

# SMALL STATE FOREIGN POLICY

POSTGRADUATE  
COURSE



UNIVERSITY OF  
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## AIM AND CONTENT

The aim of the course is to offer a comprehensive introduction to small state foreign policy to postgraduate students. No knowledge of small states or small states studies have been assumed, but it is an advantage to have some basic knowledge of politics and international relations prior to the course.

The first part of the course identifies the characteristics of small states in international relations and discusses the similarities and differences between small state foreign policy and the foreign policies of middle powers and micro states. After this part of the course, students will have a clear grasp of different definitions of a small state and the analytical consequences of choosing one definition over another. They will be able to single out typical aspects of small state foreign policy and reflect upon variations in foreign policy between different types of states.

The second part of the course focuses on sectoral foreign policies. The vulnerability of small states vis-à-vis the great powers has traditionally led to a focus on the security and defence policies of small states. The changing nature of international security is also changing the security and defence challenges and opportunities faced by small states. We discuss these challenges and opportunities and the strategic and concrete responses by small states. To balance the security policy focus of much foreign policy analysis of small states, we zoom in on foreign economic policy. We focus on the considerable variations in small state economic opportunities and challenges in the globalized international political economy and discuss the policies of small states to thrive under these conditions. Finally, we turn to climate policy discussing the environmental security of small states and their role of norm entrepreneurs in global climate policy. After this part of the course the students will know the characteristics of different aspects of small state foreign policy and be able to make concrete analyses identifying the challenges and opportunities of a small states regarding security policy, foreign economic policy and international climate policy.

The third part of the course asks: How do small states maximize security and influence? To answer this question, we discuss the strengths and weaknesses of four small state strategies: Shelter strategy, smart state strategy, status seeking strategy and negotiation strategy. After this part of the course, the students will know the characteristics of the four strategies. They will be able to use the tools of these strategies when analysing small state foreign policy and reflect upon the challenges, opportunities and consequences of the strategic choices of small states.

The topics have been mapped onto a 12-week course comprising approximately 2 hours of lectures/seminars per week. However, course leaders should feel free to amend, extend, compress or omit sections to suit the background and needs of the student body.

## **LEARNING GOALS**

At the conclusion of the course, students are able to:

- know how small states are defined in the international relations and foreign policy literature
- describe the characteristics of shelter strategy, smart state strategy, status seeking strategy and negotiation strategy in the context of small states
- describe the characteristics of small state foreign policy and how the foreign policy of small states compares to the foreign policy of other states
- analyze the foreign policy of small states
- discuss the challenges and opportunities of small state foreign policy and how these challenges and opportunities vary across policy fields and between regions in the world
- reflect upon the impact of size on the opportunities and challenges of small states in international relations
- reflect upon the challenges, opportunities and consequences of the strategic choices of small states
- apply the gained knowledge to a practical policy problem in order to provide policy advice to a small state government.

## PART I INTRODUCTION

### 1. What is a small state?

- Maass, M. (2009). "The elusive definition of the small state", *International Politics*, 46(1), 65-83.
- Long, T. (2017). "It's not the size, it's the relationship: from 'small states' to asymmetry", *International Politics*, 54(2), 144-160.
- Wivel, A., Archer, C. and Bailes, A. (2014). "Setting the Scene: Small States and International Security", in C. Archer, A. Bailes and A. Wivel (eds.) *Small States and International Security: Europe and Beyond*, London: Routledge, 3-25.
- Briguglio, L. (1995). "Small island developing states and their economic vulnerabilities", *World Development*, 23(9), 1615-1632.
- Veenendaal, W. P. and Corbett, J. (2014). "Why Small States Offer Important Answers to Large Questions", *Comparative Political Studies*, 48(4), 527-549.

#### Discussion questions:

- a) What is a small state? Discuss the pros and cons of at least two definitions.
- b) Why do Veenendaal and Corbett argue that small states offer important answers to large questions? Do you agree?

