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The Grand Strategy of Small States

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Abstract

This article discusses the nature, opportunities and limitations of small state grand strategy. It identifies the similarities and differences between the grand strategies of small states and great powers and unpacks the nature of traditional defensive small state grand strategies hiding and shelter-seeking as well as more recent offensive, influence-seeking small state grand strategies under the heading of smart state strategy. The article argues that while small state grand strategy remains tied to national security and is formulated in the shadow of great power interests, a changing security environment creates both the need and opportunity for small states to use their weakness instrumentally for maximizing interests. The likelihood of success depends on a pragmatic political culture and the willingness and ability to prioritize goals and means to utilize their non-threatening small state status in “smart” or “entrepreneurial” policies.

Keywords

Small state, grand strategy, shelter, neutrality, hiding, smart state, niche strategy, alliance, status

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Introduction

Grand strategies have traditionally been viewed as the prerogative of great powers (Kennedy 1991: 6). In political discourse as well as in the study of international security, debates on grand strategy seem intrinsically linked to debates on great power politics and US foreign policy (see e.g. Brown et al. 2000; Murray 2011). As the primary producers of security and order in international relations, great powers have for centuries engaged in comprehensive analyses of their strategic room for manoeuvre in order to devise the most effective diplomatic, military and economic means to reach their political ends. In contrast, small states have traditionally refrained from formulating explicit grand strategies. Accepting that “the strong do what they have the power to do and the weak accept what they have to accept” (Thucydides 431, B.C.E.), small states historically followed pragmatic strategies responding to the agenda set by near-by great powers and external developments rather than formulating and pursuing their own strategic goals. Consequently, there are many examples of great power grand strategies codified in national security strategies and debated publicly among politicians and experts and analysed in the academic literature, but only few and relatively recent examples of these dynamics at play in small states.

This does not mean that the concept of grand strategy is irrelevant for understanding the foreign policies of small states. Grand strategy, including the grand strategy of small states, is usually characterized by “some degree of coherence towards the outside world [...] and to be following a reasonably coherent and predictable line” (Hill 2016: 5). Coherence and predictability reflect fundamental choices of grand strategy understood as “the long-term orchestration of power and commitments to secure oneself in a world where war is possible” (Porter 2018: 9). Small state grand strategy may not be codified in official documents but nonetheless it reflects “the calculated relationship of means to large ends” (Gaddis 2009: 7). This is grand strategy in the sense that it “identifies and articulates a given political actor’s security objectives at a particular point in time and describes how they will be achieved using a combination of instruments of power—including military, diplomatic, and economic instruments” (Biddle 2015: 5).

Following this introduction, the chapter proceeds in five steps followed by a conclusion. The first section identifies the general characteristics of small state grand strategy and explains how it differs from great power grand strategy. The second section discusses the domestic and international

determinants of small state grand strategy. The third section unpacks two classical small state grand strategies – hiding and shelter-seeking – whereas the fourth section discusses how small state grand strategy has changed over the past decades. I argue that while the grand strategy of small states remains tied to national security concerns, they increasingly pursue “smart” strategies aimed at taking advantage of material weakness to activate non-material resources and maximize international influence. The fifth section discusses the determinants of success for small state grand strategy. Finally, I sum up the analysis and conclude the chapter.

The grand strategies of small states and great powers: similarities and differences

The grand strategies of small states and great powers share a number of characteristics. A grand strategy identifies the goals and prioritizes the means necessary for long-term success in the international realm. The aims and means of grand strategy are subject to debate and analysis among the foreign policy elite. For great powers in particular, the result of these debates and analyses are often codified in national security strategies, state of the union-speeches and other documents communicating the country’s position and ambitions in the world and serving as points of reference for international and domestic audiences.

