

Small states and the European Union

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The emergence of small states

During the colonising times, actors that could change the international scene, were named as Powers. The Powers were five which consisted of; Great Britain, France, Prussia, Austria and Russia. Smaller states served only as colonial holdings and as a more or less exploitation reserve. Small sovereign states have largely emerged after de-colonialism took place. The emergence of small states was a result of three international occurrences. Firstly there was the break-up of the Habsburg Empire in 1919 which saw the rise of many small states. The Second World War, was another premise, the expense of having colonies was over-bearing on the Powers national's economy especially in trying to rebuild bombed places, and so much of the small states were given independence. Lastly, the breakup of the Soviet Union in the last decade of the 20th century saw many ex- satellite states appearing in the international community. Nowadays, small states amount to almost half of the United Nations General Assembly votes. Likes such as Latvia, Macedonia, Malta and Eritrea have all been a product of the dissolution of a colonial rule.

Defining small states

In defining small states, disagreements arise on what characteristics should be assessed that outline a small state clearly. As a result of these variances there are different definitions of what is a small state. There are different features that make a state small or weak; size, power, labour force, economy, governance, sovereignty and military capability are a few illustrations.

Keohane maintains the idea that a small state is a state that either acting alone or in a small group cannot make an impression on the globe. (Rabby, 2015a) It is important to note that small states in different regions of the world face completely different challenges and opportunities. Small states in Europe are dissimilar to those in Africa, Latin America and Asia. For the purpose of this assignment I will hold prominent the idea of how the European Union measures small states due to the reason that I will discuss small states in Europe. The European Union measures states by their economic and political power such as GDP and seats in the European Parliament. (Gulmohamad, n.d., p.4)

Surviving politically

Right after independence, small states realized that once the colonial power had left there was no mother country that could contribute economically by providing subsidies, invest in employment and provide efficient trade relations. Moreover there was no protector state that would defend their interest in the international arena via military and negotiation means. Most of the newly-independent states faced terrible challenges in making their country stable, both politically as well as economically. In addition to this these weak states always had to watch out for threats to their sovereignty.

In order to cope with the international threats, most of the small states chose to hide or either bind themselves. (Steinmetz and Wivel, 2010) The hide strategy aimed for the weak state to stay out of trouble by staying out of the power's sight. They meant to deal with their national issues alone and not to get entangled or dragged into an international issue. Those small states following the bind approach were more motivated and decided that instead of trying to stay out of trouble, they would strive to prevent war from taking place at all. This, they held, is done through the strengthening of the governance of international affairs. This would in turn lead to a more peaceful co-existence among states.

The non-aligned movement tried to achieve peace through the refusal of non-military alliances and giving support to one particular bloc during the Cold War period. Regions in Africa and Asia did not want to be colonized once more under a new form, such as the European satellite states under USSR influence. Nehru developed the concept of non-alignment and its functions were to combat colonialism as well as military alliances with any major power. This is in view of achieving economic success and not be given the back burner

in the international arena. The movement managed to allow small states to reap the benefits of the Cold War's political configuration. The non-alignment movement managed to gain votes in the United Nations as well as give a new dimension to small states in the international arena, in fact it had proved to make itself a transnational organisation. (Gopal, 1976) The NAM made it available for small states to make their presence known in the international arena not through military capabilities but through diplomacy.

Diplomacy is only available in a diplomatic environment such as the United Nations, NATO and the European Union. These efforts not only prevented a third world war to occur, but also gave equal rights to small states. These international institutions managed to create an international law that protected the sovereignty, economy, rights and voice in the international arena. This is specifically inscribed in the UN Charter, Chapter one Article 2;

The organisation is based on the principle of the sovereign
equality of all its members. (The UN Charter, 1945)

Cyprus' Foreign Affairs Minister, Dr. Erato Kozakou-Marcoullis regards this as one of the successes of the international body, this is because the safeguarding of sovereign rights besides force has brought overall stability and development in the international system. (Kozakou-Marcoullis, 2011)

This stability and the bind strategy have led the small states to develop foreign policies which protect their interests instead of trying to rely on super powers. One of these policies was the neutrality route in international relations. A neutral state is a state that declares itself neutral towards any belligerent. This is a legal notion which has been personified in international law. (Baidul Alam, 1977, p.169) When a state declares itself neutral, the states that recognise this neutrality are obliged to respect it, guarantee its respect and finally to protect the neutral state. (Kunz, 1956, p.419) Brecher notes that;

“Neutrality is simply a legal status of states which demand certain rights of the belligerents in time of war and accept certain obligations toward those belligerents. It is a status which comes into existence only after a war has begun.” (Brecher, 1962, p.224)

