Neorealism and Small States

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What have we learnt so far?

I. Introduction to Small State Studies

1. Introduction to the course
2. Constructing Power and Security in the International System
3. Defining Small States
4. The Determinants of Small State Foreign Policy
What are we going to talk about?

II. Theory of Small State Foreign Policy

5. (Neo)realist tradition
6. Neoliberal tradition
7. Alternative theories
Neorealist Small State Theories

I. Fundamental writings
II. Fundamental assumptions
I. Fundamental writings

1. Melian Dialogue (5. century B.C.E.)
2. Fox: The Power of Small States (1959)
3. Vital: The Inequality of States (1967)
5. Schweller: Bandwagoning for Profit (1994)
I/1. Thucydides: Melian Dialogue

- “The strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must” (89)
- “Let not this be the case with you, who are weak and hang on a single turn of the scale” (103)
- “The Melians surrendered at discretion to the Athenians, who put to death all the grown men whom they took, and sold the women and children for slaves, and subsequently sent out five hundred colonists and inhabited the place themselves” (116)

- End of the time of small states?
- Great states have an advantage in primarily military field, but small states can use economic and diplomatic means too
- Question: how can small states survive wars and how can they profit from them?
  - Turkey, Finnnland, Norway, Sweden, Spain
Independence

1. Convincing great powers that its neutrality is in their interest

2. Good geopolitical location

3. Focusing solely on independence, not on the big picture

Neutrality
How can you convince great powers?

| The demanding great power would be deprived of valued goods or services over which the neutral had control | The enemy would retaliate directly or indirectly so severely as to outbalance any conceivable advantage | The neutral would go over to the enemy side |
Success depends on...

1. The number of great powers in the region
2. The balance of power between them
3. The range of competing interests of the great power
4. The distance between the small state and the great power
5. The nature of physical barriers to invade the small state
6. The quantity of scarce commodities or services controlled by the small state
7. The level of independence of the economy of the small state
8. Politics in the great power (unity, willingness to use force)
9. The influence of social groups in the great power identifying themselves with the small state
10. The „age“ of the small state
11. The number of neutrals
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Fox: final conclusions

• “Geography was often an important element in the calculations of the great and small powers, but it could not be said to determine their course. The expectations of the leaders, sometimes influenced by geographical considerations, to be sure, were the crucial factor”

• Small states have to focus solely on their independence and have to be willing to pay its price

• Small states likely to strengthen the “imbalance of power”
I/3. David Vital: The Inequality of States (1967)

- Focus on the disabilities and possibilities of small states
- Disabilities
  - Mental and administrative perspectives
  - Economic disabilities
  - National Defense
  - Vulnerability to Coercion
Mental and Administrative

- Small states have less diplomatic missions abroad with fewer diplomats
  - Consequence: informational discrepancy
- Weakness is a part of the identity
  - Consequence: they either defy it and create a moral highground or accept it and try to compensate for it
Economic disabilities

- Limited resources -> need of substantial export -> dependence on foreign trade
- Budgetary problems
Economic limitations: dependence on a single commodity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Developed countries</th>
<th>Under-developed countries</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Large countries</td>
<td>21.1</td>
<td>57.9</td>
<td>40.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Small countries</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>43.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>55.8</td>
<td>41.9</td>
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Coefficient of commodity concentration (Michely, 1962)
Economic limitations 2: Dependence on a single country or region

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Coefficient of geographic concentration of exports (Michaely, 1962)
Defense limitations

- Limited capabilities, limited quantity and quality of armed forces
- Lack of power to pursue its interest especially against the great powers
- Dilemma
  - Spending more on the military requires additional financial sources, which can cause internal instability
Vulnerability to coercion

- Small states are more vulnerable to general economic pressure and they cannot conduct such activity on others
Possibilities

- Active foreign policy
- Passive foreign policy
- Defensive foreign policy
Types of strategies 1.: Active foreign policy

• Aim: to alter the external environment of the state to its advantage
• Means:
  • 1. reducing the discrepancy between the state and external forces;
  • 2. widening the room to maneuver
  • 3. obtaining new resources
Types of strategies 1.: Activist foreign policy

- For small states in regions controlled by great powers
  - Only the second option is available
  - Widening the room to maneuver against a great power
  - For example: Hungary after 1964
    - “Constructive loyalty” (Békés)
Types of strategies 1.: Activist foreign policy

- For small states in regions not fully controlled by the great powers
  - Every option is available
  - This policy aims at strengthening a country’s regional influence and position and is not defined in the bipolar conflict
  - For example: Middle Eastern countries (Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, etc.), African countries (Somalia, Ghana, Congo, etc.)
Types of strategies 1.: Activist foreign policy