### 2. What characterizes small state foreign policy?

- Thorhallsson, B., and Steinsson, S. (2017). "Small State Foreign Policy", in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Foreign Policy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.  
[Available at: http://politics.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001 \(28 pp.\)](http://politics.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001)
- Hey, J. A. K. (2003). *Introducing small state foreign policy*. In J.A.K. Hey (Ed.), *Small states in world politics: explaining foreign policy behaviour* (pp.1-11). Boulder CO: Lynne Rienner.
- Cooper, A.F. and Shaw, T. (2013). "The Diplomacies of Small States at the Start of the Twenty-first Century: How Vulnerable? How Resilient?", in A. F. Cooper and T. M. Shaw (eds.) *The Diplomacies of Small States*, Houndmills: Palgrave, 1-18.
- Baldacchino, G. (2013). *Thucydides or Kissinger? A Critical Review of Small State Diplomacy*", in A. F. Cooper and T. M. Shaw (eds.) *The Diplomacies of Small States*, Houndmills: Palgrave, 21-40
- Keohane, R. O. (1969). *Lilliputians' Dilemmas: Small States in International Politics*. *International organization*, 23(2), 291-310.

#### Discussion questions:

- a) What are the typical characteristics of small state foreign policy?
- b) Which dilemmas do small states face in their foreign policy choices?

### 3. Middle powers, small states and micro states: similarities and differences

- Neumann, I. B., & Gstöhl, S. (2006). "Introduction: Lilliputians in Gulliver's world?", in C. Ingebritsen, I. B. Neumann, S. Gstöhl and J. Beyer (Eds.), *Small states in international relations*, Seattle WA: University of Washington Press, 3-36.
- Jordaan, E. (2003). "The Concept of a Middle Power in International Relations: Distinguishing between Emerging and Traditional Middle Power", *Politikon: South African Journal of Political Studies*, 30(1), 165-181.
- Jesse, N.G. and Dreyer, J. R. (2016). "Small States as Distinct Units of Analysis and as Different than Large and Middle Power", in N. G. Jesse and J.R. Dreyer, *Small States in the International System*, Lanham: Lexington, 3-19.
- Bernard Jr, P. (2006). "Canada and human security: From the Axworthy Doctrine to middle power internationalism", *American Review of Canadian Studies*, 36(2), 233-261.
- Wivel, A., & Oest, K. J. N. (2010). "Security, profit or shadow of the past? Explaining the security strategies of microstates", *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 23(3), 429-453.

#### Discussion questions:

- a) What are the differences between micro states, small states and middle powers?
- b) What is the role of middle powers in international affairs?
- c) How can a micro state maximize its interests in international affairs?

## PART II SECTORAL FOREIGN POLICIES

### 4. Security and defence policy

Bailes, A., Rickli, J. M., and Thorhallsson, B. (2014). "Small states, survival and strategy", in C. Archer, A. Bailes and A. Wivel (eds.), *Small states and international security: Europe and Beyond*, London: Routledge, 26-45.

Rickli, J. M., & Almezaini, K. S. (2017). "Theories of small states' foreign and security policies". in K.S. Almezaini & J.M. Rickli (eds.), *The small Gulf states: foreign and security policies before and after the Arab Spring*, London: Routledge, 8-30.

Krause, V.J. and Singer, J.D. (2001). "Minor Powers, Alliances, and Armed Conflict: Some Preliminary Patterns", in E. Reiter and H. Gärtner (eds.) *Small States and Alliances*, Heidelberg: Physica-Verlag, 15-23.

Rickli, J. M. (2008). "European small states' military policies after the Cold War: from territorial to niche strategies", *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 21(3), 307-325.

Ringsmose, J. (2009). "Paying for protection: Denmark's military expenditure during the Cold War", *Cooperation and Conflict*, 44(1), 73-97.

#### Discussion questions:

- a) What security problems do small states face in a globalized world?
- b) Which strategies may small states pursue to meet their security challenges?
- c) Are small states free-riders in international affairs?

### 5. Foreign economic policy

Griffiths, R. T. (2014). "Economic security and size", in C. Archer, A. Bailes and A. Wivel (eds.) *Small States and International Security: Europe and Beyond*, London: Routledge, 46-65.

Shaw, T. M. (2014). "What Caribbean post-2015? Development and/or fragile? Old versus new security", in C. Archer, A. Bailes and A. Wivel (eds.) *Small States and International Security: Europe and Beyond*, London: Routledge, 223-240.

