

Leta BARDJIEVA MIOVSKA

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Review article

SMALL STATES AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR EXTERNAL SECURITY AND DEFENSE POLICY FROM THE ASPECT OF SECURITY MANAGEMENT

Abstract:

Foreign security and defense policy is an interdependent component of security management. According to the neo-classical definition of security management in the field of external security-defense policy, it includes a series of practices, strategies and principles aimed at protecting assets, information and resources from various threats and risks through the development of civil and military skills. From the perspective of the realist theory, the nature of the international structure is defined by its organizing principle, that is, the balance and distribution of power between states and international institutions. Hence, the question arises as to what is the position and role of small states in the international system in terms of security management, from where the main hypothesis of this paper derives, which highlights the need for appropriate management of security trends, both at the national level and in wider international context.

Through the application of an inductive method of qualitative analysis of primary and secondary sources, comparative presentation of combined data and identification of causal influences, the role of the mechanisms that have the most potential to achieve an optimal outcome in the positioning of small states with limited political influence and a low security share is highlighted. Thus, through the application of appropriate models for the implementation of security management functions, small states create space for participation in security maneuvers.

Keywords: *small states, foreign and security policy, security management, security systems, security functions.*

Introduction

From a chronological point of view, the primacy in the game of international peace and security and the balance of power, almost throughout the entire documented history, is primarily held by the great powers (states, nations, republics, dominions, empires).

Ever since the fifth century BC, Thucydides formulated through his dictum that the strong act from a position of power, while the small must act from a position of unwilling acceptance.

In this direction, it is important to emphasize that to a certain extent there is a synonymization between a small state and a small power, or a large state and a large power. Defining terms such as weak state, power and size are attributes that apply over time and space, parallel to the development of international relations, diplomatic activities and security paradigms in the second half of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century (Dressler, 2019: 14).

After the Second World War, in accordance with the so-called systemic approach in international relations, which is an aggregate of nation-states, based on a behaviorist perception, the fundamental question is raised about the survival of small states among larger powers, primarily due to the race for power of the two superpowers and maneuvering to gain greater access in establishing their own hegemony. The contrast between the big powers - regional and global, and the small states that are overshadowed in this relationship, partially decreases in intensity after the end of the Cold War, which in practice implies the possibility of small states to take their own position and act independently in fulfilling their national interests without significant danger, in shaping and articulating their positions, to be dominated by regional and global powers (states) (Snejdarek, 1967:36).

Small states traditionally play a marginal role in the construction and maintenance of the international security order, which leads to the isolation of small states in their foreign policy articulations (Brady & Thorhallsson, 2021) Small states tend to pursue pragmatic and reactive security and shape their policies in the direction of the interests of nearby great powers, with the primary intention of ensuring their own survival, yet small states are essential to the global security landscape (Sweeney, & Derdzinski, 2010: 35-50).

They are not in a position to "allow" themselves a conflict, so the more favorable alternative for them remains the diplomatic struggle to avoid or reduce the risk of conflict. The only way to avoid uncertainty, which for a small state in international relations is much greater than for a large state, is the construction of appropriate security institutions and the application of a suitable model of security management (management) to strengthen its positions, through its association in international institutions, with the aim of strengthening their own strategic negotiating role in the external environment, as well as protecting sovereignty and integrity from an internal aspect (Milanovic, 2023:614).

1. Definitional divergences

1.1. *Small states*

Small states are an integral part of the international order. Two thirds of the UN member states fall into this category. They operate in the same broad political and economic environment as all other states. In their foreign policy, they pursue the same goals of security, prosperity and well-being of their citizens. They also conduct their diplomacy using the same diplomatic tools as larger states, such as so-called soft and hard power (Baehr, 1975: 456–466).

Primarily, in the context of definition of small states, they vary and incorporate multiple aspects, such as their capabilities, challenges and limitations. Small states recognize the valuable role that multilateral diplomacy plays in strengthening their engagement and amplifying their voices, thus leveling the rules of the game (Wivel, 2023:490-505).

Also, the definitions of small states can be categorized in terms of their absolute and relative capacities, primarily due to the fact that their classification is not at all simple and there is no universally accepted consensus regarding the criteria used to assess whether a certain state can be called small. These criteria are based on two basic assessment approaches, *qualitative* or *quantitative*. Qualitative definitions are based on relations between states and international bodies. These approaches provide complementary perspectives primarily for the conduct of diplomacy of small states with an emphasis on (a)symmetrical relations with large states.

