I. Introduction

The security-related topic most often addressed in small state studies is the intrinsic weakness of such states in traditional military security terms, and the ways they may attempt to compensate for it – ranging from studied inoffensiveness and neutrality, to close dependence on a national or institutional protector. It is interesting to recall, however, that when the British Commonwealth engaged in one of the earlier waves of debate about small states’ problems during the 1970s-80s, the dangers it focused on were only military at the margin. Prompted by real-life crises from the Seychelles to the Caribbean, these studies looked on the one hand at unconventional human threats like sabotage, internal coups, takeovers and political blackmail that could originate just as much from terrorist, extremist or criminal elements as from other states; and on the other hand at social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities in face of natural forces and man-made globalization. That agenda was tailored to the poorer kinds of small states in developing regions, and development policy was where many of the solutions were looked for, including the closer linking of development aid with good governance. In more recent decades, however, the relative sidelining of traditional ‘hard’ military threats has become a factor common to some well-developed regions like Europe - and medium-developed ones like South-East Asia and Central America - as well as still developing ones like the Caribbean and Pacific island zones. Indeed, looking around the globe, it is hard to identify more than two clusters of states with less than 10 million inhabitants apiece that still face real and present threats of state-to-state hostilities: namely the Middle East and Gulf region, and the Western part of the former Soviet Union. (This requires, admittedly, an optimistic assumption about developments in the Western Balkans.)

So there is a prima facie argument for looking at small states and the non-military threat agenda; and doing so may also open up interesting new questions about these states’ own strategies and policy options. A small state that succeeds in neutralizing its ‘hard’ security exposure is not making itself automatically and equally safe from the range of ‘soft’ security threats and risks. Nor can it hope to manage the latter with the same strategic choices and same sources of help that it uses for the former. For one thing, the non-traditional challenges in question arise as much within the state as they do from external power-play. They probe the possible internal

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1 Works of D Vital and XXX. Macro-economic problems have also been well covered in the literature, eg XXX
2 A study on small states’ security and economic problems was mandated by the Commonwealth Heads of Governments meeting (CHOGM) at New Delhi in 1983 and delivered in 1985 under the title ‘Small States in the Globalized Society’. A summary of its findings and of subsequent Commonwealth measures is in the Commonwealth Secretariat’s information note on Small States at http://www.thecommonwealth.org/files/216535/FileName/ComSec%20Briefing%20Small%20States.pdf.
3 It is not denied that there may be individual small (or relatively small) states in other parts of the world that face a specific military threat.
weaknesses of a small polity more sharply, and across a wider front, than would a simple external threat that, basically, just calls for clever diplomacy. The remedies required will cover an equally wide range, within which the lending of traditional state power from outside is likely to cover only a small part, if any, of the practical requirements. Conversely, a far greater part of this non-military spectrum will call for the small state itself to take positive actions, both for its own immediate protection and to tackle the origins of phenomena arising also or mainly from the outside world. To take a simple example, being a ‘free rider’ is not an option in pandemic control or in adaptation to climate change.

This paper aims to do no more than offer one potential, practical framework for defining and comparing such small-state challenges. It is geared towards empirical policy analysis and therefore uses terms and categories that relevant states and institutions themselves use, rather than any particular theoretical framework. It starts with a categorization of 21st-century threats and risks designed to encompass the widest possible range of actual small-state experiences. Secondly, it discusses how and why a small state selects issues for inclusion in its national security agenda. Thirdly, it sketches a generic range of remedies available; and fourth and last, it raises questions about features within a given small state that may predispose it to handle the overall security challenge more, or less, successfully.

II. Categorization of Threats and Risks

While the drive to broaden the definition of security has been strong and almost universal, for at least two decades now, it has not followed any single script or scripture. Precisely because it has been so much a real-world phenomenon, reflected from an early date in the policy documents both of states and of institutions from the United Nations (UN) downwards, it is hard to find one single theoretical framework that can be said either to have triggered it or to have captured it accurately. It may be best to think in terms of a number of partly overlapping and partly competing agenda sets that have been proposed and developed by mixtures of policy-makers, academics, and indeed non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the media. Some of the best known are the ‘human security’ framework created by the UN Development Programme (UNDP)4 to define, primarily, typical challenges of the developing world and of conflict-prone states; the ‘new threats’ agenda5 that was formulated by US policy-makers after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, and widely (perhaps too uncritically) picked up by others; or the ‘societal security’ used as a national

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5 This set of ideas is found notably in the US National Security Strategy of Sept. 2002 (https://digitalndulibrary.ndu.edu/edm4/document.php?CISOROOT=/strategy&CISOPTR=5231&REC=2) and focuses on ‘asymmetric’ threats from terrorism, illicit access to/use of Weapons of Mass Destruction, and linked aspects of international crime, ‘rogue’ states and ‘failed’ states. See also below.
security concept by some Northern European states. Mixtures of all of these are found in institutional documents such as the European Union’s (EU’s) European Security Strategy of 2003 and its 2008 revision, and the New Security Concept adopted by NATO in November 2010. The categories to be suggested here will draw on all these possible systems, without being entirely faithful to any of them; and in doing so, may mirror quite well the eclecticism of actual security statements produced by small states in recent years. They are consciously slanted towards the circumstances of developed and relatively prosperous (‘Northern hemisphere’), rather than developing (‘Southern hemisphere’) states.

