

# THE DIPLOMACY OF SMALL STATES IN THE INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL SYSTEM

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## Abstract

*This article interrogates the undercurrents of small states foreign policy and the determinants of foreign policy making in small states. It question small states are positioned in the web of international relations with other player, such as large states. The research is guided by the assumption that small states are somewhat limited by domestic and external factor, which are the driving catalysts of international relations agendas. The analysis aims to determine how the smallness of a state can be a challenge, and how small states can survive the limitations of their smallness. The article makes use of Liberalism/Neo-Liberalism theories of International Relations (IR) Studies.*

## 1. Introduction

The diplomacy of small states provides the study of international relations, diplomacy and the practice of diplomacy with new directions and makes some epistemological and ontological contributions to the fields of International Relations (IR) and Diplomacy. Therefore, post-Cold War years have witnessed the emergence of the literature on small states' foreign relations and diplomacy (McCraw, 1994; Mohamed, [sa]; Cooper & Shaw, 2009). The literature characterising small states diplomacy will be espousing Liberalism-inclined values of peace, cooperation and interdependence among nations.

The research question is what are the undercurrents of small states foreign policy and the determinants of foreign policy making in small states. How do they position small states in the web of international relations that with other players like large states? The research is guided by the assumption that small states are somewhat limited by domestic and external factors to be the driving catalysts of international relations agenda. The analysis aims to determine how the smallness of a state can be a challenge, and

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how small states can survive the limitations of their smallness. The article will make use of Liberalism/Neo-Liberalism theories of International Relations (IR) studies.

The article seeks to test the assumption by way of examining the undercurrents of small states, in order to make a contribution to IR studies. In order to analyse the diplomacy of small states. In order to achieve this, the authors conduct a conceptual analysis of the diplomacy of small states, the article analyses inter-small state diplomatic relations, small states' diplomatic relations with large states / large powers, and their diplomatic relations in regional and international organisations.

## **2. Defining small states**

There is no single definition of a small state as the variables determining small states are evolving. Generally, a small state is defined in terms of its small population, small territorial size, economic strength or weakness, a state's perception of itself as a small state, and a low level of involvement in global affairs (Prasad, 2009, p. 44). During the 1960s, a maximum population figure of 10 to 15 million was an indicator that determined small states. By the 1990s, this figure was amended to 1.5 million people (Taymaz, 2009, p. 3), whereas Europe applies a maximum of 17 million and the Commonwealth 1.5 million people in their respective definition of small states (Sweeney & Derdzinski, 2010, p. 38). However, although the Commonwealth applies a maximum threshold of 1.5 million people, it includes four states (Jamaica, Lesotho, Namibia and Papua New Guinea) whose population are larger 1.5 million as these states share many other characteristics (size and small economy) (Commonwealth and World Bank, 2000, p. 3).

This contribution defines small states in terms of its small territorial size, the size of a state's economy (low income), and population (8 million people and less). A population of 6 million has been adopted being a rounded figure of the median between the lowest and highest population thresholds cited in existing literature as stated above, the study also includes Cuba, Guinea, Haiti, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Niger, Rwanda, Somalia, Uganda, and Zimbabwe that comply with the study's operational definition. **Table 1** includes a list of states, including small island state and small land-locked states that meet the criteria of the study's operational definition of a small state. Table 1 below is a list of small states according to the definition adopted in this study.

**Table 1:** Small states of the world

AFRICA	EUROPE	LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARRIBEAN	ASIA AND PACIFIC
Botswana	Armenia	Antigua and Barbuda	Afghanistan
Benin	Bahrain	The Bahamas	Armenia
Burundi	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Barbados	Bhutan
Cape Verde	Croatia	Belize	Brunei
Central African Republic	Cyprus	Costa Rica	Cooks Island*
Congo	Denmark	Cuba	Fiji
Comoros	Estonia	Dominica Republic	Jordan
Djibouti	Finland	Georgia	Kiribati
Equatorial Guinea	Iceland	Grenada	Kyrgyz Republic
Eritrea	Ireland	Guyana	Lao
Gabon	Kosovo	Honduras	Lebanon
The Gambia	Lithuania	Jamaica	Maldives
Ghana	Luxembourg	The Nicaragua	Marshall Islands
Guinea	Macedonia	Panama	Micronesia
Guinea-Bissau	Malta	Paraguay	Mongolia
Lesotho	Moldova	St Kitts and Nevis	Nauru
Liberia	Norway	St Lucia	Nepal
Madagascar	Slovak Republic	St Vincent and the Grenadines	Niue
Malawi	Slovenia	Suriname	Oman
Mauritania	Switzerland	Trinidad and Tobago	Papua New Guinea
Mauritius		Uruguay	Palau
Mozambique			Samoa
Namibia			Singapore
São Tomé and Príncipe			Solomon Islands
Seychelles			Tajikistan
Sierra Leone			Tonga
Swaziland			Turkmenistan
Somalia			United Arab Emirates
South Sudan			Qatar
Togo			Tuvalu
Zimbabwe			Timor-Leste
			Uzbekistan
			Vanuatu
			Vietnam
			Yemen

\*A self-governing territory in association with New Zealand.

*Sources:* The Commonwealth (2000); Prasad (2009) and the World Bank (2015)

### **3. The implications of ordering large states**

When small states share borders with large states, they often cannot pursue independent foreign policies, because of their susceptibility to dominance (Cooper & Momani, 2011, p. 114). Therefore, it is customary for a small state to be cautious with its foreign policy when it borders large states (Nedelea, 2009, p. 338). Accordingly, small states endeavour to maintain friendly relations with large states in order to avoid dominance and marginalisation by larger states. Timor Leste, amongst others, is an illustrative example. Bordering a large neighbouring state, Indonesia, Timor Leste has been cautious towards offending this larger neighbour (Smith, 2005, p. 16). Typical of a small state's foreign policy and diplomatic practice, Timor-Leste upheld a neutral foreign policy and became inclined to the notion of collective security. Although Timor Leste has not concluded a formal military alliance with any large state, she has, nevertheless, welcomed the presence of Australian forces on her territory in the interest of collective security. Timor Leste has been systematically postponing the end of the United Nations Mission of Support in Timor Leste (UNMISSET) mandate to assist the administrative structures and ensure stability in the country following her independence to justify the presence of Australian forces (contributing 25% of UNMISSET forces) as part of the international endeavours and her security (Smith, 2005, pp. 28-29).