Small state grand strategy tends to be less formalized than great power grand strategy. However, even for small states, grand strategy is different from both the day-to-day decisions of the foreign policy executive and the foreign policy practice. Foreign policy denotes the external behavior of the state, whereas grand strategy links the values and interests of the state to goals and means in order to identify and achieve the long-term objectives of the state (Balzacq, Dombrowski and Reich 2019; Briffa 2019). Thus, even if small states do not codify their grand strategy in documents such as a national security strategy, small state grand strategy is discernible as “consistent pattern of behavior over time” (Silove 2018: 34) or “key ideas” helping political decision makers to prioritize and organize foreign policy (Brands 2014: 30).

Historically, the grand strategies of small states differed from the grand strategies of great powers. Grand strategy is the great power’s “theory of victory” (Posen 1984). It “integrates the policies and armaments of the nation that the resort to war is either rendered unnecessary or is undertaken with

the maximum chance of victory” (Earle 1943: viii). This understanding of grand strategy is in accordance with B.B. Lidell Hart’s influential understanding of grand strategy as a combination of social, economic and military policies in order to win not only the war but also the peace (Hart 1942). Much of the security studies literature - whether originating in assumptions about the rationality of nuclear deterrence or the need to balance the power of adversaries – also subscribes to this understanding of grand strategy without making much distinction between great powers and other states (Silove 2018: 34).

The classical literature on small states in international relations depicts the foreign policy of these countries as an anti-thesis to grand strategy as a theory of victory. This literature equals ‘small’ with the absolute and relative lack of capabilities and understands this capability deficit “as a handicap to state action, and even state survival” (Browning 2006: 669). Small states are weak and vulnerable prisoners of small margins of time and error following from their capability deficit and therefore unable to defend themselves against the great powers (Jervis 1978: 172–173; Handel 1990). They have limited diplomatic power and lack the necessary diplomatic competencies to avoid war as well as the necessary military capabilities to win a war. Consequently, they have little or no voice in the peace negotiated after the war. They are the pawns of international relations. Rather than a deliberate attempt to influence their own destiny and the international realm, the behavior of small states – according to this understanding - is little more than a reflection of the balance of power with little action space for small state foreign policy decision-makers (Elman 1995).

Consequently, small states have traditionally pursued reactive and defensive foreign and security policies (Neumann and Gstöhl 2006), and “their leaders focus mostly on the protection of their territorial integrity rather than on the pursuit of more far-reaching global objectives” (Krause and Singer 2001: 16). As summed up by Robert Keohane, small states “can never acting alone or in a small group make a significant impact” (Keohane 1969: 296). Rather than a “theory of victory”, small state grand strategy is historically better understood as a theory of avoiding defeat or destruction. Rather than achieving long-term success, small states have focused on avoiding short-term failure. Consequently, in the course of history, small state grand strategy has had a close fit with a defensive understanding of grand strategy as “a state’s theory about how it can best ‘cause’ security for itself” (Posen 1984: 13).

Since 1945, changes in the international system has increasingly allowed small states to pursue offensive grand strategies aimed at maximizing influence. For this reason, the difference between great power and small state grand strategy today is a difference in degree rather than a difference in kind.

What are the determinants of small state grand strategy?

Small state grand strategy suffers from both domestic and international constraints. In domestic politics, small states are prone to small and tightly knit political and administrative elites. The recruitment base for national leadership positions is limited with a small group of talents courted by both the public and private sector (Sarapuu and Randma-Liiv 2020). Counterbalancing coalitions willing able to challenge dominant elites and conventional wisdom are often weak, in particular in times of national security crisis enhancing the risk of group think (Janis and Janis 1982), and more generally resulting in the lack of innovation as well as corruption and personalized politics (Anckar 2020; Corbett and Veenendaal, 2018). Because of their small populations, small states have a small tax base. Consequently the opportunity for extracting resources from society for foreign and security policy is limited.

In international affairs, the most important consequence of these limitations is the inability of the small state to defend its own territory against enemies (Rothstein 1968: 29). The actions of the small state on the battlefield have only minimal influence on the outcome of war. A second consequence is the limited ability to affect diplomatic outcomes. Thus, small states have only limited ability to secure peaceful relations with other states and a stable regional and international environment, i.e. to avoid war, or more ambitiously, to facilitate peaceful change. A third consequence is the limited resources and competencies for information gathering. A limited number of diplomatic representations, often with only a few diplomats posted to each, and a small intelligence service leaves small states prone to misperception and dependent upon bigger allies for intelligence as well as diplomatic support in international negotiations.

