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A State of the Field Essay

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Bringing the (Smaller) State Back In: State of the Field in 'Small State' Research

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In 2003, commenting on his excursion into small state research, Peter Katzenstein summarized the predominant response to such work: “since nobody cares about small states why waste so much time writing about them? One book could be tolerated as a quirky form of intellectual self-indulgence. Writing two books on that subject was pure folly.”² Despite this reflection, Katzenstein’s *Small States in World Markets*, which received the prestigious Woodrow Wilson Award, motivated a generation of researchers. It expanded the scope of IR theorizing and created a new place for small state analysis in critiquing the mainstream.³

Small state research in general has retained a unique place in the study of international politics, with spikes of interest following periods of drastic change in the international system, such as after World War II and the Cold War.⁴ Within the last decade, international historians have again revived the research agenda of ‘smallness’ in the study of foreign policy behavior. Most significantly, international historians discussing small states have attempted to reemphasize the previously ostracized voice of historians in discussions of IR theorizing.⁵

However, as alluded to by Katzenstein, small state research has been fraught with strife throughout its development. Rik Coolsaet outlined the prevalent Bismarckian view in world politics that “foreign policy by a small power can be dealt with succinctly: there is no such thing. Small nations are only props on the world stage, not independent actors, and thus of little

¹ I would like to thank Juhana Aunesluoma and Suvi Kansikas for their comments on earlier versions of this essay.

² Peter J. Katzenstein, “Small States and Small States Revisited,” *New Political Economy* 8:1 (2003): 10. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1356346032000078705>.

³ Christine Ingebritsen, “Katzenstein’s Legacy 25 Years After: Small States in World Markets,” *European Political Science* 9:3 (2010): 362. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1057/eps.2010.23>.

⁴ Amry Vandenbosch, “The Small States in International Politics and Organization,” *The Journal of Politics* 26:2 (1964): 309-312. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2127598>; Michiel S. de Vries, “Foreign Policy Coordination Among Small European States,” *Cooperation and Conflict* 23:1 (1988): 43-52; William Paterson, “Small States in International Politics,” *Cooperation and Conflict* 4:1 (1969): 119-123. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/001083676900400107>; Christopher Browning, “Small, Smart and Salient? Rethinking Identity in the Small States Literature,” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 19:4 (2006): 673. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09557570601003536>.

⁵ William R. Keylor, “H-Diplo State of the Field Essay- ‘The Problems and Prospects of Diplomatic/International History’,” *H-Diplo*, 10 April 2015. <https://networks.h-net.org/system/files/contributed-files/e126.pdf>.

interest to the student of world affairs.”⁶ Due to the traditional focus on great ‘powers’ in the study of foreign policy behavior, researchers of small ‘states’ have first and foremost needed to justify their study of states of small size as a relevant variable. This usually came down to academic discussion surrounding research questions of: how small states survive; how/if we should defining a ‘small state’⁷; if there is an underlying *problématique* for all small-state experiences; and, when studying small state foreign, security, or economic policy behavior, how much agency is it justifiable to suppose in relation to ubiquitous systematic factors.

This short essay first offers a brief historiography of research on small state foreign policy behavior, with the Political Science subfield of International Relations (IR) as the primary field of discussion. While this has not been the only direction of research in the study of small states,⁸ it has been a central arena in attempting to define the debate’s parameters. This academic literature inspired parallel, but sometimes insular,⁹ discussions on the relevance of size in political economy, neutrality studies, democracy studies, and international history, to name a few. The latter field has taken up the torch and furthered small state study in the past decade, offering thought for future research agendas in the field, as well as how to ‘bring (smaller) states back in’ to the mainstream of International Relations theory building.