Another small state bordering large states is Nepal which is sandwiched between two large states, namely the People's Republic of China (hereafter China) and India. Nepal, therefore, has no other option than to maintain cordial relations with her large neighbours (Dahal, Sainju, Lohani, Sharma and Parajuli, 2008, p. 17). In Southern Africa, landlocked small states like Botswana, Swaziland and Lesotho are compelled to refrain from foreign policy behaviour and diplomatic practices that will offend their large neighbours and due to their trade dependence of their large neighbours (Bátora, 2005, p. 18).

However, landlocked small states do not always refrain from offending their neighbours (Bátora, 2005; Dahal et al., 2008). Botswana, for example, pronounced herself against the legitimacy of the Government of Zimbabwe, following the 2008 presidential elections, a stance contrary to the one adopted by other members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), including, Namibia (a small state) and South Africa (a middle power), on whose ports Botswana's exports and imports depend. At the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly Committee meetings held in Brussels in September 2008, SADC delegates called for the lifting of sanctions against Zimbabwe, but the representative of Botswana

made a statement that Botswana held different views, notwithstanding the stance of her neighbours. This signifies atypical small state foreign policy pursuit.

Botswana was, furthermore, among the first countries to recognise the Government of the National Transitional Council (NTC) in Libya, after the overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011, a position different to that of her neighbours, Namibia and South Africa. The position of Namibia and South Africa was that NTC Government was not legitimate. Thus, at the AU Peace and Security Council Meeting in Addis Ababa in August 2011, chaired by President Zuma of South Africa, the Chairperson and the Namibian delegation, successfully persuaded the meeting, in refusing the Libyan Ambassador to the AU, Ali Abdallah Awidan, to attend the meeting. This was because Ambassador Awidan had written to the Chairperson of the AU Commission saying that he recognised the Government of the NTC. Namibia and South Africa then maintained that the Ambassador could only attend the meeting if he represented the government under the Libyan leader, Muamar Gadaffi.

There is security disadvantages for smaller states when sharing borders with large states. South American states like Guyana and Belize face the threat of territorial claims by their larger neighbours, Venezuela and Guatemala

[They] are constrained to rely heavily for their national security on an appeal to the applicable rules of international law as a means of safeguarding their existence as sovereign states in the absence of capabilities to ensure their political independence and territorial integrity (Pollard, [sa], p. 2).

It is, therefore, arguable that small states' neighbourliness to large states sometimes creates a sense of insecurity, and it is not always that neighbouring large states brings a feeling of protection to a small state.

Some states are remotely located and such geographic locations of small states further impact on the cost of their diplomacy. This obliges small states to embrace their neighbours in pursuing economic diplomacy. Small states such as Norway that are not landlocked have some disadvantages regarding making their presence felt in international relations. Norway's geographical position isolates her from the larger part of Europe and, even if she strives to work on her visibility, she is still only regarded as one of the Scandinavian states (Bátora, 2005, p. 18).

Small islands, especially those that are located in the Pacific Ocean, are remote from major trade centres in the world (Commonwealth and World Bank, 2000, p. ii). The transportation of goods from and to ma-

for markets is, therefore, a costly exercise the economic diplomacy of these states. In general, economic difficulties contribute to small states' vulnerability to partly depend on foreign assistance by larger economies which will then seek to influence their foreign policies, as it happened when Malawi cancelled to host the AU Summit in 2012, under pressure from donors not to invite Sudanese President, Al-Bashir, as it will be discussed in the sections below (Aljazeera, 2012).

In contrast to this, some small states have surprised the international community because of their independence from large neighbours and their ability to chart their own course (Hill, 2003, p. 294). Cuba, for example, has remained resilient in opposing to her larger neighbour, the United States (US), despite the latter's decades of economic blockade against Cuba. Despite the US' position, Cuba maintains trade relations with other countries. According to the European Parliament (2014), Cuba has concluded trade agreements with at least 18 members of the European Union (EU), despite the EU's common position to restrict ties with Cuba until the values of democracy and human rights are upheld. Despite thus, the EU is Cuba's second trade partner with the EU the largest investor in the country.

