SMALL STATE FOREIGN POLICY

POSTGRADUATE COURSE

Professor Anders Wivel
Department of Political Science
University of Copenhagen
Denmark
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

AIM AND CONTENT .................................................................................................................................................. 3  
LEARNING GOALS .................................................................................................................................................. 4  
PART I INTRODUCTION .......................................................................................................................................... 5  
1. What is a small state? ........................................................................................................................................... 5  
2. What characterizes small state foreign policy? ................................................................................................. 5  
3. Middle powers, small states and micro states: similarities and differences .................................................. 5  
PART II SECTORAL FOREIGN POLICIES ........................................................................................................... 6  
4. Security and defence policy .............................................................................................................................. 6  
5. Foreign economic policy ..................................................................................................................................... 6  
6. Climate policy ..................................................................................................................................................... 6  
7. Practical Exercise I: Producing a policy brief .................................................................................................... 7  
PART III HOW DO SMALL STATES MAXIMIZE SECURITY AND INFLUENCE? ................................................. 7  
8. Shelter strategy .................................................................................................................................................... 7  
9. Smart state strategy ........................................................................................................................................... 7  
10. Status seeking strategy .................................................................................................................................... 7  
11. Negotiation strategy ......................................................................................................................................... 8  
12. Practical exercise II: Paper workshop on the strategic choices of small states ........................................... 8
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?


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?


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


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


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


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


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 II HOW DO SMALL STATES MAXIMIZE SECURITY AND INFLUENCE?

8. Shelter strategy
European Political Science, 10(3), 324-336.
Integration, 35(2), 99-115.

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
foreign policy of the Seychelles”, Journal of the Indian Ocean Region, 14(2), 170-188.
protocols negotiations”, International Environmental Agreements, 17(4), 553-571.
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
32(4), 405-425.
Discussion questions:
a) Why do small states seek status?
b) What are the costs and benefits of status-seeking strategy?

11. Negotiation strategy


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).