**Figure 1: Four ‘Packages’ of Security Challenges**

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[State attack]</td>
<td>Terrorism</td>
<td>General economic viability</td>
<td>Major accidents (inc. NBC release)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caught in crossfire]</td>
<td>Violent/organized crime</td>
<td>Financial ditto</td>
<td>Infrastructure breakdown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subversion, sabotage</td>
<td>Smuggling of strategic goods</td>
<td>Security of supply (energy, other essentials)</td>
<td>Pandemics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Political blackmail</td>
<td>Other ‘asymmetric’ attack inc. cyber-attack</td>
<td>Food security</td>
<td>Natural disasters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal (armed) conflict</td>
<td>Severe civil unrest</td>
<td>Illegal migration, trafficking</td>
<td>Resource exhaustion</td>
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9 As an example from Iceland, the Risk Assessment produced by an independent commission in March 2009 divides all threats and risks into ‘military’, ‘societal’ and ‘global’ (= transnational) categories. Text (including English summary) at http://eng.utanrikisraduneyti.is/speeches-and-articles/nr/4823.
10 Nuclear, biological or chemical.
Almost every aspect of the schema presented in Figure 1 could be challenged, including the four basic divisions. These follow one kind of logic among many possible ones: namely the question of intentionality. The problems in group A. arise from deliberate human behaviour using age-old forms of armed violence, and targeted at least to some extent against the integrity of an entire state or society. Group B. is also about international human violence and crime and the disruption of normal authority, law, and order: but using different techniques often in a different, ‘transnational’ (or even ‘virtual’) environment. It includes techniques that can be and are used by ‘non-state’ actors – as distinct from nation-states and their agents - but which remain available to unscrupulous states as well. Part of the USA’s ‘new threats’ thesis after 9/11 was that international terrorists were abetted by ‘rogue’ states and offered shelter in ‘weak’ or ‘failed’ ones, and that all three types of actor might conspire eg for the illegal acquisition of nuclear weapons. However, some of the world’s strongest states have also been suspected of conducting or inspiring cyber-attacks, and states of all sizes have been known to use kinds of violence against their citizens that could fairly be compared with techniques of terror and crime.

Category C. moves into areas of deliberate human activity that are not generally considered security matters, nor problematic per se; but which are inherently subject to risk and can generate serious security problems if and when they go wrong. In fact, the notion of ‘economic defence’ or ‘economic security’ is quite an old one, as it has evident linkages with group A. A state needs economic strength to build an army and win wars, and may often stave off internal unrest by attending to economic welfare; while economic collapse directly affects both military capacity and intangible aspects of state prestige and confidence. Sabotage directed at economic objects like food supplies is also an ancient practice. There are close ties between categories B. and C. as well, insofar as terrorists often engage in economic crime and attack economic targets, while proper security measures applied to banking, trade, travel, and production of hazardous goods can reduce the freedom of play both for terrorists and criminals, not to mention the openings for corruption. This last point also highlights the importance of security roles played by non-state actors, for good or ill, in category C. par excellence. Where free market practices prevail, the state intervenes in production and trade, transport and communications mainly by indirect means like regulation and tax policy. It may indeed act more directly in crises - including when military means are needed for instance to protect trade routes; or when it is tempted to use some element of economic strength for a security ploy against others (the ‘oil weapon’, credits with political strings attached, etc). But in normal conditions, the transactions needed for stable and productive functioning of the whole economic nexus are carried out by private actors – including social groups.

and consumers as well as corporations – and it is these that also stand in the front line when something goes wrong.

This brings us to category D., which covers events caused by unintentional human agency (accidents, unanticipated side-effects), and natural forces wholly or partly outside human control. It is a bit of a ‘rag-bag’ with elements of very varied origin, and a case could be made for putting infrastructure breakdowns under economic security instead. However, the first few items in this list – accidents, breakdowns, one-off natural disasters and pandemics – are linked by their ability to inflict similar acute damage and trigger similar multi-sectoral chains of consequences for a developed society. They are often inter-linked with each other as well as with aspects of economic and financial security: thus a severe natural disaster damages infrastructure and health, but also communication networks and the delivery of goods, and may financially weaken both the state and the private insurance system. Accordingly, states and international organizations today commonly group all these issues together as the focus for ‘civil emergency management’ policies and response mechanisms. The contrast implied by the use of the word ‘civil’ is with warlike contingencies; and in democratic states at least, the agencies of civil power would take the lead in responding to all category D. events – while possibly drawing on military assets and skills for some rescue, repair and order-enforcement purposes. It could be argued more largely that these are ‘no-guilt’ or ‘no criminal’ events to an even greater degree than problems in group C. True, some infrastructure breakdowns could be caused by sabotage or terrorist attack, but in such cases we will find states taking two essentially separate lines of action in response: remedial action for the effects through normal group D. mechanisms, and separate warlike or law-enforcement action to find, punish, or take revenge against the perpetrators.

The last items in group D. are problems in the human ecosphere that develop more gradually, although they may contribute to the causes of acute disasters and accidents, as well as to conflict dynamics. While human agency often forms part of their causation, they are unwanted and unwelcome side-effects that damage everyone’s security, often on a transnational scale. In terms of policy response they fall outside normal ‘civil emergency’ or ‘civil security’ agendas and are more likely to be addressed by policies taking effect within the economic security nexus, or designed to change societal behaviour, plus tailored research and technological approaches.

Relevance of the Four Categories for Small States

As some mixture of hazards from groups B.-D. arguably affects every state in the world and many are still exposed to group A., it is hardly necessary to demonstrate the prima facie relevance of all categories to small states as a class. What will be briefly discussed here is how far small states suffer a heightened, or otherwise untypical, pattern of vulnerability under each of the headings.

As state-to-state war is the one thing excluded from the present analysis, what remains from group A. are the risks of non-warlike aggression and dominance by neighbours – political blackmail, subversion, sabotage – on the one hand, and on the other, internal violence in the form of conflict, rioting or breakdown of order. Again, the direct linkage of environmental change with arms conflict may however have been somewhat overstated. See Michael Brzoska, The Securitization of Climate Change and the Power of Conceptions of Security, in Sicherheit und Frieden No 27 (3), 2008, pp 197-208
it is not hard to show that the very size of small states makes them unusually vulnerable to the first kind of challenge. They have little or no chance of retaliating in kind and few reserves to draw upon to reassert their authority and/or economic viability, once undermined. As with warlike attack, the patronage and protection of a large state or institution is probably the best answer for this part of the threat spectrum.