An illustration of this can be seen in combining IR and international history argumentation to elucidate small state self-perceptions of their ‘margins for manoeuvre,’ a term proposed by Laurien Crump and Susanna Erlandsson.¹⁰ Thomas Fischer, for example, argued that the implications of Finland’s key role in opening the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) negotiations in 1969 are undervalued in Cold War international history.¹¹ More contemporary work further emphasizes the ability of ‘smaller states’ to shape Soviet interests in marshaling the CSCE’s launch.¹² Three decades later, in a young post-Cold War world, the CSCE/OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) was subsequently argued to be a critical forum for Finland in shifting its post-Cold War international image and eventually becoming a post-Cold War norm entrepreneur.¹³ Historical consideration of changes and continuity in Finnish CSCE/OSCE policy is just one example that highlights the potential of cooperation between international

⁶ Rik Coolsaet, “Review of Small States in World Politics: Explaining Foreign Policy Behavior,” *International Politics* 41:2 (2003): 284. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.ip.8800051>.

⁷ For the extent of this article, ‘small states’ will be used initially, eventually shifting to ‘smaller states’ to parallel conceptual developments in the literature.

⁸ Olav F. Knudsen, “Small States, Latent and Extant: Towards a General Perspective,” *Journal of International Relations and Development* 5:2 (2002): 182–198.

⁹ Niels Amstrup, “The Perennial Problem of Small States: A Survey of Research Efforts,” *Cooperation and Conflict* 11:3 (1976): 178. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/001083677601100302>.

¹⁰ Laurien Crump and Susanna Erlandsson, eds., *Margins for Manoeuvre in Cold War Europe: The Influence of Smaller Powers* (London: Routledge, 2020).

¹¹ Thomas Fischer, “‘A Mustard Seed Grew into a Bushy Tree’: The Finnish CSCE Initiative of 5 May 1969,” *Cold War History* 9:2 (2009): 177–201. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14682740802170982>.

¹² Laurien Crump and Angela Romano, “Challenging the Superpower Straitjacket (1965-1977): Multilateralism as an Instrument of Smaller Powers,” in Crump and Erlandsson, eds., *Margins for Manoeuvre in Cold War Europe: The Influence of Smaller Powers* (London: Routledge, 2020): 13-14.

¹³ Christine Ingebritsen, “Norm Entrepreneurs: Scandinavia’s Role in World Politics,” *Cooperation and Conflict* 37:1 (2002): 11-23. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836702037001689>.

history and International Relations in theorizing how timing influences specific small state policies, or ‘margins for manoeuvre,’ and what this then says about the international system in general.

New Units, New Perspective

Page | 3

In his overview of IR as a discipline, Ole Wæver argued that “real world developments will eventually be reflected in the discipline... [but] the causal connection between external events and developments in theory is, as usual, vague.”¹⁴ The development of small state studies over the past 70 years largely follows this trend. For example, World War II and the numerous post-colonial movements¹⁵ inspired a shift in analytical focus away from considering great European powers as the only defining actors in the international system. After a brief lull in interest, the end of the Cold War likewise prompted a renewed interest in small state research,¹⁶ with a specific emergence of consideration of size in European Union studies as European integration gained speed.¹⁷ However, explanation on the relationality of these periods and their impact on small state theorizing remained ambiguous.

The evolution of small state research of course did not develop without its critiques, which are useful caveats to keep in mind while reflecting on the advancement of the sub-field. Eurocentrism as well as a large emphasis on English language literature at the expense of multi-lingual scholarship in the field have been prominent criticisms.¹⁸ The Eurocentric critique is largely focused on the specific small state discussion of foreign policy behavior and political economy, as small state research on

¹⁴ Ole Wæver, “The Sociology of a Not So International Discipline: American and European Developments in International Relations,” *International Organization* 52:4 (1998): 688, 691-692. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1162/002081898550725>.

¹⁵ Vandenbosch, “The Small States in International Politics and Organization,” 309-312.