Since the end of World War II, both the characteristics of the international system and the interests of the great powers of this system have been modified with important consequences for small state grand strategy (Maass 2017; Thorhallsson and Steinsson 2017). Norms of national self-determination, decolonization and peaceful conflict resolution reduce the importance of conventional military capabilities, and, in addition, conquest rarely pays in a world of globalized, interdependent economies. At the same time as an increase in the number of international institutions helps levelling the international playing field and underpin voice opportunities of small states. These developments do not put an end to the security predicament of small states, but they do transform the nature of the challenges faced by small states. Today, threats originate from many different actors above and below the state level, some of them sponsored by hostile great powers. The challenges vary in nature from military attack to terrorism and organized crime, coups, forced clientage and internal armed conflict (Bailes, Rickli and Thorhallsson 2014).

Small states are now less likely to be invaded but more likely to be disrupted than in the past. Today, the risks challenging small state security rarely threaten survival of the state as such, but they may risk undermining stability and changing the fabric of society. Consequently, small state grand strategy has evolved from revolving primarily around the question of military security “(war and preparations for war)” to a broader understanding including also “nonmaterial sources of power” and aims beyond the battlefield, thereby reflecting a more general trend in the understanding of grand strategy (Balzacq, Dombrowski and Reich 2019: 69).

Classical small state grand strategy: hiding and shelter-seeking

Unable to defend themselves from military attack on their territory, small states have historically pursued one of two grand strategies in order to cause security for themselves. The first option was to ‘opt out’ of international relations by pursuing a so-called hiding strategy aiming for security neutrality and political and economic autonomy. As noted in an early overview of research efforts on small states in international politics, “[t]he pursuit of a policy of neutrality is a very characteristic feature in the foreign behavior of small states” (Amstrup 1976: 170). Hiding as a grand strategy aims to protect the security interests of the small state by signaling its disinterest in great power politics and committing to impartiality. The Hague Conventions codified neutrality as

legal term in 1907. Neutral states were “required not to participate in wars either directly or indirectly” (Goetschel 1999: 118). This includes maintaining impartiality in military conflicts, refraining from supplying weapons or credits or making territory available for uses by one of the warring parties.

In political practice, “small states developed different variations of neutrality-centered national security strategies” (Maass 2017: 190). These practices were less ideal-typical than the legal understanding, which was “interpreted” and “adapted” by small state policymakers to fit with the external opportunities and challenges of the state (Amstrup 1976: 171; Morgenthau 1939). Neutrality as a grand strategy was originally formulated in the context of the development of the modern states system and in particular in the context of the European Concert in the nineteenth century, when the concert powers had little regard for the “Kleinstaaterei” of weaker actors potentially undermining systemic stability (Maass 2017: 123). In this context, neutrality was a means for small states to avoid conquest or annexation in the name of systemic interests and to maintain autonomy in an international system with few restrictions on great power politics (Frei 1968: 14-15). In addition, neutrality was a means to maintaining trade relations and avoiding economic dependency in times of war (Goetschel 1999: 120). This is particularly important for small states, because their domestic markets are too small for sustaining growth and wealth (Griffiths 2014). The practice of small state neutrality varies from countries such as Costa Rica and Liechtenstein with no armed forces to the armed neutrality of e.g. Sweden and Switzerland with long traditions of a relatively strong territorial defence and arms industries.