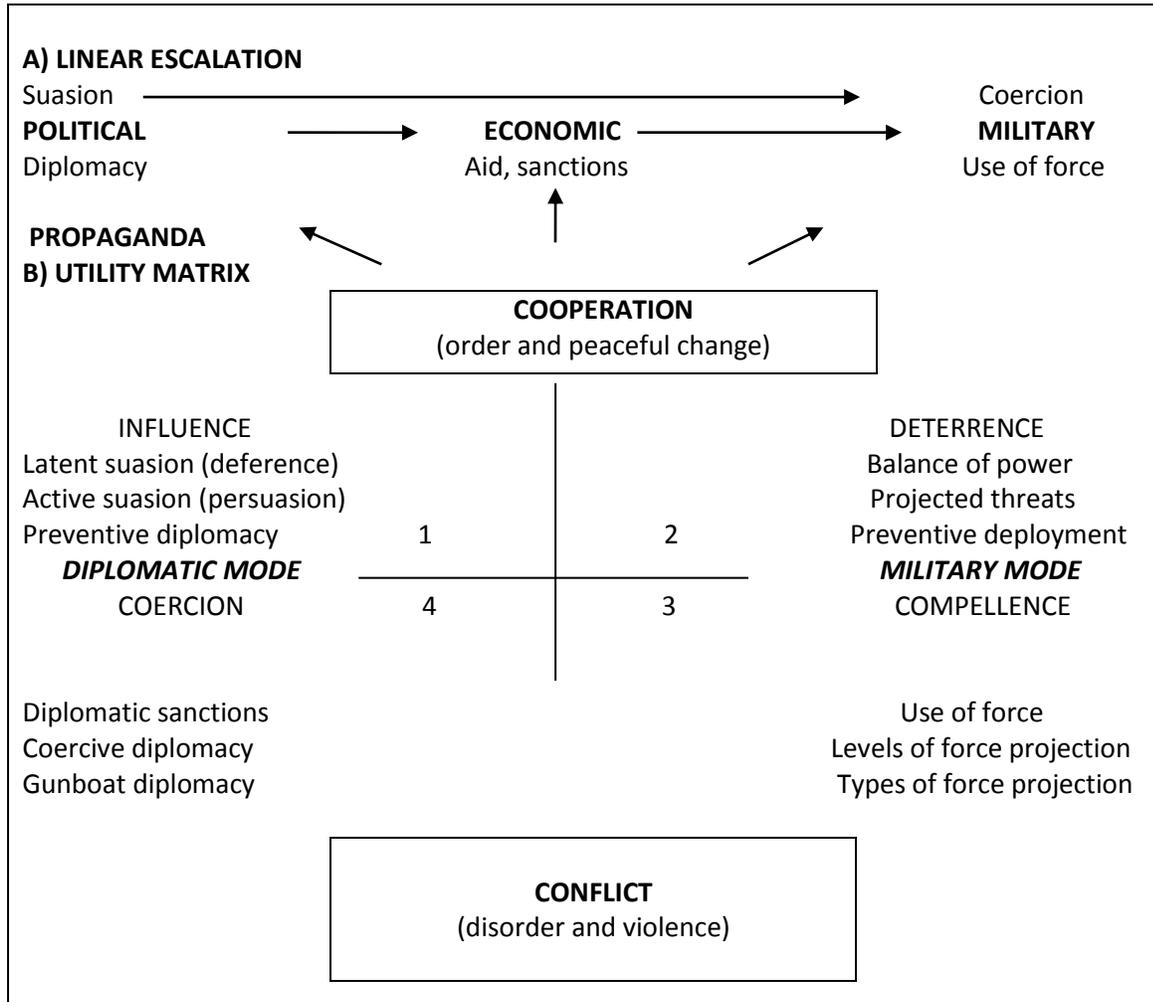
Thus, a small territory, geography, population and economy, which are the determining features of small states, also determine their relations with larger states, but with some states espousing behaviours that are traditionally associated with larger states.

#### **4. Diplomacy as an instrument of foreign policy**

Diplomacy is one of the key instruments of a state's foreign policy. Political diplomacy entails articulating policies to win political support from other states or actors. This type of diplomacy is conducted through, *inter alia*, discussions, summits and consultations over issues relevant to the parties involved in political diplomacy.

Large states' instrument of diplomacy are characterised by a linear escalation that starts from diplomacy escalating to the use of force, inclined to Realism as a theory of IR studies, illustrated in figure 1 below:

**Figure 1:** Diplomacy as an instrument of foreign policy



*Adopted from: Du Plessis (2006: 136)*

Meanwhile, small states’ instruments of diplomacy adopt an opposite posture of the one discussed in figure 1. For example, when political diplomacy and economic diplomacy are unable to be used as diplomatic instruments, small states resort to specialised forms of diplomacy. This entails seeking alternative allies rather than imposing economic sanctions against their adversaries. For example, relations between the EU and Zimbabwe turned sour in the 2000s following the land reform programmes which resulted in many whites of European descent losing their farms through expropriation by the Government of Zimbabwe. Subsequently, the EU imposed sanctions against Zimbabwe. As a small state, Zimbabwe sought alternative diplomatic allies as a diplomatic instrument to send a message to her adversaries that she remains independent from them in continuing her relevance in the web of the world politics and

economy. Zimbabwean Government adopted the Look East Policy, embracing Asian states, such as Malaysia and China that,

In essence, Mugabe uses the Look East Policy to reassert Zimbabwe's role on the international stage to gain greater prestige and legitimacy at home and abroad... This project... contributes to the growing literature on the use and deployment of state identity as a foreign-policy tool for states (Youde, 2007, p. 4).

The diplomacy practiced by Zimbabwe in response to the EU's foreign policy towards Zimbabwe does not correspond to the linear escalation illustrated in the figure above. Small states, furthermore, do not use coercion, deterrence or compliance (see Figure 1).

The conduct of economic diplomacy is the same as that of political diplomacy but the objectives of economic diplomacy - the process of aligning a state's commercial interests with its foreign policy - are the advancement of a state's economic interests (Barston, 2006, p. 134). Actors are predominantly government leaders and officials, with the Head of State assumes a leading role in diplomacy. Other role players are Ministers, senior government officials, heads of diplomatic missions, diplomatic and Foreign Service officials. These actors conduct diplomacy through high-level visits and summits among others (Du Plessis, 2006, p. 140). See Table 2. Public diplomacy provides an opportunity to members of the general public to have an impact on their respective countries' diplomacies. In the conduct of public diplomacy, leaders gauge public opinion and solicit the support of their people in order to pursue given external policies. Rourke (2008, p. 273) contends that leaders endeavour to create an image at home and abroad that enables the country to attain diplomatic success. Table 2 below outlines a typology of diplomacy that is used in the study.

**Table 2:** Typology of diplomacy

<b>Permanent</b>	<b>FORM</b>	
	<b>Bilateral</b>	<b>Multilateral</b>
	Resident mission in receiving state Diplomatic, consular and specialized representation such as attachés	Resident missions at inter-governmental organisations (IGO) such as the UN, EU and AU
	<b>Inter-governmental</b> (state – state / state - IGO / IGO – IGO)	
<b>DURATION</b>		
<b>Temporary</b>	<b>Inter-governmental</b> (state – state / state - IGO / IGO – IGO)	
	High level and ministerial visits (by heads of government and state, ministers) Ad hoc personal diplomacy (at ministerial and trans-governmental level not involving diplomats)	Serial summits (Summits of the AU heads of state and government) Ad hoc summits and/or conferences Parliamentary diplomacy (UN General Assembly) Conference diplomacy on specific issues such as climate change and racism
	<b>Non-governmental</b> (at least one actor is non-governmental)	
	<b>Bilateral</b>	<b>Multilateral</b>
		
	Multitrack and two-track diplomacy, involving non-governmental and transnational actors such as interest and pressure groups, multilateral corporations, NGOs, national liberation movements, terrorist groups)	

*Adopted from: Du Plessis (2006, p. 140)*

In economic diplomacy, it has become mandatory to include non-state actors as role players. Du Plessis (2006, p. 122), for example, recognising the role of MNCs, NGOs and multilateral organisations in foreign policy-making, states,

Foreign policy is no longer the exclusive prerogative of and targeted at states and governments but has moved beyond the 'world of states' to the mixed-actor environment of the multi-centric world.