Quantitative definitions begin with the criterion of absolute size based on demographic, geographic or economic factors, individually or in various combinations. According to the Oxford Encyclopedia, small countries are those countries that have a population of less than 10 million inhabitants. According to the World Bank, almost 50 small states are listed, according to the following criteria: territorial size, economic power or potential, security positions or military strength, interaction with other states as indices of relative power. In terms of the vulnerabilities of these countries, they are particularly vulnerable to exogenous shocks such as economic turbulence, natural disasters and climate change. With limited economic opportunities and significant migration, they often face capacity constraints. According to the definition of the Small States Forum, an informal group at the UN established in 1992, small states are defined as key in international relations, flexible and adaptable to changes, although once characterized as lacking strategic weight.

1.2. *Foreign Security and Defense Policy*

Foreign security and defense policy refers to the efforts of states to protect and advance their core national interests and identity from external threats within the framework of foreign policy action by promoting cooperation and

strengthening international security, in addition to preserving their territorial integrity and sovereignty that fall in the domain of national security (European Commission, 2020).

The *national security* narrative has traditionally been synonymous with military security, while the syntagm external threats to the existence of the state or its territory are considered paramount and, consequently, face the most destructive instrument of national power of the state, its military forces (Brady & Thorhallsson, 2021:59-71).

Although modern concepts of national security also incorporate broader social aspects, such as economic, human and environmental security, which require responses that are largely non-military in nature, despite the apparent shift in emphasis to *external security* operations, modern military forces remain organized and equipped to defend the state from external threat (Johanson, 2022:14).

External security policy through *defense policy* deals with external threats and implies their ranking according to importance, danger, proximity and immediacy. It deals with the translation of resources into defense-security capabilities and current and future force structure, as well as the formulation and dissemination of doctrine. Hence, security and defense *planning* deals with the assessment of future threats and force structure, capabilities and doctrines. New national security expectations are embedded in existing organizational structures and within existing or projected *budgets*. For large states or small resource-rich states, this approach is feasible and appropriate given their available resources and the range of potential threats to their national interests projected externally. However, for most small states, financial and physical resource constraints make it challenging to meet these broader expectations within their existing military structures and budgets (Bennett, 2018:63).

In this regard, small states are defined as those recognized members of the United Nations that maintain permanent military forces, but are unable to significantly change the nature of their strategic environment. Developing and maintaining a national security apparatus with full military capabilities generally appears to be an inadequately effective approach for small states, which in reality often lack the capacity to generate sufficient power and military competence in specific contingencies (Thorhallsson, 2018: 17-34).

Therefore, for small states is preferable to engage in collective security arrangements through membership in military alliances, reflecting the view that autonomous military operations, even in defense of the state, are largely aspirational, and more effective engagement is identified in the realm of called in international security the export of security, which in practice means sending civilian, military, police personnel in operations to preserve, build and support peace in an international context (European Defense Agency, 2020).

The concept of the development of the defense-security function of small states, the development of security institutions and the construction of transformed societies, in the recent concepts of international relations, foreign and

security policy, diplomacy and military diplomacy, includes *the security sector reforms* as one of the imperatives in direction of the activities undertaken. These activities are primarily driven by the UN concept of the human-centric approach to security, the new paradigm for security as an activity of public interest, etc.

In the context of the analysis of small states and the development of their security sector, a significant segment that covers the work and activity of their security systems is the process of creation of modern security institutions that have the capacity to respond to traditional forms and forms of threats to national security, but also new trends in security. Namely, there are several dimensions that have been subject to reform and transformation for three decades, which in their essence refer to the creation of strategic frameworks, the method of regulation, the management of material and financial resources, the management of human resources, supervision and control, respect for international law, etc. (Hadžić, 2012).

1.3. Security Management

Security management involves the systematic process of identifying, assessing and mitigating security risks within an organization or society. This includes the allocation of resources, the development of policies and procedures, and the coordination of efforts to maintain security. Within the framework of what is called security management, or defense-security activity of a certain society, that is, a state, a series of definitions have been offered that determine the meaning and function of this term. Hence, according to the *organic viewpoint*, security management is undertaken and carried out by those authorities and services whose purpose, that is, competence, is the security-protective role of the state, which can be implemented in two ways, through preventive and repressive activity (Jacobs, *et al.*, 2021:43-53).

In differentiating between how security management to preserve national security is carried out by small and large states, actors are categorized based on the *structural power* they exercise within the international system. Structural power refers to the ability of the state individually to change the overall structure of the system in which they exist. Hence, empirically perceived, small states lack "structurally significant" capabilities such as significant military power or a large economy, according to the concept of Westphalian sovereignty (Williams, 2008:340-342).

According to the *realist perspective*, the international system is structured solely by its great powers. From the aspect of security analysis, where the reference object of security is the state, the security activity of a state, that is, its national security, is conditioned by the security environment and security architecture. Here, first of all, the physical-geographic positioning, the strategic position in relation to the proximity or distance from the big states (powers), the control of strategic routes and resources, as well as the negotiating position of a

certain small state, which are the most significant factors in any system configuration, are taken into account. (Waltz, 1979:161).