Despite its historical prominence, neutrality has been deemed a counterintuitive grand strategy in the sense that we would expect a state with a limited resource base to seek shelter from stronger allies rather than rely on its own means for protection (Karsh 1988: 4). Moreover, neutrality is only possible to the extent that the great powers respect it. Metternich respected Swiss neutrality from 1815, because it allowed Austria to deny France the Swiss territories, and the great powers recognized Belgian neutrality in 1839 and Luxembourgian neutrality in 1867 in order to maintain the stability of the European Concert (Maass 2017: 112-113). In contrast, neutrality did not protect Belgium for German occupation in World War I or the Baltic countries from Germany or the Soviet Union in World War II. Neutrality was originally a strategy for “staying out of trouble by staying

out of sight” (Wivel and Ingebritsen 2019), but this grand strategy has increasingly been used by small states as a platform for status seeking and influence on great power politics. Prominent examples include Swedish UN activism advocating East-West détente and North-South dialogue during the Cold War and the small state dominated non-aligned movement of Third World states in the same period calling attention to global inequality and the particular challenges of post-colonial societies.

Historically, the alternative to hiding is shelter-seeking, i.e. to seek refuge from the great power politics of international anarchy by allying with one or more strong states able and willing to shelter the small state from external threats (Bailes, Thayer and Thorhallsson 2016; Vital 1967). Shelter-seeking involves a more or less tacit contract or a trade-off with the great power(s) providing shelter (Morrow 1991). The great power serves as the security provider, and, in return, it gains influence over the small state’s foreign policy. The small state’s focus is primarily on defensive goals. The alliance provides shelter from military aggression and allows the small state to pursue core interests such as defending its territory and population. At the same time, the great power - by providing defence - is allowed to expand its influence over the small state and to deny other great powers to do the same (Krause and Singer 2001: 18).

Small states pursuing shelter-seeking may contribute to balance of power coalitions, but they rarely pursue balancing as a grand strategy. Their main motive is to use one or more great powers as a shield against threatening great power(s), not to affect the balance of power and, by definition, their limited capabilities will have little effect on the overall balance. Small state participation in asymmetric alliances is primarily about obtaining security and defending the status quo, whereas great power participation in asymmetric alliances is about changing the status quo to widen its own autonomy and influence over international relations in addition to preserving security (Morrow 1991). Or to put it differently, the alliance provides both the small state and the great power with a bigger margin of time and error, but as they begin from different points of departure with the great power already being relatively safe and the small state entering the alliance to obtain basic security goals, the end result is also different for the two types of states. The great power can use its position vis-à-vis its small ally to initiate structural change with important consequences for the future of international order (e.g. by enhancing trade and thereby further deepening dependency under the

security umbrella), and in turn creating a buffer in time and space against the influence and military threat of other great powers. The consequences for the small state are mainly measured in terms of national security.

Hiding may be seen as the ultimate free-rider strategy for small states, but historically shelter-seeking has provided small state with good opportunities for free-riding as well. The most prominent example is NATO, which both during and after the Cold War has been subject to an ongoing discussion between the United States and smaller allies on their contribution to the alliance. In general, the inconsequential nature of small state contributions to the overall security of the alliance, and the unlikelihood that even a steep increase in the defense spending of small alliance members will tip the balance of power leaves the larger allies to “bear a disproportionate share of the burden” (Olson and Zeckhauser 1966: 266). The political costs associated with bringing small states into line are most often higher than the security gains from small ally compliance. Thus, whereas alliance membership restrains the autonomy of the small state, the restraints are often the highest in the lead-up to membership, when the small state needs to demonstrate its usefulness as a future ally (Mouritzen and Wivel 2005). Once inside the club, the small state is free to enjoy security like any other member.

This strategy gives the small state a considerable action space in peacetime, but it may face important difficulties in times of war, when the small state seeks to navigate the so-called alliance security dilemma facing on the one hand the risk of abandonment and on the other the risk of entrapment (Snyder 1984: 466-468). The small state faces an increased risk of abandonment by stronger allies if it signals a weak commitment to alliance obligations or fails to support other alliance members in specific conflicts. However, if the small state seeks to offset this risk by pursuing a strategy of strong commitment and support to stronger allies it runs the risk of being drawn into and ultimately entrapped in conflicts in which it has little interest and no control over when and how to end. Not all wars have the same effect on the dilemma. In military operations, such as the out of area-operations that have been frequent since the end of the Cold War, the territorial integrity of the small state is not at risk. At the same time, the involvement of small states lends both legitimacy and capabilities to the operation. Consequently, the small state may use its continued involvement as an important bargaining chip. As noted by Weitsman, “during wartime,

fears of abandonment may mediate the lead power's decision-making – the reverse is true for smaller states. This grants significant leverage to smaller states during wartime operations. In other words, instead of being coerced or bullied, coalition or alliance partners may be begged or bribed” (Weitsman 2014: 35).