The mixed-actor environment, especially in the world economy, enables multinational institutions to emerge as one of the strong actors in the international economy. The role of multinational institutions in global trade could be discerned from the increasing foreign direct investment. National economies are becoming integrated in four main areas such as trade, finance, production and a growing network of treaties and institutions (Sachs, 2000, p. 218).

Generally, in the conduct of diplomacy, states are guided by norms of behaviour in the international political system. Norms are the standards and beliefs that countries uphold in their foreign relations. Norms emanate from International Law such as the UN Charter and Conventions (Hill, 2003, p. 178). The social identities of foreign policy actors, too, determine the interests and goals of foreign policy and there is, thus, a causal link between norms, actors, identity and interests (Checkel, 2008, p. 72). The hypotheses are also part of the constructivists' approach to IR. The issue of International Law and interests is not reflected in Du Plessis' (2006, p. 136) figure on the instruments of diplomacy (see Figure 1). Meanwhile, the assumption of Liberalism as a theory of IR studies is that the interests of a state are generally many (Mingst, 2008, p. 72). This is arguably due to the fact that the plurality of actors results in those actors identifying a number of interests that the state should pursue.

According to Liberals, the identity of foreign policy actors is that they embrace cooperation (Mingst, 2008, p. 63). The identity of small states inclines them to comply with International Law's Liberalism-inclined values of justice, peace and cooperation, among others (Papadakis & Starr, 1991, p. 428).

## **5. Nature and scope of small states**

Proponents of Liberalism as a theory of IR studies have confidence in institutions such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the World Bank as they maintain that international organisations serve to regulate international markets and ensure an efficient allocation of resources. Liberals want to see all states served justly in the international economic system and are disinclined to a different treatment of small and large states (Cohn, 2008, p. 72). After all, international economic agreements and regimes serve the purpose of maintaining economic order that promotes cooperation (O'Brien & Williams, 2007, p. 20). There should, thus, be no state that uses its economic and trade strengths to the detriment of other states.

The diplomatic instruments preferred by small states are inclined to peaceful methods. Small states, generally, avoid conflicts largely because they lack the capabilities to force other states to behave, both in bilateral or multilateral relations. Consequently, the interests of small states also differ from those of large states. This is also because their resources are different; the goals of their diplomacy differ too (Papadakis, 1991, pp. 420-423). Small states, therefore, uphold Liberalism-inclined diplomacy. Yet, their diplomacy also illustrates elements of Realism as these states, like large states, do strive to enhance their national interests.

The motivation of small states to join multilateral organisations arises from what Liberalism theory argues that is the desire of small states to be provided with security (Mowle, 2003, p. 568). Kuchins and Zagorsky (1999, p. 10) argues that international organisations create a sense of collective security and foster peaceful solutions to disputes. When small states join military alliances, it should not be seen in terms of Realism's perspectives about the quest for power but it is more an effort, on the part of these countries, to boost their security. Such a trend corresponds to the theory of Liberalism's assertion that multilateral institutions guarantee national security.

However, the pursuance of economic diplomacy through multilateralism also has its own challenges. It is the proposition of Liberalism theory that in multilateral institutions, or any form of alliance, individual states should follow the positions of other states, even if such position is not necessarily its ultimate policy (Mowle, 2003, p. 569).

Liberalism's perspective on the interdependence of states' behaviour is largely determined by its surrounding environment (Moravcsik, 1997, pp. 520-522). The susceptibility created by trade relations between large and small states is rejected by Liberalism as a theory of IR. This is illustrated by Nichols (2004: 746) who stresses the need to adhere to the Charter of the WTO. He states that when a country disadvantages another with regard to the benefits provided by a trade agreement, the aggrieved state should be assisted by the WTO to be restored to its gainful position. He criticises the inflexible dispute settlement system of the WTO that it is unlike its predecessor, the General Agreements on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) which allowed for panel decision negotiations and where an aggrieved member state can exercise its power to vote against the panel report. He concludes that in this respect, the current settlement system does not promote the values of Liberalism theory.

The imbalance in trade power relations between large and small states is discouraged by advocates of Liberalism theory. Even when one country enjoys pre-eminence over another in terms of production

means, the relationship between the two countries should, nevertheless, remain advantageous to both countries (Cohn, 2008, p. 74). This intrinsically points to the principle of the equality of states as sovereign entities. The dictating of trade terms by one trading partner to the other partner espouses virtues of Realism as a perspective of IR studies. Thus, Cohn (2008, p. 74) further denounces unilateral trade policies and calls on the state to protect its citizens against such forms of biased trade patterns.

### **5.1 Small states diplomacy and multilateralism**

Small states overcome their limitations by practising multilateral diplomacy. Small states pursue multilateral diplomacy with many international economic institutions to advance their financial and economic strengths. They further form alliances with other small states to address common issues. For example, many small islands facing the threat of climate change come together to voice their concern against the emission of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere (Barston, 2006, p. 215).

Some small states adopt associative diplomacy by coming together to speak with one voice on issues of common interests. When small states voice their concern at the UN as a group, such as was the case with the Group of 77 (G-77), they attract global attention (Cooper & Momani, 2011, p. 114). Association with supra-national institutions give small states a sense of being part of economic integration (Haughton, 2010, p. 5). He further argues that these institutions provide prestige and security to small states. Slovakia, for example, felt insecure outside the EU and her nationals did all they could to convince Europe that they were eligible for the EU membership. The Czech Republic also felt that she had to shift from pro-Communist ideology to the West in the post-Cold War era. The suitable place to realise these aspirations was, accordingly, in the EU as the EU provides political, military security, and economic security. These states which as small states were previously aligned with the Soviet Union are able to adapt to their international environment in the post-Cold War era. Ultimately, small and poor countries of Europe now belong to a strong monetary system (Haughton, 2010, pp. 23-24).