¹⁶ For example see: Jeanne A. K. Hey, ed., *Small States in World Politics: Explaining Foreign Policy Behavior* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2003); Laurent Goetschel, ed., *Small States Inside and Outside the European Union: Interests and Policies* (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4757-2832-3>; Milan Jazbec, *The Diplomacies of New Small States: The Case of Slovenia with Some Comparison from the Baltics* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2001); Nikolaos Zahariadis, “Nationalism and Small State Foreign Policy: The Greek Response to the Macedonian Issue,” *Political Science Quarterly* 109:4 (1994): 647–667. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2151842>.

¹⁷ For example see: Anders Wivel, “The Security Challenge of Small EU Member States: Interests, Identity and Development of the EU as a Security Actor,” *Journal of Common Market Studies* 43:2 (2005): 393-412. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0021-9886.2005.00561.x>; Baldur Thorhallsson, “The Size of States in the European Union: Theoretical and Conceptual Perspectives,” *European Integration* 28:1 (2006): 7-31. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/07036330500480490>; Baldur Thorhallsson and Anders Wivel, “Small States in the European Union: What Do We Know and What Would We Like to Know?” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 19:4 (2006): 651-668. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09557570601003502>; David Arter, “Small State Influence Within the EU: The Case of Finland’s ‘Northern Dimension Initiative’,” *Journal of Common Market Studies* 38:5 (2000): 677-697. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-5965.00260>; Esko Antola, “The Future of Small States in the EU,” in Mary Farrell, Stefano Fella & Michael Newman (eds.), *European Integration in the 21st Century: Unity in Diversity?* (2002): 69-85. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781446221051.n5>; Han Dorussen, Emil J. Kirchner and James Sperling, “Sharing the Burden of Collective Security in the European Union,” *International Organization* 63:4 (2009): 789 – 810. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818309990105>; Jennifer Brown, *Small States in the European Institutions*, (Turku: Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence, 2000); Robert Steinmetz, Anders Wivel, *Small States in Europe* (London, UK: Routledge, 2010). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315609348>.

¹⁸ Iver Neumann and Sieglinde Gstöhl, “Introduction Lilliputians in Gulliver’s World?” in Christine Ingebritsen, Iver Neumann, Sieglinde Gstöhl, and Jessica Beyer, eds., *Small States in International Relations*. (Seattle: Washington University Press, 2006): 21-23.

democracy and governance from the beginning was largely a global discussion.¹⁹ Nonetheless, the 2016 inaugural issue of *Third World Thematics: A TWQ Journal* specifically looked at non-western small states and what contribution they may have for small state theoretical discussion in IR.²⁰

Regarding language, *Cooperation and Conflict*, an international IR journal published in cooperation with the Nordic International Studies Association, is one English-language journal that attempts to bring non-native English speakers' work on small states to an English-language audience.²¹ However, the fact that much small state research continues to be published in languages other than English is a characteristic of the field. Smaller state researchers speak to smaller state enthusiasts, often in smaller states where national languages other than English are a predominant scientific medium. Despite the continuation of smaller state literature in national languages, the English language canon of the field continues to influence any contemporary discussion.

Annette Backer Fox and her 1959 work *The Power of Small States* is largely credited with initiating the theoretical discussion on the significance of nation-state size in international relations. Fox questioned how small states such as Turkey, Finland, Norway, Switzerland, and Spain survived great power militancy, while other small states saw an end to their sovereignty.²² This was followed in 1967 by David Vital's *The Inequality of States: A Study of the Small in International Relations*, which again took specific case studies of small states and used them to contemplate the relationship of size and foreign policy options.²³ Because both of these works only briefly touched on what it meant to be 'small', the subsequent question for the subfield that arose, which Coolsaet argues is still largely unanswered today, was "are small powers something great powers writ small."²⁴ The initial studies of Vital and Fox opened the discussion and spurred thought on how to expand data sets in search of relevant theorizing on 'small state' foreign policy.²⁵

An idea that emerged toward the end of 1960s, which began to question how size should be considered as an indicator of power, was the 'power of the weak,'²⁶ or Erling Bjøl's argument that power is a relative classification and should be looked

¹⁹ See for example: Burton Benedict, *Problems of Smaller Territories* (University of London: Athlone Press, 1967); For a more comprehensive bibliography see: Wouter Pieter Veenendaal, "Politics and Democracy in Microstates: A Comparative Analysis of the Effects of Size," PhD Dissertation (Leiden: University of Leiden, 2003).