• For small states in regions not fully controlled by the great powers
  • Primary tool: subversion, propaganda, guerilla warfare
  • Examples:
    • Egypt: propaganda messages throughout the Arabic world (especially: 1956-170); United Arab Republic
    • Somalia: propaganda tools against Ethiopia
    • Ghana: Pan-African messages throughout Africa (1957-1960)
Types of strategies 2.: Passive foreign policy

• “This is a policy of renunciation. It implies acquiescence in the fact (...) that the state is not viable as an independent international entity”

• According to this strategy, the state by itself cannot become a strong actor in international relations, consequently its foreign policy either has to be defined according to a great power, or simply has to be invisible.
Types of strategies 2.: Passive foreign policy

• This strategy is chosen usually by states with secure environment, stable international affairs with no particular international interest

• For example:
  • Arab countries of the Persian Gulf (especially until 1979)
  • Western-European countries
Types of strategies 3.: Defensive foreign policy

- The state does not refrain from conducting an independent foreign policy, but does not have particular foreign policy interests.
- Aim: to maintain the status quo and secure independence in order to achieve internal stability and development.
Types of strategies 3.: Defensive foreign policy

• In case of possible external threat, the defensive foreign policy aims at (1) increasing the price of a possible attack and (2) emphasizing the room for cooperation
• Political side: emphasizing common interests in relations with a third actor
• Military side: relative deterrence
Types of strategies 3.: Defensive foreign policy

• “I do not believe that Sweden could be an objective to be attacked expect in conjunction with a major conflict. (...) In a major conflict, (...) even the Great Powers must plan the use of their resources (...) and they cannot afford to throw in overwhelming troop concentrations against a minor secondary objective. Accordingly we are building up a defence which has naturally not much of a chance of surviving against a concentrated attack by a Great Power but which, nevertheless, may be rather troublesome to overcome if Sweden is a secondary objective” (Prime Minister Erland of Sweden, 1964)

• McGowan and Gottwald integrated two separate theories
  • The theory of adaptivity by Rosenau
  • The theory of influential capacity by Hansen
1. The Theory of Adaptivity

• The foreign policy of a state can be described by their reactions to internal and external events
• The main question is that which part is more important
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2. Hansen’s influencial capacity theory

- Influencial capacity: the level of the influence of a state on international affairs and system
  - SIZE
- Stress sensitivity: the level of the influence of external factors on internal institutions
  - MODERNIZATION
3. The theory of McGowan-Gottwald
The smaller the state...

...the less influential capacity it has

Acquiescent foreign policy

The more modern a small state ...

...the higher its stress sensibility

Conservative foreign policy instead of preservative
Conclusions

• External factors are much more important for small states than internal ones

• Three possible ways for small states
  • Acquiescent (any small states)
  • Preservative (developed small states)
  • Promotive (underdeveloped small states)
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I/5. Randall Schweiler: Bandwagoning for Profit (1994)

- Lions: leaders of the international system
- Lambs: weak states aiming solely on keeping their independence
- Jackals: bandwagoning weak states
- Wolves: challengers of lions unsatisfied with the status quo
II. Main assumptions of the neorealist school of thought

- Foreign policy aims and optimal strategies
- The Security deficit
- Activity
- Limitations
- Main possibilities
II/1. Foreign Policy Aims and Means

- Sole aim: survival
- Optimal strategy
  - Acceptance of weak position
  - Should be determined by external factors (Acquiescent foreign policy)
  - Depending on the possibilities, one can try to strengthen itself but only vis-á-vis small states
II/2. Compensation for the security deficit

• Self-help or making alliances
• Alliance-policy is determined by external factors
• Wiberg (1987): five possible strategies
  • Bilateral alliance with a great power
  • Alliance between small states
  • Multilateral alliance which includes a great power
  • Non-alignment and neutrality
  • Non-aligment without neutrality
II/3. Activity

- How active a small state is in international politics?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not active</th>
<th>Very active</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East, 1973</td>
<td>Duval-Thompson, 1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because of financial and military limitations</td>
<td>Because of the need for survival</td>
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II/4. Limitations

• Main limitations can be seen in
  • Regional scope
  • The set of foreign policy tools
• Small states are doomed to conduct non-violent and peaceful foreign policy on a multilateral basis
• But: because of limited decision-making and human capacities, small states can be characterized with high risk behavior
  • Errors
  • Late response
II/5. Main possibilities

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