The economic diplomacy pertaining to trade negotiations of small states is also characterised by alliances and coalitions. Some small countries that depend on agriculture, for example, have formed an unofficial alliance in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to address agricultural trade liberalisation, especially as it relates to the WTO's Doha Round of negotiations (O'Brien and Williams, 2007, pp. 161-162). This remains of particular interest to these small and developing states which experience the impact of an unlevelled field with their developed partners who subsidise agricultural exports. Small states such as Myanmar, Liberia, Somalia and the Central African Republic (CAR) have a high GDP share of more than

50 percent in the agricultural sector. Accordingly, they formed a multilateral coalition as an instrument of their economic diplomacy to advance their interests in global agricultural trade.

## **5.2 Distinct diplomatic behaviour and preference for multilateralism**

The smallness of states has a bearing on their behaviour in the international political system. Small states are generally averse to conflicts. For many years Ireland, for example, had refused to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and to participate in the NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme (Sweeney & Derdzinski, 2010, pp. 42-43). Another example is the reluctance of the Danish Parliament to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), possibly attributed to the notion that while alliances can work to the advantage of small states that they become equal partners with large states, creating a dilemma for small states (Thapa, 1997, p. 12). Small states will subsequently be turned into enemies by defending state A against state B, as part of the alliance, a small state inevitably becomes an enemy of state B.

Denmark, for example, joined NATO in 1949 but has been disinclined to NATO's support for nuclear weapons. From 1982 to 1987, the opposition in the Danish Parliament forced the government to adopt a foreign policy that was incompatible with NATO policies (Doeser, 2010, pp. 6-8). Since the Danish opposition held strong views against missile deployment whenever NATO issued communiqués that supported the missile deployment, the Danish government included in such communiqués dissenting footnotes, expressing their country's opposition. Footnotes were further included in the NATO communiqués that supported the US Strategic Defence Initiatives. The purpose of such foreign policy behaviour was to keep nuclear weapons from the territory of Denmark both during the times of war and peace.

Hey (2003, p. 84) states that because of states such as Luxemburg, due to their smallness, depends on the EU to air her voice. Her leaders admit that, was it not because of multilateralism through the EU, Luxembourg could not persuasively articulate her interests in the WTO.

## **5.3 Alignment with large powers and middle powers**

Apart from multilateralism, small states are also inclined to align themselves with large and middle powers, in order to survive politically and economically. For example when The Gambia became isolated in the international community following a *coup d'etat* in 1994, she found an ally in a great power, Nigeria, and even defended Nigeria in the wake of international criticism, resulting from the killing of the Nigerian human rights activist, Ken Saro-Wiwa, in 1995. To advance his country's economic diplomacy,

The Gambian leader, Jahya Jammeh, invited the Imam of Mecca to officiate at the opening of a mosque at the State House in 1995. The underlying reasons were that The Gambia wanted to establish sound economic relations with oil-producing Arab countries (Saine, 2003, pp. 124-125).

As a precautionary measure to avoid conflicts, small states avoid offensive behaviours against large states. Brighi and Hill (2008, p. 128) maintain that such moderation on the part of small states' foreign policy behaviours keep such states away from international conflicts. They further argue that small states, who behave to the contrary, invite complications and are bound to fail in their foreign policy endeavours.

#### **5.4 Dependence and limitations**

The foreign policies of small states espouse dependency. China and Taiwan, for example, have used development aid to win support from small islands (Bernal, 2012, p. 10). China, for example, has constructed a US\$ 17 million cricket stadium and further promised US \$122 million economic assistance to the Dominican Republic when she changed her diplomatic recognition of Taiwan in favour of China. Other small states such as St Lucia, Grenada and Nauru adopted their respective foreign policies towards China and Taiwan, depending on where they stood to receive better aid.

When small states depend on large powers for the supply of goods, it compromises their independence and they are, therefore, bound to be cognisant of political implications arising from economic relations. Ultimately, small powers would accordingly be limited in their foreign policy formulation (Vital, 1967, p. 57). In 2012 Malawi was due to host the AU Summit. However, being a small state, dependent of foreign aid from large states, they pressurised her not to invite Sudanese President Al-Bashir to the AU Summit. Sudan and many AU member-states felt that Al-Bashir was entitled as Head of State to attend the Summit. Eventually, Malawi gave in to the pressure of her benefactors resulting in the cancellation to host the Summit (Aljazeera, 2012).

#### **5.5 Scarcity of human resources**

Small states experience scarcity of capable idiosyncratic resources which impacts on states' effectiveness and negotiation capacity (Cross-Mike, [sa], p. 4; Nedelea, 2009, p. 335). These are, however, required in economic diplomacy as the negotiating human capacity is crucial in determining success. States must possess the human capacity to influence the agenda of economic diplomacy with other states and international organisations if they are to achieve the objectives of their economic diplomacy.

The problem of limited human resources capacity has reduced small states to being more reactive than pro-active in the international political system. Large states such as the US, China and Brazil, among others, influence the rules and institutions that impact on the global economy. Arguably, this means that large states have a remarkable status in the international economic diplomacy (Woods, 2008, p. 255; Zahariadis, 1994, p. 648). Small states further depend on foreign capital to boost their trade, where they are not net contributors but rather beneficiaries (Haughton, 2010, pp. 21-22).

### **5.6 Preference for negotiations rather than conflicts**

Literature on small states supports Liberalism in not supporting the use of force (Papadakis, 1991; Sweeney & Derdzinsk, 2010; Brighi & Hill, 2008; Russette, 2010). The refusal of Ireland to join NATO, for example, and the reluctance of Denmark to support NATO's nuclear correspond to both Liberalism and perspectives on small states' foreign policy behaviour.