²⁰ For the introduction to this issue see: Marie Gibert and Virginie Grzelczyk, "Non-Western Small States: Activists or Survivors?" *Third World Thematics: A TWQ Journal*, 1:1 (2016): 1-8. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/23802014.2016.1231012>.

²¹ Neumann and Gstöhl, "Introduction Lilliputians in Gulliver's World?" 23.

²² Annette Backer Fox, *The Power of Small States: Diplomacy in World War II*. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1959).

²³ David Vital, *The Inequality of States: A Study of the Small in International Relations*. (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1967). See Vital's later work as well: *The Survival of Small States Studies in Small Power/Great Power Conflict*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1971).

²⁴ Coolsaet, "Review of Small States in World Politics: Explaining Foreign Policy Behavior," 284.

²⁵ Paterson, 119-123; Gunnar Skagestad, "Small States in International Politics: A Polar-Political Perspective," *Cooperation and Conflict* 9:1 (1974): 185-193. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/001083677400900116>.

²⁶ Erling Bjøl, "The Power of the Weak," *Cooperation and Conflict* 3:2 (1968): 157-168. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/001083676800300201>.

upon by issue, rather than comprehensively as a monolithic category.²⁷ This thinking was followed up by Robert Keohane's 1969 review of the early small state debate where he affirmed that size should be considered as a perception rather than a facet of material strength.²⁸ This argument was further refined in 1977 with Keohane and Joseph Nye's argument that power is relative to issue area and smaller states can possess issue-specific power.²⁹

Moving from the question of material strength as a defining factor of size to that of perception helped nuance the overarching research question of small state study. In the early years, with the birth of new nation-states out of old colonial empires or the systematic changes presented by World War II, the primary intention of questioning small states' foreign policy behavior was to ask how they had survived and why. What universal law could be derived from a study of small state survival and could offer further insight into the changing nature of the international system?³⁰ Contemplation of size as relative began to push the subfield in a direction where it would question key presumptions of mainstream IR.

A vital point that grew out of this early discussion was a disagreement over how to define 'small' as well as other size categories (micro, medium, 'great,' etc.) in the study of power and nation-states. The early assessments of Vital and Fox utilized population sizes as categorical parameters, while Robert Rothstein argued that the signing of particular treaties such as the Treaty of Chaumont in 1817 divided great and small powers.³¹ In the 1970s, as mentioned above, a school of thought that argued that perception of size should take precedent over material variables in defining size emerged.³² This was paralleled by arguments proposing even more positivistic approaches of data analysis for defining 'small' states.³³ As seen in 'power of the weak,' some scholars coaxed the discussion away from 'small' as a definable category, towards that of 'weak' in order to shift the measurement in terms of a more traditional discussion of power.³⁴ Small in this formulation was to be considered as the weaker part of an asymmetric relationship, though again, not always a disadvantage.

In 1971 Raimo Väyrynen offered an early overview of the different definitions used in the study of small states as being: rank in the international system, though rank was subjective and not a stable category for extrapolation; degree of penetration into a specific environment, such as the economic viability of a small state; and type of behavior as an understudied field, but one that was worth further exploration.³⁵ While this was a comprehensive overview of the burgeoning field, Väyrynen only

²⁷ Bjøl, "The Power of the Weak," 159.

²⁸ Robert Keohane, "Lilliputians' Dilemmas: Small States in International Politics," *International Organization* 23:2 (1969): 291–310.

²⁹ Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition*. (Toronto: Little, Brown and Co, 1977).

³⁰ Vandenbosch, "The Small States in International Politics and Organization," 312.

³¹ Robert L. Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968).