As soon as we move to internally generated (armed or physical) violence, however, the role of external helpers becomes more ambivalent. Internal conflicts and violent demonstrations can of course be the result of external mischief-making, perhaps especially when ethnic groups or religious and political movements with connections to larger states are present. They can, however, also be genuinely home-grown: there is no rule that smallness in a state must go with homogeneity and internal unity. Ethnic divisions and their link with actual conflict or conflict risks are found throughout the small states of the former Soviet region and several of those in the Western Balkans. A different kind of ethnic variety is found in cosmopolitan small states (eg in the Gulf and SE Asia) that attract foreign residents and often depend on migrant labour. Small-state politics can be vicious and polarized precisely because they are so easily personalized, and ideological divisions can sharpen to the point of violence as seen, for instance, in Central America and the Caribbean in the past. Finally, the small state itself may be the source of internal conflict when it rebels against and seeks to break out of incorporation in a larger entity. In all these cases, traditional military protection by another state risks either being powerless to solve the problem or becoming part of the problem itself, as it may simply carry the small state out of one kind of interference and tutelage into another. Recent international practice has shown a strong preference for multilateral, more ‘disinterested’ action by the United Nations, a regional organization, or both in partnership. In the cases of East Timor and Kosovo, the UN with support from other institutions has even provided a temporary administration, with the aim of giving the small entity time and support to develop the capacity for full self-government.

Alongside military attack, the other types of deliberate human assault in category B. constitute those threats most likely to pose a greater danger, the smaller the target state. The history of coups in small island states shows that a limited group of terrorists, other extremists or criminals can all too easily grab the small and exposed centres of power that are typical of such states, even without a full-scale military attack. A single terrorist atrocity could damage a sizeable part of the state’s entire infrastructure, as well as causing secondary economic damage by scaring away tourists and investors. Terrorists aiming at a different nation or human group might decide to strike at their targets in transit through a small state because they expect a lower level of protection and preparedness. Mutatis mutandis the same can happen with smuggling, especially of more exotic kinds for which small-state officials may lack the relevant expertise: thus the nuclear smuggling network linked to Pakistani scientist A.Q.Khan was alleged to have made transfers through Malaysia, the Gulf states and perhaps even Bosnia-Herzegovina.13 Criminals may prefer not to damage or challenge the state structure openly but rather corrupt it and manipulate it to their profit, as some have claimed to see happening in Kosovo and Montenegro. The small

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13 A.Q.Khan, the ‘father of Pakistan’s bomb’, was suspended from work in 2002 on suspicion of trading nuclear secrets to Iran and possibly others. For his story see Powell, B. and McGirk, T, ‘the man who sold the bomb’, Time magazine 14 Feb. 2005
state’s vulnerability here may be aggravated by relatively weak media and civil society organizations that lack the potential to expose and resist abuses. On the other hand, the smallest states are not necessarily ones that terrorists and criminals would look to as hideaways, since strangers stand out too easily in such communities. Finally, it is hard to argue that small states per se are more vulnerable to cyber-attacks, as they may find it easier to communicate across their limited territory and continue business by other means if major ITC systems are brought down. Indeed, the asymmetric nature of this new technique arguably offers small states one of their few ways of making trouble for much larger states, if so inclined. They could, however, aggravate their own exposure if they switch too enthusiastically to ‘e-governance’ without backup systems, and if they devote too little effort and expertise to cyber-defences in general.  

There is a plentiful literature on the economic security complex – category C. above - as it relates to small states, and wide agreement on the nature of typical vulnerabilities. Small size does have some prima facie benefits as it reduces the scale and complexity of economic management challenges and often, also, the range of social variation. It brings flexibility to adopt the most profitable available niche in international competition, as shown by the many small states that have prospered as banking centres, transport hubs, sites for communication and media dissemination, and tourist attractions. However, there is rarely any lasting escape from the three main parts of the small-state economic risk equation: limited own resources imposing high import dependence (for food, energy etc, and also capital and technological knowhow); a specialized production or service-provision profile rarely amounting to even half a dozen profitable sectors; and above-average ‘openness’ to external dependencies, influences and market fluctuations. Small states’ limited export capacity all too often exposes them to a price scissors when the international market downvalues, or loses interests or confidence in, their assets but they are forced to go on importing vital necessities. As regards security of supply, they are unlikely to be able to develop a wide range of diversity in import commodities and sources, and if they are islands or in peripheral locations their physical lines of trade and transport may also be limited. A single breakdown in transport, availability of supplies, or indeed the funding to pay for supplies can thus hit them far harder than it would a larger territory with more reserves and alternatives.

A second layer of the problem is that most options available to a small state for increasing its income go hand in hand with greater openness and exploitation of the global context, and thus with a multiplication of risks. Iceland since 2008 is only the most notorious example of what can happen when such a gamble goes wrong – and goes wrong partly because it has outstripped the capacity of the small state’s formal governance and oversight system to grasp and control the dangers involved.  

Although the gross amount of funds needed to put such a state back on its feet is also small, Iceland’s case further shows that the terms imposed by states and institutions offering such a rescue can be perceived within the state as encroaching unacceptably on its sovereign independence, and/or as being unfairly harsh compared with the way

15 See e.g. Roger Boyes, Meltdown Iceland, London:Bloomsbury, 2009 and the report of the Special Investigation Committee of the Althingi, April 2010, English translations at http://sic.althingi.is/.
larger states often stretch the rules for each other. Here we come to the ambivalence of integration in an economic community like the European Union, considered as a cure for economic risk. While it empirically does seem to improve the odds that a small state in trouble will not be abandoned, the price both of rescue and of initial submission to the communal rules can be seen as potentially undermining important attributes of statehood – which the smallest of states can the least afford to lose.

Looking from a more global perspective, however, some might say that states in regions like Europe, South-east Asia and Southern Africa are fortunate to have only such trade-offs to worry about; while most small developing states have no alternative to (sometimes extreme) aid dependence, and others live in regions where economic tools are more nakedly used for subjugation and punishment.