Papadakis and Starr (1991, p. 429) assert that it is imperative for small states to endeavour creating a good rapport with large states. It is in the similar context that the afore-said relations with oil-rich and powerful states such as Nigeria and Arab states were courted by The Gambia. Liberalism as a theory of IR studies argues that state cooperation arises from the convergence of values (Moravcsik, 1997, pp. 525-528). This means that when states share common values such as the similarity of assumption of power between The Gambia and Nigeria, then there arise an opportunity for cooperation between such states. By aligning with oil-rich countries which are economically stronger, The Gambia's foreign policy behaviour confirms the relevance of the discourse of Abd Alaziz (2003, p. 11). He says that a great proponent of Liberalism theory, Robert O. Keohane, claims that the desire for prosperity is one of the considerations of states.

### **5.7 Limited use of economic statecraft**

Economic statecraft is an instrument predominantly used by large states which have enough resources at their disposal (Mingst, 2008, p. 114). It comes in a form of economic embargoes, or in a form of boycotts, where there will be no imports from the targeted states. Some states apply tariff discrimination measures to treat imports from the targeted state less favourably and others may freeze assets of the targeted state (Hill, 2003, pp. 149-151). This instrument is not always employed by small states as they are inherently weak. Economic statecraft is a technique advocated by Realism (Mingst, 2008, pp. 124-126). Liberalism encompasses a broad range of instruments in which a state can exercise influence on oth-

ers and, therefore, it advocates non-coercive measures. Small states do not have the capacity to use economic statecraft, as this requires both political and economic power which small states generally lack.

## **6. Factors affecting the diplomacy of small states**

Four factors negatively impact on the economy of small states (Taymaz, 2009, p. 4). These are the limited size of their national market, a limited domestic resources base, vulnerability and a limited scope for public policy; all impacting on a state's effectiveness pursuance of their economic diplomacy. A fifth factor, namely, identity (as a small state) can be added to this list of factors affecting the diplomacy of small states.

### **6.1 Identity**

Identity in international relations is identified with *inter alia*, Constructivism, which propounds that identities of states and political actors within the states are shaped by universal norms (Reus-Smit, 2009: 220). Identities are further driven by the interests of states. States inclined to democracy will identify themselves with the promotion of democratic values in the international political system.

Three mechanisms shape the identity of a state (Reus-Smith, 2009, p. 220). First, actors are shaped by how they think they should act in the international political system and what measures they need to employ in order to attain their objectives. In the second instance, actors appeal to the conventions as norms of behaviour which justify their actions when they take a position on a specific issue. Third, the normative structure in the international political system in itself serves as a constraining factor to the behaviour of state actors. This means that the foreign policy behaviour of a state and its actors are constrained by accepted universal normative principles to which a state subscribes.

### **6.2 Size of national market and a limited domestic resources base**

The territorial size of a state determines the availability of resources. Limited resources render small states unable to mitigate the effects of external shocks. Small states often have limited economic diversifications which compel them to often rely on trade and tourism. Unlike large states, small states need to have business strategies augmenting their economies of scale (Prasad, 2009, pp. 47-48). Thus, export promotion becomes relevant to their economic diplomacy. Due to their membership in the ACP, small islands, except Maldives, have survived, due to their foreign trade. Accordingly, in their foreign policy behaviours, small states will be mindful of the dependence of their economies on foreign trade –

it should be noted that large states use economic sanctions as a diplomatic instrument against small states (see Figure 1) (Du Plessis, 2006, p. 136).

### **6.3 Vulnerability**

Small states' diplomacy is limited due to their vulnerability as they are bound to be part of the integrating economy (Narlikar, 2001, pp. 135-136). Small states are vulnerable to trade balances, especially when it is larger states that are exporting to small states under non-competitive conditions (Schiff, 2003, p. 3).

Second, small states' vulnerability results from the transformation of the international political system since the end of the Cold War. The presence of two great powers during the Cold War provided a balanced power broking, where small states could ally to one of the powers. In the post-Cold War system, the source of balance for small power's relevance had diminished (Narlikar, 2001, p. 136).

The third cause of small states' vulnerability is the development of emerging economies such as India and Brazil that previously organised themselves alongside small states to improve their bargaining power in the international trade system. The vulnerability of small states is further exacerbated by differences in their approaches to issues, especially when some states maintain that negotiations are damaging the image and reputation of their benefactors. This is illustrated by, for example, the behaviour of some African states who received aid from the West during the meeting of the AU PSC as stated above. Similar trends prevail during discussions on political situations in the ACP member states during the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly sessions.

Environmental issues such as climate change, too, have an impact on the vulnerability of small states. With, for example, unpredictable rainfall patterns resulting from climate change, the agricultural production of small states is negatively affected. Moreover, islands as small states are affected by rising sea-levels due to climate change. In some cases, predictions state that these island states will literally sink which will result in the loss of their territories, livelihoods, lives and their sovereignty. In an effort to counter these challenges, some small states in the Pacific Ocean have concluded cooperation agreements with their large neighbour Australia.

### **6.4 Limited scope of public policy**

Due to their weak and moderate economies, small states tend to have a narrow scope in their international relations due to the fact that most of these states are not able to maintain many diplomatic establishments due to, *inter alia*, the cost of maintaining diplomatic establishments. The narrow foreign policy

scope further results from the size of the bureaucracy. Generally, small states have smaller diplomatic corps compared to large states. Sometimes they try to complement this limitation with external advisors. This has its own potential danger as relying on officials outside the establishment does not necessarily ensure that decisions will be taken on the basis of sincerity and, therefore, informed basis. Papadakis and Starr (1991, p. 427) contend that under such circumstances, small states are unable to judge their environment accordingly and are bound to act slowly when responding to issues.

## **7. Limitations of small states' diplomacy**

Large states often extend the horizons of their power and influence at the expense of smaller states to the extent that they threaten the security of small countries. This vulnerability, at the hands of large states, limits the decision options of small states. They have to weigh the consequences of their behaviour in the region and the international political system at large.

### **7.1 Attitudes of large states**

Despite the advantages associated with multilateral economic diplomacy, it also poses some challenges to some small states. Eastern Caribbean states, for example, face the threat of being marginalised in the global economy (De Rosa, 2000, p. 2). These states lack massive production capacity and, therefore, rely mostly on imports. Due to their limited economic diversification, small states become subjected to unilateral trade liberalisation. Their production of commodities such as banana and coffee, is relatively costly and is only sustainable due to the concessions they receive from the EU as part of the ACP group. It is argued that should the EU decide to extend similar concessions to non-ACP countries, this will impose further strains of the trade of Caribbean states.