Contemporary small state grand strategy

Shelter-seeking and hiding remain important small state grand strategies, However, as a consequence of the changes in the international system since 1945, their characteristics are changing at the same time as new more offensive grand strategies become more important for small states.

Transforming hiding and shelter-seeking

Hiding in its original incarnation is virtually impossible in a globalized world, and the strategy does not enjoy the prominence of the past (Wallace 1999). The rising importance of non-territorial security problems and security interdependence makes it “questionable whether neutrality or military non-alignment has any particular strategic or security value, and, if it does, whether it currently comes in the form of their engagement in wider security initiatives” (Agius and Devine 2011: 266). However, a number of states, typically very small states with few natural resources, still aim to stay outside the entanglements of globalized international society. This allows them increase national capabilities by serving as hubs for unregulated international financial services, tax evasion, violation of intellectual property rights, drug trafficking (Shaw 2014; Simpson 2014), but also as (typically remote) locations of high security prisons, refugee camps and weapons testing and dumping sites (Baldacchino 2014). Thus, for some small developing island states, globalization combined with a virtually non-existent threat of annexation or colonization has allowed them to build societal resilience on either serving those who want their business hidden from globalized international society or alternatively as a dumping ground for the prisoners, refugees, weapons etc. of globalized international society.

Shelter-seeking now extends far beyond military protection against great power invasion as small state security challenges now include risks such as terrorism, smuggling, piracy and cyber threats as well as environmental and economic security. Consequently, small states seeking shelter demand a broader spectrum of services from the alliance than previously at the same time as international and regional organizations beyond traditional alliances have come to play a key role in small state grand strategy (Bailes, Rickli and Thorhallsson 2014: 38-39). Small states still need hard military protection, but at the same time they are dependent upon being parts of networks for the exchange of information, including intelligence, police cooperation, the effective border control of other states etc. (Crandall 2014). Networks are not always linked to formal alliance membership but may take the form of coalitions within an alliance or between alliance members and non-members using the alliance as a platform for cooperation. Sometimes networks take the form of concentric circles giving those small states being able to forge a ‘special relationship’ with the great power(s) at the centre privileged access to information and cooperation. These developments result in constant negotiation of security and discussions on ‘who does what’ among alliance and coalition members thereby multiplying the alliance security dilemma into a series of dilemmas at many different levels of the decision-making process.

Rather than dichotomous alternatives, hiding and shelter seeking are increasingly, two supplementary aspects of small state grand strategy. A small state with limited capacity cannot have strong opinions, competencies and policies on all issue areas, and it has no chance of meeting or even monitoring the threats and risks of contemporary international society effectively. Consequently, a grand strategy of shelter-seeking needs to be combined with issue-specific hiding allowing the small state to focus its resources on issues of vital importance for national security and leaving other issues on the international security agenda for others to grapple with. In addition, small states can actively couple shelter-seeking and hiding in grand strategies as exemplified by Malta, an EU member state preserving military neutrality as part of a grand strategy to maximize national interests by taking the role of a “Mediterranean interlocutor” between the EU and its southern neighbours (Briffa 2019).