Both highly developed and poorer small states share some obvious vulnerabilities to the accidental and natural hazards in category D. Haiti’s earthquake catastrophe of January 2010, since when the nation has still not managed to restore a semblance of normal government, was an extreme case but represents only one part of the disaster spectrum – including tropical storms, tsunamis, internal floods and volcano eruptions – threatening small nations in the Caribbean and worldwide. Notoriously, some small island states in the Pacific and Indian Ocean could see their whole territory submerged by rising sea levels consequent upon global warming. Short of that, extreme events and more gradual climate changes could tip the balance against economic survival by destroying key habitat features and polluting or exhausting natural resources. When pandemics hit, there is no obvious reason why small states should suffer proportionally more than others and their defences (such as vaccination campaigns) should be easier to organize; but fewer human reserves mean that even a few cases of incapacitation and death could wipe out key positions and seriously damage crisis management capability. In cases of infrastructure failure and accidents, a lack of redundancy on the one hand and of specialized response assets and expertise are probably the most widespread features of small-state vulnerability.

At first sight, island states might seem to have the worst problems because they have no neighbours to supply help. However, land-locked states that are meshed into larger neighbouring systems for energy, transport, ICT and so on are doubly at risk because their own access may be cut off for reasons beyond their control, or their neighbours may suffer disasters that have knock-on effects for themselves.

Within the threat/risk spectrum that has now been sketched, there is no single ‘typical’ small-state profile. The problems looming largest for each nation will be determined by objective factors of territory size, geography, climate and habitat; but also by political features of the neighbourhood and the larger region, by the level and direction of economic development, and by a multitude of human and societal factors.

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16 For instance, within the Eurozone, it has been alleged that Ireland has more than once been singled out for tough treatment when facing macro-financial problems – most recently in the case of its 2009 bail-out – while larger Euro-users like France and Germany are more likely to agree with each other to soften rules that they themselves find irksome.

17 This is further argued in Alyson JK Bailes, ‘Instrumentalizing the EU in Small State Strategies: Examples from Norden’, a paper presented at the ISA conference at Montreal in March 2011.

18 Obvious examples are offered by Russia’s use of energy cut-offs and import or export embargoes to put political pressure on, or undermine the security of, small neighbours like Georgia and the Baltic States.
including patterns of emigration, immigration and tourism. As the next section will show, moreover, charting hazards and measuring vulnerabilities is only the first step in developing a security policy or strategy to avert threats, minimize risks and protect the best interests in of the country and its people.

III. Building a National Agenda

There may be some small states in the world that have few enough problems to be able to deal with them case-by-case on a purely reactive basis. There are probably more who have outsourced enough of their security provision – military and non-military - to be able to rely on someone else’s guidance and assured help in a crisis. However, the majority of such states around the globe (and certainly in the larger Europe) face a complicated enough set of security challenges and responsibilities to need a conscious process of threat/risk assessment and planning. Under the modern understanding of ‘security’ this needs to be a whole-government exercise, as just about every ministry and agency could be required to collaborate especially in an internal civil contingency. Nor can the process be confined just to government, given the importance of non-state reactions and contributions (from business, NGOs, societal organizations and ordinary people) as mentioned early in the last section. Finally, a state that calls itself democratic needs to think about the demands of openness, a role for representative institutions in approving at least the key policy principles, and possibly some kind of wider consultation. It will give thought to checks and balances to ensure that citizens’ essential rights and freedoms are not sacrificed for an over-stated, unchallenged security rationale.

All this is actually quite a steep challenge for any state, and – as Japan’s agonies in March 2011 have illustrated - it would be hard to find any, even the richest and most conscientious, that has achieved a state of perfect preparedness. Many of the typical problems arising do not distinguish between states of different sizes. To start with, assessing threats and risks is anything but a cool scientific process. Even when the utmost effort is made for objectivity, the findings may be skewed by missing or incompatible data sets; the complexity of linkages and chain reactions between different dimensions; the unpredictability and rapid evolution of the environment; and a natural human bias towards giving extra weight to the most familiar, most recently experienced, and most visible or acute dangers. Disagreements can then easily arise over how far the definition of ‘security’ should be extended, and which dimensions should be prioritized within it. In a small state just as a large one, ideological and political starting points (such as the taste or dis-taste for military matters, pro- or anti-business stances and nationalist or internationalist leanings) can generate such differences; but so can departmental interests within the administration, the pressure of special interest groups, and the vagaries of public opinion. Even if these problems


20 In conceptual terms, the importance of all these factors is well captured by the ‘securitization’ theory associated with Ole Wæver and the ‘Copenhagen school’, which points out inter alia that getting an issue recognized as a security one can lead to higher priority for funding and a licence to take stronger action than would normally be sanctioned. For a short introduction and critique see Ralf Emmers,
can be surmounted to arrive at a balanced threat/risk analysis and a rational set of policies for prevention, mitigation and emergency response, many further obstacles can get in the way of implementation. Shortages of funds and perhaps of personnel are almost inevitable, as it is only human to grudge spending too much on an insurance policy. Coordination may be too weak, allowing departments and agencies to go their own way and perhaps delegating too much to the local level; or it may be too strong, destroying local initiative and favouring ill-informed, heavy-handed intervention.