³² Browning, "Small, Smart and Salient?" 673; Keohane, Lilliputians' Dilemmas: Small States in International Politics."

³³ Maurice A. East, "Size and Foreign Policy Behavior: A Test of Two Models," *World Politics* 25:4 (1973): 556–576. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2009952>; Tom Crowards, "Defining the Category of 'Small States'," *Journal of International Development* 14:2 (2002): 143–179. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1002/jid.860>.

³⁴ Ulf Lindell and Stefan Persson, "The Paradox of Weak State Power: A Research and Literature Overview," *Cooperation and Conflict*, 21:2 (1986): 79–97. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/001083678602100202>.

³⁵ Raimo Väyrynen, "On the Definition and Measurement of Small Power Status," *Cooperation and Conflict*, 6:1 (1971): 91–102. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/001083677100600109>.

briefly discussed how different definitions could be instrumentalized, and did not comment on the variety of research focuses that emerged out of the debate over definition. What would eventually emerge was a seeming uncertainty of the level of analysis to which researchers of small states intended their research conclusions to be applied. This in effect, raised the question of whether there was truly a need to strictly define 'small' in achieving the analytical aims of studying small states.

In a similar vein, Peter Baehr concluded in 1975 that the concept of the small state was not a useful analytical tool. Despite this pessimism, Baehr was one of the few scholars to acknowledge parallel interests in size as a category of analysis by other Political Science sub-disciplines, specifically that of democracy studies.³⁶ This is a significant point because Robert Dahl and Edward Tufte's *Size and Democracy*³⁷ and the plethora of literature that evolved out of this work,³⁸ are largely ignored by the IR discussion on small states and foreign policy. This unincorporated, but parallel discussion reflects IR's debate over if and how to incorporate 'the black box' of domestic politics in studying foreign policy behavior.³⁹ In furthering research on small states, it might be time to reincorporate literature on democracy and size when focusing the discussion on levels of analysis and looking at domestic institutions and bureaucracies in the foreign policymaking process.

Redirecting the Current

While the 1950s-1970s are largely seen to be the beginning and high mark of small state research, Iver Neumann and Sieglinde Gstöhl argue that the 1980s and 1990s are seen to be a more barren era for the subfield.⁴⁰ However, the 1980s and 1990s did see the beginning of small state research percolating out from the IR discussion of survival and a need to define the parameters of 'small' to other fields that allowed for a questioning of the original conversation and nuanced contemplation of 'smallness.'

The most prominent example of this is from Katzenstein's 1985 consideration of size in political economy in *Small States in World Markets: Industrial Policy in Europe*.⁴¹ In Katzenstein's own review of his work two decades later, however, he reflected on why his primary argument, that "perceived vulnerability generated an ideology of social partnership that had acted like a glue for the corporatist politics of the small European states," was largely missed.⁴² Even though Katzenstein's argument was in line with a tradition of small state thought that considered self-perception as a significant variable in

³⁶ Peter Baehr, "Small States: A Tool for Analysis," *World Politics* 27:3 (1975): 456-466. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2010129>.

³⁷ Robert Dahl and Edward Tufte, *Size and Democracy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1973).

³⁸ For example: Alberto Alesina and Enrico Spolaore, *The Size of Nations* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2005); Carsten Anckar, "Size, Islandness, and Democracy: A Global Comparison," *International Political Science Review* 29:4 (2008): 433-459. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192512108095722>; Dag Anckar, "Dominating Smallness: Big Parties in Lilliput Systems," *Party Politics* 3:2 (1997): 243-263. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068897003002005>; Charles Farrugia, "The Special Working Environment of Senior Administrators in Small States," *World Development* 21:2 (1993): 221-226. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1016/0305-750X\(93\)90017-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/0305-750X(93)90017-4); For a more comprehensive bibliography see: Veenendaal, "Politics and Democracy in Microstates," 281-303.

³⁹ Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999): 196. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511612183>.