The international political economic system is inherently characterised by stereotyping of small states by large states (Bátora, 2005, p. 8). Some large states are uncompromising in their attitudes towards the capacity of small states. This means that even when they conduct economic diplomacy with small states, large states will always behave in a manner that they are negotiating from a position of strength versus a weak partner. Often, large states dictate terms of trade to their small partners and expect these partners to accept their proposals, without much questioning. This does not augur well for the sovereignty of small states. They are, therefore, challenged to strive to overcome the belittling attitude of their large counterparts.

Qatar, for example, diverges from the stereotyping of small states as a unique crossbreed diplomatic actor that focuses on diplomacy beyond the region (Cooper & Momani, 2011, p. 114). Her resilience amidst differences with large states and her visible presence in international relations will be discussed below.

## **7.2 Constraints in influencing the international agenda**

While multilateral diplomacy provides security for small states, large states dominate the setting of the agenda of multilateral institutions. For example, the proportional representation of EU member-states in the European Parliament advantages large states over small states. Some Members of the European Parliament (MEP) from large states in institutions like the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, where the researcher of this study has been a member, tend to dominate discussions and behave typical of representatives of large states. However, one can convince these MEPs on an issue they can persuasively argue in one's favour. For example, they have argued in favour of small states in the EPA negotiations.

Small states are often also constrained by public policy. They have no capability to influence terms of trade in the international economic system (Cordina & Farrugia, [sa], p. 7). Similarly, small states have no choice over the agenda of international economic relations; instead, they are obliged to conform to those agendas set by large states. Instead of shaping the agenda of their environment, small states would rather adjust themselves to follow the direction of the environment in which they find themselves. This means that their input in making a difference in the international political system is minimal. Large and powerful states are, therefore, described as 'rule-makers' while weak ones are 'rule-takers' (Woods, 2008, p. 255; Zahariadis, 1994, p. 648).

## **7.3 Invisibility and weakness in the international political system**

Small states are challenged to concentrate their limited resources in strategic areas where they can yield some advantages. Hence, small states, with limited resources, are challenged in their aspirations to be noticed for the accurate cause (Melissen, in Gregory, 2006, p. 1-3). Leaders of small states want to use public diplomacy to influence the thinking of the public in the interests of the system. Public diplomacy serves the purpose of understanding attitudes and behaviours, requiring strategies that ensure convincing influence. The dialogue between the leader and the public at various levels is, therefore, crucial. It is, therefore, suggested, that through their public diplomacy, small states should endeavour to attract attention and create their own visibility in the international political system. They should improve media

management so that their achievements in bilateral and multilateral diplomacy are known, both domestically and internationally.

The smallness of a state is often associated with diplomatic weakness. When the UNSC resolved to impose a no fly-zone on Libya in 2011 (United Nations 2011), for example, NATO forces went beyond the framework of UNSC Resolutions 1970 (2011) and 1973 (2011) and carried out air strikes on Libya. Most African states, including small states such as Namibia and Zimbabwe, among others, condemned the attacks maintaining that it was clearly a violation of the UNSC Resolutions 1970 (2011) and 1973 (2011), which authorised the imposition of a no-fly zone. At the meeting of the AU PSC, in Addis Ababa, held in April 2011 and 26 August 2011, African states voiced their concern. The position of the AU did not change the behaviour of NATO.

Qatar assumed a non-permanent seat of the UN Security Council from 2005 to 2007. She maintained her independence and pursued issues which some of her neighbours shied away from. During that time, there was a conflict between Israel and Lebanon. Arab countries that lean to the west, like Egypt, Jordan and Syria, conveniently remained quiet and did not speak out against the onslaught of Lebanon. Qatar used her UN Security Council membership, criticising Israel and castigating the UN Security Council for standing idle as the battle went on (Cooper & Momani, 2011, p. 120).

## **8. Diplomatic opportunities for small states**

Large states are sometimes aware that they cannot always wield influence and patronise small states as Keohane (1971, p. 162) asserts that 'Possession of superior military or economic force cannot guarantee small-power compliance with big-power interests'.

### **8.1 Asserting the role of small states**

Positive self-perception is important for small states boosting their zeal to make their presence known in the world system. The Singaporean Prime Minister, Lee Hsien Loong, stated in 2005 that his country was a relevant centre in Asian affairs, *albeit* a small power (Chowdhury, 2010, p. 9). Singapore's foreign policy and diplomacy have been geared towards widening the web for her relations, in order to maintain close relations with large states and through such relations, play a meaningful role in the international political and economic system. This is contrary to the traditional perspective that small states have a narrow scope in world affairs.

In response to the G20's role in the international political and economic system, Singapore organised other small states to address the concern of small states and safeguard their interests against flattening by large states. The process was started by her Foreign Minister, George Yeo, at the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, Switzerland, in 2009. Subsequently, these small states established the Global Governance Group later called the 3G. Subsequently, the Singaporean Ambassador to the United Nations (UN), Vanu Menon, worked hard to win the cohesion of small states and expanded the 3G to 28 small states from South East Asia and the Pacific, Middle East, Africa and Europe. The 3G submitted a document entitled *Strengthening the Framework for G20 Engagement of Non-Members*, to the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, where they called for a more transparent and consultative decision-making process within the G20 (Chowdhury, 2010, pp. 6-8). Singapore is a small state that maintains assertiveness in its pursuit of diplomacy (Rana, 2007, p. 122). Singapore's foreign policy advocates innovation adopts proactive diplomacy, thereby increasing her role in geopolitics. Singapore ensures that her smallness does not manifest weakness when dealing with large neighbours like Malaysia and Indonesia.