If these are universal challenges, where does smallness make a difference? It can be helpful to the extent that a small nation may have a correspondingly restricted threat and risk spectrum, and one that does not vary too much across its territory. On the other hand, the specialized and non-typical security profiles of many small states make it harder for them to pick up ready-made models of response from elsewhere,21 while small elites also imply limited homegrown expertise. A limited cast of players should make communication and coordination easier in a crisis; the downside is that it can make it too tempting not to bother with formal and systematic coordination at all, but to rely – that is, to gamble – on improvisation. Rational exploitation of knowledge, skills, equipment and response capacity from the private sector and volunteer organizations is especially important for small states with limited government structures; yet over-reliance on this kind of help could mean starting down a slippery slope towards the privatization of state authority and ‘capture’ of government by special interests. Similar or even more diverse risks attach to bringing in foreign experts, even those with apparently high-minded agendas.22

A whole further layer of complication arises from the fact that few states build their national agendas in isolation. To start with, all are supposed to obey the orders of the United Nations regarding arms and trade embargoes, other sanctions against individual states, and generic directives such as those established by UN Security Council Resolutions 1373 on terrorist financing and 1540 on the illicit handling of Weapons of Mass Destruction. The legislative, even more than the administrative, steps needed to give full force to these norms within national jurisdictions can be extremely burdensome for small states and this has often retarded implementation even of politically unexceptionable measures.23 Secondly, the majority of states today, including a clear majority of small ones, have obligations (as members or associates) towards regional organizations claiming one or another kind of security competence. The more developed this regional cooperation, the more likely it becomes that any given state will be obliged to adopt collective security priorities, and perhaps quite heavy commitments, that reflect the aggregate concerns of all its partners. In Europe

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21 To take Iceland as an example, it would be hard to find another state with a ready-made recipe for handling a security profile centred on fisheries protection, volcanoes and banking debts.

22 For instance, many small island states have allowed anti-whaling NGO experts to represent them at International Whaling Commission meetings. Normative arguments aside, in what way does this serve national interests?

for example, Nordic states have to comply with measures designed to deal with Southern-style organized crime and with elaborate anti-terrorist policies developed by NATO, the EU and OSCE, while these problems rarely if ever affect their own territories directly. Some Central European states meanwhile may see the same measures, but also the Nordic insistence on environmental security and gender rights, as a vexatious distraction from their continuing more basic worries about territorial security and subversion. German taxpayers recently have been notoriously reluctant to ‘bail out’ Southern member states facing problems of economic and financial security; and so on.

At least where these problems are being tackled in a formal institutional framework, a small state can participate in the policy-forming process, learn the rationale for the measures that will impact on it, and – as a last resort – campaign against or even veto an aspect it finds especially damaging. It has also, however, been quite common for small states to look for their security protection to one or more individual larger states, and this has a double or even triple significance for the composition of their national security agendas. First, the big state may ask something directly in return for offering shelter, such as access to the small state’s resources and/or use of its strategically placed territory as a base. Secondly, the small partner may be expected, or may choose itself, to adopt large parts of its sponsor’s general security philosophy and the priorities that go with it, even though – just as in the case of institutions with diverse membership – these could be far removed from the small state’s ‘natural’ profile. If so they may not only bring new burdens, including strains on domestic consensus, but also distract from local issues that deserve more serious attention. Finally, the large state may call for specific actions in support during a crisis or international contention where it sees its own interests at stake, and in some cases could even mobilize the small state as its proxy. 24

One further trend that has been clear in recent years, driven by general global conditions as well as institutional and protector relationships, is the expectation of greater outgoing activism at least by more prosperous small states. The most altruistic forms of such action go back at least a century, including the pioneering roles of some individuals and NGOs from small states in humanitarian and medical aid (think of Fridtjof Nansen from Norway), the above-average contributions of several small European states to international development assistance, and – especially since 1945 – the frequency of small-state contributions to UN-led peace missions. Up to the end of the Cold War, however, such activism was truly voluntary (aside from the case of states that still had far-flung colonies to protect) and reflected the values, more than the strategic self-interest, of the donors concerned. As the threat of ‘real’ war receded from the Northern hemisphere after 1989-90, NATO and the EU - but also larger, more inclusive organizations like the OSCE - moved conflict management for other people’s conflicts more into the centre of their agendas, and placed increasingly specific obligations on all their members to prepare capacities for, and contribute to,

24 An obvious example of these last two contingencies is the way that small partners especially dependent on US security support, such as the three Baltic States, supported Washington’s stance in the ‘Global War on terror’ from 2001 and joined the international coalition supporting the invasion of Iraq, even if they could offer few or no military assets. This case also helps to explain why large states may put pressure on small states to act this way: it was important for the US, lacking UN approval, to demonstrate that it had a wide spectrum of political support for the use of force.
such missions in accord with their ability. Similar trends could be marked elsewhere in the world as regional or sub-regional organizations in Africa, the Caribbean, South-East Asia and the West Pacific were drawn further into the peacekeeping business.25

This was a significant shift for small states, especially those that had been peripheral to the Cold War’s geography and so had been expected to do little for ‘real’ defence except make some show of guarding their own territory. No-one was ‘peripheral’ for the new interventionist agenda, or exempt from contributing on the new ‘fronts’ that could be opened by political choice - literally anywhere in the world. As already noted, small states might indeed have an above-average motivation to contribute if they wanted to please some larger sponsor who was pushing for the operation; but many were driven also by loyalty to the institutions that they relied on as their own ‘shelters’, both for ‘hard’ and other security purposes.26 The consequences for national security postures could be quite serious, including not just the burden and risk of the operations themselves, but the bleeding of scarce resources away from home defence and civil emergency response, and also the danger of rifts in national consensus since the grass-roots would generally be slower to grasp and accept the logic of such unfamiliar ventures than the more internationalized politico-military elite.27

IV. A Model Range of Remedies

As the non-military security threats/risks covered in this analysis range so widely and vary so much from state to state, it is not to be expected that any one path towards resolving, minimizing and surviving them will suit all small states or fully meet any state’s needs. Complex solutions using many tools and sources of support will tend to become more common as security agendas broaden: but also as globalized processes and patterns of dependency create more complex environments even for the most physically remote nations, and as the starkest forms of single-power dependence become less common with the final crumbling of empires and loosening of Cold War disciplines.

The range of options available could be mapped along several axes, but the simplest approach is perhaps to start from the most traditional model of big state as protector and move towards more multilateralized, international solutions. If we add consideration of which kinds of tools and partners are best for which dimensions of security, using the four categories from section II above, this could give an initial

25 Peace missions led by regional organizations, albeit often under a UN mandate, now make up half of the roughly 60 such interventions ongoing in any year. For full details see the SIPRI International Peace Operations database at http://www.sipri.org/databases/pko/pko.