⁴⁰ Neumann and Gstöhl, "Introduction Lilliputians in Gulliver's World?" 12.

⁴¹ Peter J. Katzenstein, *Small States in World Markets: Industrial Policy in Europe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985).

⁴² Katzenstein, "Small States and Small States Revisited," *New Political Economy* 8:1 (2003): 11. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1356346032000078705>.

understanding foreign (and here economic) policy behavior, his argument might have only been fully understood in retrospect when constructivist theory became popular in IR during the following decades. Despite this reception by the disciplinary mainstream, Katzenstein's theoretical suppositions spurred numerous review conferences and journal debates on the role of small states in comparative political economy.⁴³

In the field of negotiation studies, William Zartman built on the critique that more refined levels of analysis might support the enhancement of small state research, as well as IR in general. In 1985, Zartman highlighted that while small state research had begun to contemplate the agency and role of small powers in international politics, the end goal of discussing the international system inhibited thought on how 'smallness' played out in lower levels of interaction, such as negotiations.⁴⁴

In conjunction with this dispersion of small state research to other subfields, scholars of neutrality studies in the late 1980s also began making forays into the small state discussion.⁴⁵ This in turn further shifted questions of small state survival as the main research problem, to a question of degrees of sovereignty in small state policy.⁴⁶ While this was essentially a similar question, it nuanced what survival meant. The entrance of neutrality researchers highlighted a growing interest among small state scholars in the relationship between, on the one hand, the agency smaller states had in selecting policy options, and, on the other hand, the omnipresent restraints imposed by the international system. Sovereignty was not a binary of survival or extinction, but now had various hues colored by policy decisions, in which neutrality was one strategy.⁴⁷ Combined with a small state perspective, neutrality became a useful analytical field for posing these agency-structure theoretical challenges. This conversation on survival and sovereignty was also noted as an early critique from small state studies on larger IR discussions of sovereignty.⁴⁸ For example, Ulf Lindell and Stefan Persson at the end of the 1980s highlighted that power in IR was no longer the only explanatory frame, but still a perennial background.⁴⁹

In the 1990s, in addition to critiquing the mainstream, scholars such as Miriam Fendius Elman began challenging conventional wisdom in small state studies. In doing so, Elman significantly highlighted the deficiency of ignoring domestic

⁴³ For example see: Baldur Thorhallsson, *The Role of Small States in the European Union* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2000); *European Political Science* 9:3 (2010): 358-386. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1057/eps.2010.22>; Special Issue, "Small States in Multilateral Economic Negotiations," *The Round Table* 100:413 (2011): 135-225. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00358533.2011.565625>.

⁴⁴ William Zartman, "Negotiating from Asymmetry: The North-South Stalemate," *Negotiation Journal* 1:2 (1985): 122. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00999253>.

⁴⁵ For only a few examples see: Harto Hakovirta, "Western European Integration and Finnish Neutrality," *Cooperation and Conflict* 5:2 (1970): 129-136. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/001083677000500207>; Harto Hakovirta, *East-West Conflict and European Neutrality* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988); Bo Huldt and Atis Lejins, *European Neutrals and the Soviet Union* (Stockholm: The Swedish Institute of International Affairs, 1986).

⁴⁶ Efraim Karsh, *Neutrality and Small States* (London: Routledge, 1988): 5-6.

⁴⁷ This perspective is continued by the contemporary international history small state discussion in: Johanna Rainio-Niemi, *The Ideological Cold War: The Politics of Neutrality in Austria and Finland* (London: Routledge, 2014).

⁴⁸ Knudsen, "Small States, Latent and Extant," 187-188.

⁴⁹ Lindell and Persson, "The Paradox of Weak State Power," 92.

level factors in the study of small state foreign policymaking.⁵⁰ This continued the argumentation that more thought should be given to levels of analysis in small state foreign policy behavior research. While Elman did not directly cite literature on democracy studies or negotiation studies, this observation again underscores the benefits that being in conversation with size and governance literature could have for refining research on small state foreign policy behavior.