From defensive to offensive grand strategy: the competent performance of vulnerability

Small state security is no longer primarily about vulnerability to the invasion of nearby great powers, but about achieving resilience in a globalized world. In order to serve this purpose, grand strategy must be multifunctional. The multi-functionality of alliances and international institutions more broadly cuts deep into state structures and practices thereby changing both the means and meaning of power politics (Wivel and Paul 2019). For this reason, the small state has a strong incentive to seek influence on policy and decision-making practices thus transforming the autonomy-security trade-off into an autonomy-security-influence trade-off (Mouritzen and Wivel 2005: 33; Rickli and Almezaini 2017: 12). Consequently, small states are likely to pursue strategies combining shelter-seeking with influence-maximization. If small states are pegging their own policies to those of the strong or even adapting these policies, they have an incentive to influence these policies as well as the norms upon which they are based. Even small states living dangerously on the outside or on the margins of the rules and regulations of international society need sponsors or at least tolerance from stronger states and have an interest in influencing these partners in order to pursue the “creative political economy” underpinning resilience of their society (Baldacchino and Milne 2008).

In contrast to great powers competing for hegemony and dominance, the aim of small state influence-seeking is not necessarily to increase rank, but rather to engage in a “competent performance of vulnerability” taking advantage of weakness to influence international outcomes (Corbett, Xu and Weller 2019: 1). Performing vulnerability as a grand strategy can be conceptualized under the heading “smart state strategy” (Bueger and Wivel 2018; Grøn and Wivel 2011). Rather than seeking to compensate for weakness or to move away from weakness, smart states utilize weakness by pitching their own ideas within the parameters set by the great powers. Because they are weak and viewed as non-consequential to decision-making, they typically have more leeway to act as mediators, provide technical expertise and champion solutions for the greater good than great powers and thereby take advantage of voice and framing opportunities if they manage to “prioritize and invest their available resources in issues of particular importance” (Panke 2012: 317).

The small state may identify a niche of particular national interest and the necessary competences to make a real and visible contribution in the name of the greater good, e.g. “peacekeeping, institution

building, conflict prevention, mediation, human rights promotion or sustainable development” (Rikli and Almezaini 2017: 16). Depending on the strategic ambitions, contributions to specific wars and operations may focus on the provision of transportation or logistics, or, more ambitiously on, e.g. special operations forces (Rickli 2008). Even more ambitiously, the small state may embark on niche norm-entrepreneurship by delivering policy inputs on issues that may seem marginal to the great powers but is of great relevance to the small state (Jakobsen 2009). Because of the limited coercive power of small states, they are dependent on identifying an issue, which plays into the already existing discourses, building a coalition in favour of the issue, and finding an organizational home for the new norm to underpin permanence and implementation (Björkdahl 2007; Grøn and Wivel 2011). If persistent, the small state may succeed in being “noticed or seen” as a state “*useful* to greater powers” and thereby enhance its bargaining position and its status as state worthy of great power support in times of crisis (Neumann and Cavalho 2015: 2). The “virtual enlargement” strategies of e.g. Singapore and the Vatican City State show how even very small states can utilize their political economy potential, models of good governance and diplomatic mediation to achieve a status that far exceeds material capabilities (Chong 2010).

As an alternative to, or in combination with, smart state strategies, small states may engage leash-slipping (Press-Barnathan 2012) and hedging (Tessmann 2012) seeking to maintain shelter while avoiding dependence. Leash-slipping strategies are aimed at building military capabilities in order to maximize the ability to conduct independent foreign and security policies. It is unlikely that many states will be able to achieve full independence from great power-based shelters, but they may aim to forge forerunner reputations within specific areas allowing them to take on the role of negotiator and lead within this particular issue area (Jakobsen 2009). By hedging their choices for security shelter, small states seek to increase their security independence by increasing capabilities and strengthening diplomatic, economic and even military ties with other states, but stops short of participating in forums or alliances balancing the shelter state. Even relatively weak small states such as Bolivia, Chile and Ecuador have been able to use a combination of regional institutional arrangements and cooperation with South American and European states to hedge against dependency on the United States (Wehner 2020).

When are the grand strategies of small states successful?