Security management in small states represents a specific challenge due to their limited resources, geographic determinants, vulnerability to external pressures, etc. Small states build security systems whose success depends on a number of determining factors. Under a multidimensional, open definition of security, in the context of categorizing the factors that condition the security of states, it includes *joining strategic alliances*, conducting defense and military diplomacy, *investing in reforms in the security-intelligence sector and oversight*, building resilience capacities, application of international law, regional integration, balancing security and development, adaptability and flexibility, etc. (Alford, 1984: 363–369).

This preference for access to collective security systems leads to the question of whether membership in military-political alliances is imperative for small states, in the context of overcoming their limitations in relation to larger military partner forces for the development of structures and capabilities? The answer to this question is affirmative in the context of addressing certain military-security issues that are being securitized at the global level, although traditional collective agreements do not necessarily boast of offering solutions to certain local security problems..

Hence, a variable can be derived in the context of the claim that access to military-political alliances is vital for the survival of small states in the context of *interoperability*. Interoperability, according to NATO's defining terminology, is the ability to act together coherently, effectively and efficiently to achieve Allied tactical, operational and strategic objectives. (NATO, 2023).

The discourse around interoperability, in a military context, mostly refers to the dimension of technical interoperability in relation to the strategic, operational and tactical integration of military systems. Technical interoperability refers to the ability of communication, information and logistics systems to communicate and share data at levels that improve multinational operations. However, for small states, interoperability also has a behavioral note, implying a prerequisite for a doctrinal approach to a more constructive contribution to collective security operations. Thus, *behavioral interoperability* is related to perception and action, as are doctrinal and cultural interoperability, both of which are influenced by state constitutional, legal and customary elements. According to behavioral theory and the concept of interoperability, small states could communicate effectively with larger defense partners without the obligation to develop and maintain expensive military capabilities, that are rarely deployed in direct support of their national security interests. Because, small states are expected to export security in non-military ways such as participation in peacekeeping missions, development assistance and compliance with global regulation (Simpson, 2018:119).

From a foreign and security policy perspective, national security strategies are vital for small states, as the principles of international security rest

on equal rights for all nations, safeguards in the military, political, economic, health and humanitarian fields, respect for sovereignty and fair political resolution of international crises and regional conflicts (Maass, 2016:11)

If these principles are universally accepted, small states can develop a strategy in cooperation with other states. Hence, it can be argued that the traditional, classical realist notion in defining small states is neither outdated nor dysfunctional, but modified and supplemented in the context of current developments. Most small states are by definition vulnerable in a world where international law is, relatively speaking, compromised, because they tend to have limited military capacity compared to major powers with large armies. Thus, given that a violation of international law would have implications with the greatest security risk for small states, one would expect them to be the defenders of the international order that protects them (Waltz, 1979: 40).

Hence, it can be said that all these factors affect the security of small states, albeit in very different patterns, and in terms of exposure to both traditional threats and non-traditional threats, which may hit them disproportionately, or proportionately. to be avoided (Gitelson, 1974: 451).

2. Small states and the development of their external security and defense policy from the aspect of security management (review of the Republic of North Macedonia)

In the context of this paper, through empirical examples in the field of international security and defense cooperation, regional cooperation platforms, as well as the reforming of the national security sector, among others, the applied security management for the development of the security function will be shown through the projection of the potential of the own security institutions of small states, specifically the Republic of North Macedonia (Bakreski, Bardjieva M., 2021: 342).

At the executive level, as part of the activities of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia in the domain of the system for managing the process of accession to the EU, Chapter 3.31 stands out for the approximation of the external security and defense policy of the Republic of Macedonia to the CFSP and ESDP.

Furthermore, within the framework of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, through the Directorate for NATO and Political-Security Affairs and the Directorate for Multilateral Relations and Security Cooperation, annual work plans and reports are prepared, the activities and tasks of the Republic of North Macedonia are planned, organized and coordinated in terms of multilateral relations, especially in the areas of peace, security and human rights, cooperation in international and regional organizations; the process of integration of the Republic of North Macedonia into NATO through the coordination of activities and tasks from the membership of the Republic of North Macedonia into NATO, etc.