Lee, D. (2013). "Bringing an Elephant into the Room: Small African State Diplomacy in the WTO", in A. F. Cooper and T. M. Shaw (eds.) *The Diplomacies of Small States*, Houndmills: Palgrave, 195-206.

Panke, D. (2012). "Being small in a big union: punching above their weights? How small states prevailed in the vodka and the pesticides cases", *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 25(3), 329-344.

#### Discussion questions:

- a) What is the relationship between economic security and size?
- b) How do the economic challenges of small states vary across regions?
- c) Which strategies may small states pursue to ameliorate their economic challenges?

### 6. Climate policy

Ingólfssdóttir, A. H. (2014). "Environmental security and small states", in C. Archer, A. Bailes and A. Wivel (eds.) *Small States and International Security: Europe and Beyond*, London: Routledge, 80-92.

Ourbak, T., & Magnan, A. K. (2017). "The Paris Agreement and climate change negotiations: Small Islands, big players" *Regional Environmental Change*, 1-7 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10113-017-1247-9>

Hoff, J. (2017). "The green 'heavyweights': The climate policies of the Nordic countries", in Peter Nedergaard and Anders Wivel (eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Scandinavian Politics*, London: Routledge, 49-65.

Blaxekjær, L. (2015). "Korea as green middle power: green growth strategic action in the field of global environmental governance", *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, 16(3), 443-476.

Lahn, B. and Rowe E. W. (2015). "How to be a 'front-runner': Norway and international climate politics", in B. de Carvalho and I. B. Neumann (eds.) *Small State Status Seeking: Norway's Quest for International Standing*, London: Routledge: 126-145.

#### Discussion questions:

- a) What is the relationship between environmental security and size?
- b) Why and how are some small states forerunners in international climate policy? Discuss.

## 7. Practical Exercise I: Producing a policy brief

The aim of this session is to put the knowledge obtained so far in the course to practical use. Students work together in groups of 3-4 people. The task of each group is to produce a policy brief (2-3 pages) for a particular state of their own choice. Each group chooses one policy area (defence and security policy, foreign economic policy or climate policy) and identifies 1-2 core challenges facing the state within this particular issue area. The group describes the nature of the challenge(s), identify key international actors of importance to the small state regarding this particular challenge and present a brief plan for meeting the challenge(s). After finishing the draft policy brief, each group presents the brief to another group giving peer-to-peer feedback. After feedback the draft policy brief is revised and uploaded to the course webpage for all participants to read and learn from.

## PART III HOW DO SMALL STATES MAXIMIZE SECURITY AND INFLUENCE?

### 8. Shelter strategy

Bailes, A. J., Thayer, B. A., & Thorhallsson, B. (2016). "Alliance theory and alliance 'Shelter': the complexities of small state alliance behaviour", *Third World Thematics: A TWQ Journal*, 1(1), 9-26.

Thorhallsson, B. (2011). "Domestic buffer versus external shelter: viability of small states in the new globalised economy" *European Political Science*, 10(3), 324-336.

Bailes, A. J., & Thorhallsson, B. (2013). Instrumentalizing the European Union in small state strategies. *Journal of European Integration*, 35(2), 99-115.

Wivel, A. and Thorhallsson, B. (2018) "Brexit and small states in Europe: Hedging, Hiding or Seeking Shelter?", in P. Diamond, P. Nedergaard, and B. Rosamond (eds) *The Routledge Handbook of the Politics of Brexit*. London: Routledge, 266-277.

Wivel, A. and Ingebritsen, C. (2019). "Why shelter theory matters: ramifications for international relations and small state studies", in B. Thorhallsson (ed.) *Small States and Shelter Theory: Iceland's External Affairs*, London: Routledge, 205-213.

#### Discussion questions:

- a) What is a shelter strategy?
- b) What are the potential opportunities and shortcomings of a small state shelter strategy?
- c) Is a shelter strategy equally important for micro states, small states and middle powers?

### 9. Smart state strategy

Grøn, C., & Wivel, A. (2011). "Maximizing influence in the European Union after the Lisbon Treaty: from small state policy to smart state strategy", *Journal of European Integration*, 33(5), 523-539.