26 One notable illustration of these pressures is the way that the Nordic states, including non-Allies, shifted the bulk of their peacekeeping contributions after 1990 to NATO-led, EU-led and ‘coalition’ operations, rather than UN ones. For more on this topic see Alyson JK Bailes, ‘Motives for Overseas Missions: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly’, chapter in Crisis Management in Crisis?, ed. Susanna Eskola, proceedings of the Xith Suomenlinna Seminar, Research Report no. 40, National Defence University of Finland, Helsinki, December, pp. 73–84.

27 This problem is discussed further, with examples i.a. from Sweden, in the last section of Alyson JK Bailes, ‘Does a Small State Need a Strategy?’ as note 21 above.
model as in Figure Two below – again, geared to the needs of a well-developed or transitional small state rather than a developing one.

**Figure Two: Sources of External Protection and Partnership in Non-Military Security**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Single State (or small group)</th>
<th>Regional organization</th>
<th>Global Cooperation/Regulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cat.A: Polit/ econ blackmail</td>
<td>If military alliance: as Single State, plus reduced overall risk of <em>local</em> use of force</td>
<td>Cat. B (through regulation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subversion</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cat.C, benign business partners + financing, tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Conflict (with cautions)</td>
<td>PLUS for EU/ASEAN Front-line or supplementary role in Cat.D (accidental/natural events)</td>
<td>Cat.D, mainly pandemics and long-term risks (climate change) but also disaster response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cat.B: Violent and overt non-state attacks</td>
<td>All Cat.B All Cat.C (economy)</td>
<td>Cat.D ditto, plus IMF aid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some forms of crime</td>
<td>Cat.D, mainly pandemics and long-term risks (climate change) but also disaster response</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cat.C: Bilateral econ/financial support</td>
<td>Cat.D ditto, plus IMF aid</td>
<td>Cat. D, normative inputs,28 emergency + humanitarian aid</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of course, there are more complications than such a two-dimensional presentation can capture. In particular, state roles and state-to-state relationships remain very important even within the most deeply integrated organizations like the EU: so a small state may – for instance - join the Union to multiply the help it can get from a traditional state helper, but also to balance the power and excessive demands of that state by finding new partners and sheltering behind institutional rules.29 A similar Chinese-boxes relationship exists between regional and global organizations in the case of worldwide challenges like financial stability, fair trade, security of supply, combating terrorism and coping with climate change. Here the region may help the small state by acting simultaneously as the local executor of global precepts; the initiator of globally useful approaches; and a defender against conflicting efforts by other regions and large powers. Several regions now have ‘nested’ sets of organizations moving from larger to smaller geographical coverage – eg in Europe, the OSCE, EU, Council of Baltic Sea States, and Nordic Council – which may both specialize and overlap in terms of their security-relevant functions.30 A whole extra

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28 Eg campaigns for environmental responsibility, health improvements, protection of various rights.
29 This interplay is discussed at greater length in Alyson JK Bailes, ‘Instrumentalizing the EU in Small State Strategies: Examples from Norden’, as note 19 above.
30 On the functionality of sub-regional organizations see Andrew Cottee, ‘Sub-regional Multilateralism in Europe: An Assessment’ (2008), downloadable from Europe’s World at
http://www.europesworld.org/NewEnglish/Home_old/PartnerPosts/tabid/671/PostID/1097/SubregionalCooperationinEuropeAnAssessment.aspx; and by the same author,
dimension that this diagram does not capture is the impact – which can be both supportive and subversive – of international media and communications carrying a mixture of state, non-state and individual messages and influences.

How does a particular small state decide how best to combine and mobilize the external options available to it? The first point to make is that not all of them are always available. To start with the most traditional category: geography and history will determine whether a large protector state exists nearby, and whether that state’s terms for a relationship are beneficial or damaging for the small partner’s non-military security on balance. Very large powers, like the US today and incipiently China, may pick up small allies and proxies all round the world but it is they, not the small states, who will decide where to seek such relationships, and also when to drop them as their own strategic agenda evolves. Regional organizations capable of making a positive input within the non-military spectrum are absent, or exist as barely more than shells, in the most divided and dysfunctional parts of the world like the Middle East and South Asia.  

In principle all states should have the option of working with the UN, its agencies, and the international financial institutions, but in practice their degree of access and influence can depend on many factors including, again, how powerful is the regional lobby or organization they happen to belong to, and how much effort and expertise they themselves can bring to the relationship. Really small states are also at a structural disadvantage given the minimal chance that they will ever sit on the Security Council, where so many decisions important both for conflict dynamics and major non-military threats are taken. Perhaps the sphere where small states are the least handicapped is the transnational non-state space, where investors, tourists and private aid-givers can be solicited in a global market-square and useful knowledge mined even from the most remote location. The corresponding risk, as already pointed out in section II, is that a small state may get out of its depth and end up being exploited and thrown into unfamiliar dangers by organized non-state ‘partners’ who neither know its real needs nor have its real interests at heart.

The next critical set of factors in building non-military security partnerships are the choices made by the small state itself. These in turn are subject to at least two kinds of influences. First are preferences and attitudes of the more subjective kind – the fears and beliefs, good and bad images attached to particular state partners, but also to different institutions and types of institutions. Thus a state committed to neutrality will not join a military alliance, and a state might be so strongly committed to protecting its own economy that it refuses to join a free trade area. Luxembourg may consider the EU more important overall than NATO for its security, and the Baltic states may feel the opposite, even though they all belong to both organizations. It is only too likely that different schools of thought will exist within the state, for the reasons sketched in the last section: meaning that consensus is never reached on taking up some potentially useful relationship, or that it is taken up and then dropped as political forces shift, or that the state remains in the institution/partnership but as a half-hearted, inconsistent partner.