While the ‘establishment’ critique became a part of small state inquiry, the original system-level research objective remained a tenet of small state research, albeit in a refined manner. In 2000, a more general movement in IR away from realist theory, aided by critical voices in small state research, further promoted contemplation of the agency-structure debate in small state research.⁵¹ In illustrating this developed focus, Anders Wivel and Matthew Crandall argued that small state literature highlights a classic binary in international studies between nomothetic explanations from the outside and ideographically understanding the actors from the inside,⁵² where both offer clues about why and how small states behave as they do.

This nomothetic (the effort to derive laws that explain types or categories of objective phenomena) - ideographical (the effort to understand the meaning of contingent, unique, and often cultural or subjective phenomena) divide is an apt description of the difficulties small state studies encounters in the discipline of IR. Such a division in small state research also accentuates the inability to find satisfactory causal links between external events and theory. This is because of the inability of either nomothetic or ideographical explanations to fully explain decision-making; a combination of both nomothetic and ideographical is needed to fully understand how decision-makers’ perceptions are formulated.

Finland is a good illustration of how decision-makers consider both nomothetic and ideographical factors as influencing their decision-making environment. For example, Finnish decision-makers see their unique history as part of first the Swedish and then the Russian empire, and perpetual status as a neighbor with the great power Russia, as having helped develop their unique skills in foreign policymaking and diplomacy (ideographical). At the same time, there has historically been an understanding among Finnish elites that they would be limited by the structural boundaries of being a small state in a realist international world (nomothetic), what is commonly referred to as small state realism.⁵³

Building on the spirit of the small state agency-structure debate and early arguments of smallness as a self-perception, Christopher Browning posited in 2006 that smallness should be considered as a self-definition of the state, with the possibility of it being positively defined. In this constructivist conceptualization, size is not objectively given, but negotiated

⁵⁰ Miriam Fendius Elman, “The Foreign Policies of Small States: Challenging Neorealism in its Own Backyard,” *British Journal of Political Science* 25:2 (1995): 171.

⁵¹ Anders Wivel, “Theory and Prospects for Northern Europe’s Small States,” *Cooperation and Conflict* 35:3 (2000): 331-340. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/00108360021962156>; Clive Archer, Alyson Bailes, and Anders Wivel, *Small States and International Security Europe and Beyond* (London: Routledge, 2014).

⁵² Anders Wivel and Matthew Crandall, “Punching Above Their Weight, But Why? Explaining Denmark and Estonia in the Transatlantic Relationship,” *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 17 (2019): 395. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1057/s42738-019-00020-2>.

⁵³ Christopher Browning, “Coming Home or Moving Home? Westernizing Narratives in Finnish Foreign Policy and the Reinterpretations of Past Identities,” *Cooperation and Conflict* 37:1 (2002): 47-72. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836702037001691>; Christopher Browning, *Constructivism, Narrative and Foreign Policy Analysis: A Case Study of Finland* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2008); Matti Pesu, “Suurvaltaempiristi pienvaltion johtajana: Mauno Koiviston ulkopoliittinen uskomusjärjestelmä [A Great Power Empiricist as a Small-State Leader: Mauno Koivisto’s Foreign Policy Belief System],” *Kosmopolis* 46:2 (2016): 6-24; Matti Pesu, “Kun pienvaltiorealismin hegemonia murtui: suomalaiset ulkopoliittiset koulukunnat kylmän sodan jälkeisen ajan alussa [When the Hegemony of ‘Small-State Realism’ Was Broken: Finnish Foreign Policy Schools of Thought at the Beginning of the Post-Cold War Era],” *Politiikka* 59:4 (2017): 280-297.

and dependent on how “size is narrated.”⁵⁴ Finland as a self-defined ‘peacekeeping superpower’⁵⁵ during the Cold War and a contemporary leader in peace mediation⁵⁶ are examples of how issue area ‘greatness’ is emphasized in Finnish self-narratives over that of relative asymmetrical weakness in other conventional issue areas.