Bueger, C., & Wivel, A. (2018). "How do small island states maximize influence? Creole diplomacy and the smart state foreign policy of the Seychelles", *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region*, 14(2), 170-188.

Arter, D. (2000). "Small state influence within the EU: The case of Finland's 'Northern Dimension Initiative'", *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 38(5), 677-697.

Schulz, T., Hufty, M., & Tschopp, M. (2017). "Small and smart: the role of Switzerland in the Cartagena and Nagoya protocols negotiations", *International Environmental Agreements*, 17(4), 553-571.

Pedi, R. (2017). "Greece in the Aftermath of the Economic Crisis Needs to Change Its Strategy in the International System: Choosing Between Melians and David", in J. Marangos (ed.) *The Internal Impact and External Influence of the Greek Financial Crisis*, Houndmills: Palgrave, 143-160.

#### Discussion questions:

- a) What is a small state strategy?
- b) When and how do small states pursue smart state strategies?
- c) What are the most important opportunities and challenges when pursuing a small state strategy?

### 10. Status seeking strategy

Neumann, I. B. and de Carvalho, B. (2015). "Introduction: Small states and status", in B. de Carvalho and I. B. Neumann (eds.) *Small State Status Seeking: Norway's Quest for International Standing*, London: Routledge: 1-21.

Græger, N. (2014). "From 'forces for good' to 'forces for status'? Small state military status seeking" in B. de Carvalho and I. B. Neumann (eds.) *Small State Status Seeking: Norway's Quest for International Standing*, London: Routledge: 86-107.

Crandall, M., & Varov, I. (2016). "Developing status as a small state: Estonia's foreign aid strategy", *East European Politics*, 32(4), 405-425.

Pedersen, R. B. (2018). "Bandwagon for Status: Changing Patterns in the Nordic States Status-seeking Strategies?", *International Peacekeeping*, 25(2), 217-241.

Pedi, R., & Kouskouvelis, I. (2019). "Cyprus in the Eastern Mediterranean: A Small State Seeking for Status", in L. Spyridon and A. Tziampiris (eds.) *The New Eastern Mediterranean*. Houndmills: Palgrave, 151-167.

**Discussion questions:**

- a) Why do small states seek status?
- b) What are the costs and benefits of a status seeking strategy?

**11. Negotiation strategy**

Panke, D. (2012). "Dwarfs in international negotiations: how small states make their voices heard", *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 25(3), 313-328.

Panke, D. (2010). "Good instructions in no time? Domestic coordination of EU policies in 19 small states", *West European Politics*, 33(4), 770-790.

Panke, D., & Gurol, J. (2018). "Small States as AgendaSetters? The Council Presidencies of Malta and Estonia", *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 56(S1), 142-151.

Björkdahl, A. (2008). "Norm advocacy: a small state strategy to influence the EU", *Journal of European Public Policy*, 15(1), 135-154.

Thorhallsson, B. (2012). "Small States in the UN Security Council: Means of Influence?", *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, 7(2), 135-160.

Smed, U. T., & Wivel, A. (2017). "Vulnerability without capabilities? Small state strategy and the international counter-piracy agenda", *European Security*, 26(1), 79-98.

**Discussion questions:**

- 1) How do small states influence international negotiations?
- 2) Which international and domestic factors influence small states' ability to maximize their interests through international negotiations?

**12. Practical exercise II: Paper workshop on the strategic choices of small states**

The aim of this workshop is to provide a constructive and inspirational setting for students to write their term papers. Before the workshop each student must upload a synopsis of their final paper. The paper topic is 'the strategic choices of small states'. Each paper must define what is meant by a 'small state' in the paper, construct an analytical framework based on the readings of the course and apply this framework on one or more cases chosen by the paper writer analysing the strategic choices of small states.

Each synopsis must include research question as well as considerations on theory, methodology and sources. Maximum 800 words. Each student will serve as discussant on another paper. The synopsis will be discussed in clusters with other students and the lecturer. By the end of the session each student will write down a plan for finishing the paper, including a detailed list of contents for the paper.

For some sound advice on how to write a paper, please read <https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/writing-international-security-contributors-guide> (don't worry, we do not expect you to publish your paper in *International Security*, but they offer some pretty good tips in how to present an academic argument).