The Small States in the International System,” 784.

⁷⁷ Väyrynen, “Small States: Persisting Despite Doubts,” 42.