The grand strategy of both small states and great powers seek to reconcile political ends with limited material means (Dueck 2008: 10), but this problem is particularly acute for small states, because of their limited resource base. Small states suffer from limited influence over international affairs. This is particularly the case in security and defense policy, where material capabilities and resources remain closely tied to influence (Græger 2015). Taking their external environment as a given and viewing non-provocation as a condition for security and survival, small state grand strategies, even when they are at their most offensive and ambitious, continue to adapt to the international environment and cater to the interests of the great powers. Still, the conditions for small state grand strategy has changed since the conclusion of World War II and in particular in the decades since the end of the Cold War. Today, it is not the choice between hiding and seeking shelter, which is the most important choice in small state grand strategy, but how to ‘mix and match’ these strategies to maximize security in the constantly changing contexts of a globalized security environment.

The success of small state grand strategy depends on factors on both inside and outside the small state. Some small states face a more dangerous security environment than others, because of their geopolitical location. Other small states suffer from limited human resources and lack of competition in the marketplace of ideas and talent. However, the success of small states in problematic locations such as the Seychelles, Singapore and Estonia provide lessons for small state grand strategy more generally (Bueger and Wivel 2018; Chong 2010; Crandall 2014). Despite their obvious differences in terms of democratic development and geopolitical location, they share two characteristics.

First, all three countries are characterized by a pragmatic even opportunistic, political culture. Estonia has taken advantage of its delicate geopolitical location close to Russia and its position as a victim of serious cyberattacks to build e-competencies in the private and public sector marketing the country as *E-stonia* and open for business. It has worked closely with the United States in formulating the alliance’s cyber security policies and contributed to US military operations, while building close political and economic ties to neighbouring Baltic and Nordic countries. The Seychelles’ approach to international relations begin from a Creole political culture, which combines a “genuine openness to and appreciation of difference” and a “pragmatist thinking style,

which does not start from foundational principles and beliefs, but from ideas of what works and what can be achieved” (Bueger and Wivel 2018: 181-182). This allows them to work with the United States as well as China and other states at the same time. Singapore has adopted a “diplomatic style of calculated candour in addressing security issues generated by vastly larger states” (Chong 2010: 395). This approach facilitates pragmatically working towards goals for competitiveness and globalization of its domestic society; neither challenging the American world order, nor provoking China or other states in South East Asia.

Second, all three states have been willing and able to prioritize their goals and means and utilize their non-threatening status as small states into “smart” or “entrepreneurial” policies, i.e. policies that are “problem-solving”, “alert to opportunities”, focused on transforming “an opportunity into change” in a way which is “proactive, creative and responsive” (Pedi and Sarri 2019: 12). In that sense the lessons of these successful states come full circle. Successful small state grand strategy is pragmatic, responsive and adaptive, although more often now than in the past combining defensive shelter-seeking with more offensive influence-seeking in order to hedge the security bets of the small state in a globalized security environment.

Conclusion

Grand strategy is not the prerogative of great powers. Small state grand strategy is less likely to be codified as a national security strategy, but small state grand strategy is discernible in key ideas underpinning the organization and prioritization of foreign policy by connecting, values and interests with goals and means and resulting consistent patterns of behavior over time. The lack of relative material capabilities has important consequences for small state grand strategy. Historically, small states have pursued defensive grand strategies. The two most prominent small state grand strategies are hiding, i.e. opting out of international affairs by pursuing military neutrality and economic and political autonomy, and shelter-seeking, i.e. seeking bi- and multilateral ties to great powers willing and able to shield the small states from the perils of international anarchy.

Developments in the international system since 1945, accelerated since the end of the Cold War, have changed the conditions for small state grand strategy making small states less likely to be

invaded or annexed by great powers but facing new disruptive security challenges. Hiding is difficult in a globalized world, but life on the margins of international society may allow some small states to take in business scorned by others, e.g. providing hubs for unregulated financial services or offering sites for prisons and refugee camps. Shelter-seeking becomes multi-functional and subject to constant negotiation reflecting a new threat environment. New small state grand strategies are 'smart' in taking advantage of material weakness to mediate, promote norms, hedge and seek status in order to further the interests of small states. The success of these efforts depends on a pragmatic political culture and the ability and willingness to prioritize goals and means in ways, which serve the interests of the small states without alienating or offending the great powers.

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