The second kind of calculation is in principle more objective: what can each external provider offer in the way of non-military security (or more precisely, in security *added value*), and what is the price for obtaining what it offers? The most concrete, quantifiable kinds of ‘price’ have already been indicated in section III and range from ceding control of some national resources and territory, through having to adopt some other state’s or community’s security agenda, to being obliged to ‘repay’ with active contributions to other people’s security within the region and beyond. Another practical cost is the total of man-hours spent on nurturing such relationships and especially on participating in multinational organizations, which can become a real burden for states with small elites unless they regularly leave their seats empty. This factor increases the penalties for, but does not usually deter small states from, seeking cover in as many institutions as possible simultaneously. Indeed, the smallest states may be especially keen to work in institutions that others consider marginal, such as the weaker and lesser-known sub-regional networks in Europe, because of the greater scope to raise their profiles there without being shouldered out or manipulated by larger powers.\footnote{Institute of International Affairs and Centre for the Study of Small States, University of Iceland, *Sub-Regional Organizations in Europe: Cinderellas or Fairy Godmothers?* (seminar report), 2008, available at http://stofnanir.hi.is/ams/sites/files/ams/B%C3%A6klingur_0.pdf.}

Probably much more influential in real-life policy choices, however, is the importance attached by any given small state to the intangible goods of sovereignty and identity, and the price that may have to be paid in that currency. Entering into any co-dependent relationship at all is always more hazardous from this point of view for the smaller partner, as habits, models, ideas and cultural norms –as well as concrete rules and demands – will naturally 'flow downwards' from the larger partner even if the latter is not consciously domineering. There is room for argument over whether state partners or institutional partners offer a better cost/benefit balance from this point of view. A state's demands may be shifting and arbitrary, but for that very reason may remain more 'external' to the small polity. Politicians may also find it easier to explain the pragmatic terms of trade-offs made within such a relationship to their population. Perhaps the best case is where a small state manages to balance two or more larger partners and to some extent play them off against each other, when it can rightly feel that its own identity and strategy is driving the game.

With institutions, on the contrary, the collective entity penetrates the small state just as the small state has to work from inside the institution. Not only are the effects generally more intrusive - most of all in the case of the EU with its tens of thousands of pages of directly applicable legislation - but the small state's government cannot escape responsibility for collective decisions in which it has participated.\footnote{This does not of course prevent politicians in states of all sizes for blaming 'Brussels' for the decisions they themselves have taken in that city.} The fact of participation itself 'socializes' elites in a more insidious way, and probably more deeply, than does the habit of contact within a traditional alliance where the smaller side will always be to some extent on its guard.\footnote{This process actually operates at many levels and is analyzed in the extensive literature on 'Europeanization'. For the Icelandic and other Nordic examples see Baldur Porhallsson, Per Legreid and Runólf Smári Steinþórsson, *Europeanization of Central Government Administration in the Nordic States*, in Journal of Common Market Studies vol. 42, no. 2, pp. 347-369, June 2004.} Balancing this is the very
fact that the small state gains collective ownership of any institution that it joins as full member, and thereby wins influence over other members – at the extreme, by exercising its veto – that it could never enjoy in a non-institutionalized, anarchic interstate system. Institutional procedures and dynamics may further soften the crude inequalities of size, and can even privilege smaller states in certain ways: for instance through their agility and adaptive skills, the relative simplicity of their agendas, or their suitability as ‘clean’, non-threatening front-men or mouthpieces for the whole institution.35

There is no hope of doing justice to this very large issue here; but trying to draw conclusions about how small states should weigh up the range of identity-related costs would be wrong for another practical reason. Not every state has an equally clear identity in the first place, and not every state is equally proud of the one it has (or is seen from outside as having). Broadly speaking, the urge to cling on to national particularities will be strongest in states that have a relatively homogeneous character and have no (recent) reason for historical guilt.36 Another scenario militating against close integration is where a particular small state has very different values and modes of governance from its nearest neighbours, in which case it may survive with strategic protection from an influential power outside the region, or may simply try to isolate itself. Length of history is a less straightforward indicator, as some well-established states may be confident enough of their identity to take the risk of diving deeper into institutional waters, while states with recent independence may be naturally concerned to celebrate and preserve that independence against all comers. On the other hand, newly created states carved out of other states – like the relicts of Former Yugoslavia in Europe or East Timor in South-East Asia – may be among the strongest demandeurs for institutional integration which they see as the best guarantee of their separate survival, as well as a way of purging the past. In the end and at a mundane level, a lot can also depend on the way such issues are presented to the public through the political discourse of a given community, which in turn can be significantly shifted in a more, or less, ‘integrationist’ direction by individual politicians.37

The list of a small state’s options would not, however, be complete without mentioning choices that it can make in its own internal arrangements. Certain non-military challenges such as emergency response (for a sufficiently limited incident), pollution control, environment protection, general health protection, control of domestic crime, and maintaining order on the streets should be basically independent of direct external inputs, even if their national managers can learn from external norms and examples. The efficiency of internal administration, including rapid incident response, and of internal coordination both for normal and emergency times is thus another important variable and potential tool for small states when seeking comprehensive and balanced security for their peoples. Trying to survey the whole range of security dimensions for the purpose is always difficult, as discussed in section II, and may be unwelcome to many for political, ideological and cultural reasons; but there are at least three good arguments for taking the most comprehensive possible approach.

35 These arguments are further developed in Alyson JK Bailes, ‘Instrumentalizing the EU in Small State Strategies: Examples from Norden’, as note 19 above.
36 All five Nordic states offer a good example of this syndrome albeit to differing degrees.
37 Compare for instance the European strategy of Slovakia during and after the rule of Mečiar.
The first is the interconnectedness of the various dimensions, which can be seen especially clearly in incident scenarios where an initial breakdown in one sphere – say, a train-crash – turns into an even larger disaster in some other sphere – say, because the train was carrying nuclear wastes. The second is the question of national budgetary allocations, which will have to be shared out somehow between the different fields whether they are described as facets of 'security' or not. The risks both of over- and of under-spending on any given security sector, or of getting the balance wrong between military and non-military, external and internal, security can hardly be assessed and remedied unless some kind of comparative overview is available. The third point, which matters particularly for this section, is that a small state can only optimize the cost/benefit balance in its external efforts for non-military security if it manages them all in a coherent way: either maintaining 'one voice' and unity of purpose in all its relevant relationships, or playing a conscious and skilful 'right hand, left hand' game. Adding these domestic dimensions to the external options in Figure Two above, the complete policy-making schematic for a small state might look something like Figure Three on the next page. Again, this is greatly simplified compared with real life: it misses (for instance) the important fact that outside security providers will have direct contacts with the corresponding national actors – including non-state ones - in the various specialized sectors, even in a relatively well coordinated system. Nor can it reflect the penetrative effect of information flows and social media, which could be bringing in ideas and bad/good security influences even from beyond the range of recognized partners and providers.