There are different formations of a neutral state. Hersch Lauterpacht lists different types of neutrality. Among them one finds, perpetual neutrality, voluntary and conventional neutrality, benevolent neutrality and armed neutrality. (Oppenheim, and Lauterpacht, 1952, pp.661–663) Switzerland was the role model of perpetual neutrality when the Neutrality Act was adopted

in 1955. When a state chooses to follow a permanent neutrality foreign policy such as Switzerland and Finland, the state in question is removed from the forum of conflict when it comes to power politics. There have been small states such as Belgium and Luxembourg which their neutrality was established in a treaty between great powers, therefore permanent neutrality was imposed on them in order for them to act as a kind of buffer zones for the powers. Laos and Austria are two instances of this. (Kunz, 1956, p.418) This signifies that there are neutrality can be either voluntarily or by force. Neutrality benefits those who lack high military capabilities, since it protects the state from being dragged into war either by an attack or being accused of siding with a particular bloc. Benefits of neutrality are similar to the non-alignment ideology. One has to note that when these neutral states joined the European Union, their neutrality has been compromised.

The states that decided to follow the hide strategy tried to stay out of conflict and to improve their economies by staying in a power's good books and followed the dependency theory. By the dependency ideology one is referring to the situation whereby the development and expansion of a country may condition the economy of the other country/countries. The dominant country can be self-sustaining and enlarge itself. In contrast, dependent state can only be a reflection of the development in the dominant country. (Dos Santos, 1970, p.231) The tendency is that when the wealth of poor states decrease, the wealth of rich states increased. The dependent states supplied cheap labour and cheap resources to the dominant states. This would many a time bring about poorness because the profit is not equally shared but it is given to who the dominant state says it should be given to. This was a risky move for the dependent states because they developed their economy in view of how they integrated into the world's economy. Due to monopolistic control of the market, the profit of dependent states is passed on to dominant ones. And so the development of one state is at the expense of another.

This had devastating effects in some dependent states and chose to change their policies so that they could survive and be more efficient in maintaining a stable economy in their states. They searched for a strategy that would not have them accept anything that comes their way due to their lack of economic and political power.

The strong do what they have the power to do,
and the weak accept what they have to accept

- Thucydides

Surviving economically

Small states following the dependency theory had to rely mostly on imports and had a low per capita GNP, many a time this led to them being a dependent state. Many states tried to break off from this dependency by blocking out all imports and investing in the country's industries to produce their own products. Many leaders believed that greater economic growth potential lay in import substitution. This would allow them to be self-reliant and not necessarily integrate themselves into the world market. They planned to become self-sufficient by protecting their industries from competition by legislating high tariffs on imported goods. The planned end-result would be that the industry would grow so much that it can withstand international competition, in turn making a great contribution to the national economy. Many a time, by shielding the local industries from competition, the outcome would be for the industries to be less innovative and monopolistic. This, of course, would not make them successful when they reach the point to compete internationally. Mintoff, a former prime-minister of Malta was an advocate of this theory and implemented it into Malta.

In order to solve this problem, many small states following the Import Substitution theory, reformed their policy and progressed into a regional integration economy. This would make the states which agree on integration interdependent and each would grow dependently at a more or less same pace. By removing customs tariffs and trade barriers each state's industry will have more room to make profit and so produce more. Moreover it will create healthy competition and the customer is guaranteed to have a product which has proved to be better than others and so get the best. This is unlike a monopolized economy where the buyer is allowed to buy local products. Therefore, small states such as Malta are employing the notion of economic diplomacy. It has been given prime importance in the international arena due to its political and economic aspects. Through this notion, small states have effectively managed to gain the maximum for their national economies in terms of exports, imports and investment. (Rabby, 2015b) Due to their economic contributions there is a majority of small states which have been given an important seat when it comes to influence in the international arena.

One should appreciate that states' economies' in this day and age are becoming increasingly interdependent, especially with the fast-paced movement of globalization. Institutions such as the historic Zollverein Union have been created in support of interdependent economies and reduction of trade tariffs. A leading institution is the European Union which has employed a

common currency to further enhance this interdependency. The European Union has not only benefitted small states when it comes to security and economy but due to its institutional set-up, the EU permits small states to punch above their weights. The 2004 enlargement of the European Union, which included the following ten countries; Poland, Hungary, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Cyprus and Malta, have shifted powers in the European Union. There has been an increase of seats in parliament and a more unified and coherent policies throughout the member states which allow small states to have the same rights as more powerful states.

Conclusion

Throughout the decades, small states have applied different theories so that they can become more secure, stable and independent in their being. Some of the theories have proven to fluctuate in their advantages and other have also demonstrated their lack of compensations in the long term. Nowadays it is clear that the modern way of conducting foreign policy in order to survive in the anarchical international arena is to apply economic diplomacy and interdependent economic structures. This would increase trade and would create more opportunities for businesses to expand and also attracts foreign investment. This win-win situation has proven to be successful for small states in this political configuration of the 21st century.

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Bruno, P., 2015. Small states and the European Union. *Cultural Relations Quarterly Review*, Vol. 2. Issue 3. (Summer 2015) pp.36–42.

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