Small states are increasingly conscious of their importance in the management of public international affairs. At the Global Governance and Security Council Reform conference held in Italy in May 2011, small states called for a democratic and representative UN, one that espouses values of inclusiveness, accountability and transparency. The conference was convened by the President of the UN General Assembly, Joseph Deiss, who called for a considerate and inclusive reform, cautioning that if some stakeholders (the vociferous of which are small states) are not satisfied with the process, it will backfire on the UN, as an organisation. Deiss (2011) cautions that,

[T]he United Nations will lose its credibility. Our organization will be marginalized, and important issues will be discussed in other forums and groupings which are considered more efficient and more representative of the realities of the day.

Deiss wanted a consensus between large and small states in the UN reforms and accordingly underscored that the role of small states on international affairs could not be wished away. At the meeting, it stressed that the size of a country does not matter for the purpose of partaking in global governance, but what matters is equitable representation, taking into account geographic dimensions. Small countries of Eastern Europe, for example, maintain that the number of countries in this region has expanded in numbers over the past years and that they deserve a representation on the enlarged UNSC, at least

for a non-permanent member seat. It is a common cause that small states will adopt alternative strategies when they feel that their interests are not adequately addressed in a given forum.

## **8.2 Macro-economic stability**

The smallness of a state does not necessarily results in an inability to perform well economically

Our analysis shows that small states may suffer from certain size-related disadvantages, but they could overcome most of these disadvantages by taking appropriate measures. Moreover, the empirical evidence suggests that small states, on average, do not perform worse than large states do, i.e., the size of the state/country does not matter for economic performance. There is no evidence to claim that the *de facto* independent states of the Caucasus could not establish viable economies because of their small size (Taymaz, 2009, p. 2).

The smallness of a state can also favour its policy's efficiency. Vital (1967, pp. 29-30) notes that against the background of a narrower scope of issues and a small number of bureaucracy, small states can focus fully on issues and come up with a coherent foreign policy.

Botswana and Mauritius are small African states which manifest good leadership and stable economies. These aspects create an enabling environment for institutions in these states to grow and advance (Rotberg, 2008, p. 1). This view is collaborated by Dömeland and Sander (2007, pp. 3, 7) who add Seychelles and Gabon to Rotberg's list. They further argue that because of their ability to attract foreign direct investment (FDI), small states in Africa have diversified their export arrangements and are, thus, not susceptible to terms-of-trade shocks. They further state that if export services are to be considered, then the export diversification of The Gambia, for example, will be larger. The Gambia is a small state which exports tourism and financial services.

It could be argued that, if a small state has put in place road infrastructure for smooth transport of goods and service this will also enhance its economic diplomacy. On the contrary, if a large state does not have an efficient road network, its economic activities will remain hampered by transport inconveniences and cost. Goods that are produced will make detours before they reach a final destination, where they could be traded. The time spent on transportation of goods is relevant to the turnover of exports. The efficient system of transport ensures high economic returns.

There is an opportunity for small states' economic growth arising from the tourism sector, for example. Tourists from large states and economies spend money on holidays and conferences which create afflu-

ence in the small states that are being visited. Thus, Taymaz (2009, p. 7) states that income from the tourism industry fast tracks a country's economy considerably, in comparison with the economies of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, for example.

### **8.3 Resilience of small states**

Qatar departed from the Arab states' traditional relations with Israel and established trade relations with Israel in 1996. While Arab governments called for economic boycott of Israel, Qatar hosted the Israeli trade Minister at the fourth annual Middle East and North Africa Economic Summit held in Doha 1997 (Cooper and Momani, 2011, pp. 117-118).

Being a small state does not deter Qatar to differ with her neighbours. In 2006, she broke ranks with the Arab League in support of Ban Ki-Moon, the South Korean candidate for the position of the UN Secretary General which was also contested by Prince Zeid from Jordan (Cooper & Momani, 2011, p. 119). Qatar further sought to broker peace between Israeli and other Arab states. In 2003, the Qatari Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sheik Hamad met his Israeli counterpart, Silvan Shalom, in Paris, to discuss matters related to peace in the Middle East.

Qatar maintained a balanced diplomatic approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Cooper & Momani (2011, pp. 23-24; 118-119), using her regional influence to mediate between Israeli-Arab tensions. These tensions resulted from the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory of Gaza and the quest of the Palestinian people to establishing their statehood. However, at the same time, Qatar remained committed and firm towards her support for the cause of Palestine. For example, when Israeli attacked Gaza in 2008 and 2009, Qatar asked the Israeli office to leave the country. While maintaining friendly relations with the US and Israeli, Qatar also maintained close relations with their enemies, Syria and Iran and she donated money to Hamas and Hezbollah, organisations that are enemies of Israel and classified as terrorist groups by the US.

## **9. Conclusion**

The economic diplomacy of small states is subjected to challenges resulting from, amongst others, geographic location and economic abilities. They are, therefore, in most cases, likely to avoid alienating their neighbouring large states and calculate their behaviour in the international political and economic system. Unlike large states, small states do not use statecraft in their economic diplomacy. This is a trend observed only in respect of large states. It comes in a range of economic sanctions such as an em-

bargo, where a ban on trade or exports to a targeted state is imposed. For example, the US had imposed embargoes against Cuba for many years which the US has now undertaken to lift.

This paper concludes that notwithstanding assumptions of small states' diplomacy of being cautious to offend large neighbours, small countries can maintain resilience, taking centre stage in international affairs and making their presence visible. Resilient small states further pursue independent foreign policies that are unfettered by large neighbours. Botswana and Qatar are examples of such small state that remain firm to their positions irrespective of the positions taken by other states in their respective regions.

The smallness of state does not always mean vulnerability. Small states also use their smallness as opportunities, playing large powers against each other and allying with opposing large states as the dynamics of changing foreign policy unfolds. For example, when faced with threats of economic statecraft, small states can outsmart such a diplomatic predicament by aligning with a large economy to mitigate the disadvantages that arise from strained economic relations with another large economy which has turned into an adversary.

Further, to overcome vulnerability, small states come together through multilateralism, to collectively face the challenges of vulnerability in the international political system. In the global trade system, forming partnerships and coalitions in order to speak with one voice in trade negotiations. They maintain practices of diplomacy inclined to Liberalism as theory of IR studies, underscoring cooperation. Meanwhile large states conduct a Realism-inclined diplomacy including threatening other states with sanctions.

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