As part of the activities of the Ministry of Defense, the Republic of North Macedonia starts from the position that security and prosperity in the global framework increasingly depend on the effective multilateral system and the contribution to it. Hence, the contribution of the Republic of North Macedonia in the military part in relation to the missions led by the United Nations Organization is a confirmation of the effective membership and its strategic determinations. Through the ARNM Operations Command, the conventional ground and air forces of the Army are prepared for the defense and protection of the territorial integrity and independence of the Republic, with the declared forces to participate in operations to support peace and prevent conflicts and deal with regional conflicts and crises in operations led by the UN, NATO, OSCE, EU, and other internationally agreed alliances and to contribute to the protection of the broader interests of the Republic, conducting operations and providing military support as a host country to international forces on the territory of the Republic.

Taking into account that the sources of threats to the security of small states have heterogeneous properties and have a spillover effect across national borders, the form of regional cooperation between them is also significant. Regional cooperation takes place within the framework of various initiatives (for example, the Process for Cooperation in Southeast Europe, the Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons in SE Europe, the Regional Initiative for Migration, Asylum and Refugees, etc.). With this type of activity, the governments of the region participate in the development of numerous declared solutions rooted in strong partnerships and regional cooperation aimed at combating the arms trade, reducing armed violence and promoting gender equality, as essential prerequisites for the overall development of the region and thus to increase the capacities of institutions from the security sector.

When it comes to the activities related to the reform programs in the security apparatus, they represent a mechanism that creates a cohesive and synchronized unification of the security system, where a key element is the regulation and coordination of internal security, foreign policy, the eradication of high corruption and crime, in the direction of approaching the doctrinal-strategic positions and structural arrangements of the security system in the context of modern concepts of defense and security, based on the current challenges, risks and threats in the security environment (Government of RSM, 2024).

These endeavors are primarily initiated by the geopolitical and strategic implications left behind by the process of independence of the states that were part of the Eastern bloc more than thirty years ago, the regional conflicts that were a consequence of nationalistic restructuring, as well as the institutional efforts to adapt to modern security environment.

For an illustrative example, the Republic of North Macedonia, Croatia, Montenegro, and to some extent the Republic of Serbia, which is a militarily neutral state, are going through these processes.

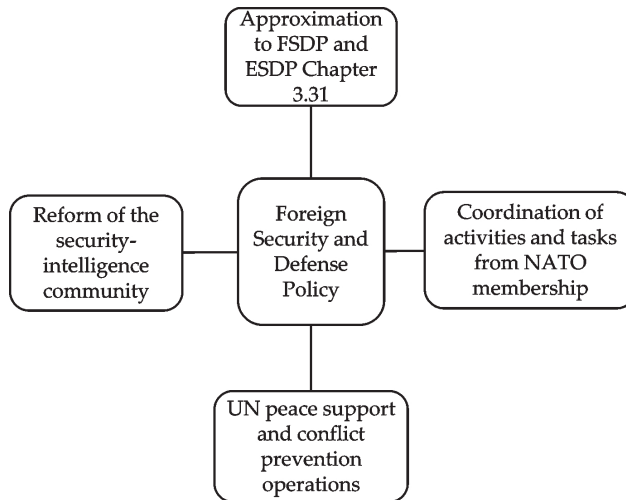


Figure 1: External security and defense policy – coordination and unification of activities in the RHM. Source:<https://vlada.mk/node/35101>

Conclusion

In the context of the elaborated data, an inductive conclusion is reached about the causal influence of the effects of external and internal systemic changes on small states. In the established configuration of international relations and the development of the security activity, small states, in the context of the management of national security and its levels and dimensions, should form alliances, be they regional or international, for the maintenance of their security which they do not they can afford to maintain it themselves, due to lack of resources, population, size or economic conditions.

In the external domain, through the application of diplomatic, economic and political means and initiatives, small states try to occupy a significant place under the protection of the umbrella of the international order, thus trying to minimize the costs and maximize the benefits of creating a secure environment for their citizens.

From the aspect of the internal dimension of national security of small states, the pace of finalization of structural and institutional reforms in the security sectors is significant, in the direction of strengthening the capacities of the security systems in achieving the effectiveness and efficiency of the undertaken engagements and utilization of resources, as well as the principles of accountability and transparency. Here it is important to note that despite the initial challenges such as the lack of political will for reform and the relics of previous system arrangements, the disproportionate relationship between donor and recipient of reform programs, this specific activity of security systems in small states, viewed from the perspective of geography and political cohesiveness,

represents a constructive example of the development of the security-protection function of the security systems of small states.

Finally, in addition to the limitations of small states, in the context of the postmodern understanding of international relations, emphasis is placed on the opportunities they have in the promotion of respect and the application of co-operation through the principle of interoperability, which is a vital connective tissue in the international security architecture. and guarantor of the principles of the rule of international law. The possibilities rather than the limitations and disadvantages in relation to the asymmetric proportions of large versus small states also have benevolent predispositions, if one recognizes the potential for flexibility and adaptability, which is a prerequisite for survival, understood from a realist and behaviorist point of view.

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