/Figure Three…
**Figure Three: External Choices and Internal Means for Non-Military Security**

### External Alternatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>PLUS for EU/ASEAN</td>
<td>Cat.C, benign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Conflict (with cautions)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cat.B: Violent</td>
<td>All Cat.B</td>
<td>Cat.D, mainly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and overt non-state attacks</td>
<td>All Cat.C (economy)</td>
<td>normative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some forms of crime</td>
<td>Front-line or supple-</td>
<td>inputs, emergency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mentary role in Cat.D</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cat.C: Bilateral</td>
<td>(accidental/natural events)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>econ/financial support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Internal/External Interface (including outward contributions by the state)

- Unity of voice and message
- OR
- Right hand, Left hand, 'playing off'

### Domestic coordination

- Resource Allocation
- 'Peacetime' policy *(inc. regulation)*
- Emergency response

= Role division and collaboration in three dimensions:
- Inter-departmental
- Central/local
- Cross-sectoral

*Government/business/NGOs/people*

V. Review and Conclusions: factors for success?

Returning to the British Commonwealth studies mentioned at the outset: one of the main preoccupations of analysts looking at small island states in the 1970s-80s was the weak, corrupt nature of not a few of their governments, which opened the way to Communist subversion but also to manipulation or takeover by other ill-intentioned
players. Since that time, advances in democracy, externally supported good
governance programmes, and the more positive effects of globalization in terms of
information flow and economic opportunity have all helped to improve things, while
the end of East-West confrontation has removed a whole set of external risks. A good
case could also be made that trends in international norms and practice, and the march
of global and regional institutionalization, have created an environment that is
relatively more accepting of and benign towards small states than ever before. It
remains, nonetheless, as true as it ever was that governance is the key to good
management of multi-functional security challenges. It is, indeed, perhaps the only
factor that one can safely generalize about, given the very great variety of individual
small states' challenges within the broad matrix offered above.

To recapitulate some of the points already made in this context: perceptions
and understandings of security itself must be the starting point. Policy will clearly be
on an unsound base if a small state's leaders fail to recognize the security importance
of relevant non-military sectors, but also if they go too far in seeing threats
everywhere, thereby demoralizing their population and wasting scarce resources on
over-scaled reactions. Also very important is that there should be as much consensus
as possible within the country on what security is, whose responsibility it is to deal
with it and what the current priorities are. It has been stressed how serious divisions
can become on these matters even within the smallest state, and if left untreated they
not only damage effectiveness at home but can sabotage the whole external aspect of
security provision. Whether fairly or not, the world is much less tolerant of and
interested in a small state sending conflicting signals than it would be towards policy
struggles in Washington, Beijing or Paris.

That last point is an argument for a small state to have a conscious,
comprehensive and consistent security strategy that extends at least into the medium
term. Other reasons for the importance of this have been given, notably the resource
allocation angle, the complex interactions between different dimensions in peacetime,
and the ease with which emergency events can acquire multi-sector impacts.
However, while the difficulty of strategy formation and the importance of overview
points to a strong top-level input, this needs to be balanced by recognition of the
importance of non-state and bottom-up roles – information supply, compliance, and
active burden-sharing – above all in a small state with a limited bureaucracy. Even if
there are no major ideological divisions or objective divergences of interest within a
small state's territory, the viewpoints and concerns of business, NGOs, social
organizations and ordinary people are different enough by nature to require a serious
effort by the state to explain, consult, reconcile differences and work for positive
societal buy-in. Ensuring such in-depth back up for state strategy is particularly vital
in two contrasting contexts: handling disasters that strike within society, and facing
the risks of greater external activism into which so many small states are now being
impelled.

When a small state needs to look outside for protection, advice and support in
any dimensions of security, the range of choices and calculations facing it has been
sufficiently covered in section IV. What is worth underlining here is how much a
small state's chances of getting a good bargain are improved if it can take a
dispassionate, almost scientific view of its environment rather than letting itself be
driven by prejudices and preconceptions towards various outside actors, or pandering
too much to views of that kind among the grass-roots. Precisely because a small state
may so often have to 'role-play' – and do things that are not pleasant or natural for it to
do - in order to please and impress as many potential providers as possible, it needs to
keep a very firm grip on the identity and fundamental national purpose that underlies such tactics. At the same time, since small states are just as prone as large ones to the illusion that the world centres on them and 'everyone else is out of step', a particular effort is needed by small-state leaders to try to put themselves inside the heads of larger ones (as well as institutional guardians) and to grasp where they are coming from. This is probably also the best answer to the conundrums facing a small state that needs to solve various of its non-military security problems by integration with a multinational organization of the more intrusive kind. Traditional sovereignty in the sense of being able to take each decision in a purely self-referential way – and to change one's mind as often as wished – is bound to be reduced as part of the price-tag in such bargains. Identity most definitely does not have to be compromised in the same way if the small state is clear on how it is instrumentalizing the larger entity, and not vice versa. Success in this depends, in turn, on a clear objective perception of national needs and goals, combined with an ability to understand the subjectivity of others, and to play with, not against, the visible rules and invisible culture or dynamics of the institutional frame. If the outcome is better security, in the round, in the long term and for all legitimate stake-holders, the small state will be fulfilling a function of the state even more ancient than the notion of sovereignty: and that will be no small success.