Contemporary momentum in small state research seems to emphasize these constructivist strains of small state research. In a recent volume of historical case studies involving small states, editors Crump and Erlandsson allowed each author to define ‘smallness’ themselves, rather than using ‘small’ as a static category, in order to increase analytical range. While seemingly taking a position in the nomothetic school of argumentation, Crump and Erlandsson qualify that their:

aim is to examine and facilitate a comparison between the goals, strategies, and scope for manoeuvre of smaller European powers during the Cold War era empirically, without a priori assumptions about limitations inherent to their East–West positions.⁵⁷

This form of historical argumentation coincides with the school of New Cold War History, which also, at times, combines the conversation of temporality and nomothetic and/or ideographical arguments. While certain research within New Cold War History is not always marked with ‘small state’ terminology, it implicitly participates in the small state discussion by explicitly shifting the research focus to that of small states rather than utilizing the traditional bipolar Cold War paradigm.⁵⁸

Despite this growing reflectivity of the advantages alternative approaches offer, traditional delineations found in the 1960s continue to arise and affect stagnation in the discussion. In 2006, Christine Ingebritsen, Neumann, Gstöhl, and Jessica Beyer curated sectional reprints of some of the most significant scholarship in small states research along with a comprehensive summation of the field. Ingebritsen highlighted the theoretical shifts in the small state literature over the past half-decade. She significantly pointed to the plurality of perspectives and analytical questions that are now valued in the study of international politics, partially due to contributions from small state research.⁵⁹ A review of Ingebritsen, Neumann, Gstöhl, and Beyer’s volume that interestingly was published in the *International History Review*, considered this argument

⁵⁴ Browning, “Small, Smart and Salient?” 673–674, 681.

⁵⁵ Teemu Palosaari, “Still a Physician Rather than a Judge? The Post-Cold War Foreign and Security Policy of Finland,” *Swiss Political Science Review* 19:3 (2013): 360. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/spsr.12041>.

⁵⁶ Teemu Turunen, “Finland, Conflicts, and Peace Mediation,” *Finland Fulbright News Magazine*, 10 December 2020, https://www.fulbright.fi/news-magazine/finland-conflicts-and-peace-mediation?fbclid=IwAR3Czi0RPbmk4Yd_e_DWMvBFnqiP7ta3q0WbxVXcucUUNOmO11_CojAxV2k.

⁵⁷ Crump and Erlandsson, *Margins for Manoeuvre*, 1–2.

⁵⁸ To name only a few: Crump and Erlandsson, *Margins for Manoeuvre*; Laurien Crump, *The Warsaw Pact Reconsidered: International Relations in Eastern Europe, 1955–1969* (London: Routledge, 2015); Federico Romero, “Cold War Historiography at the Crossroads,” *Cold War History* 14:4 (2014): 685–703. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14682745.2014.950249>; Sari Autio-Sarasmo and Katalin Miklóssy, *Reassessing Cold War Europe* (London: Routledge, 2011); Stephan Kieninger, “Diplomacy Beyond Deterrence: Helmut Schmidt and the Economic Dimension of Ostpolitik,” *Cold War History* 20:2 (2020): 179–196. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14682745.2019.1607308>; Suvi Kansikas, *Socialist Countries Face the European Community: Soviet-Bloc Controversies over East-West Trade*, (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2014); Una Bergman, *Politics of Uncertainty: The US, the Baltic Question, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, *Forthcoming*).

⁵⁹ Christine Ingebritsen, “Conclusion: Learning from Lilliput,” in Ingebritsen, Neumann, Gstöhl and Beyer, eds., *Small States in International Relations*. (Seattle: Washington University Press, 2006): 288.

equivocal and asked that a generalizable conclusion for all small states be offered.⁶⁰ Perceptions of a necessary ideographical-nomothetic dichotomy and disagreement over the appropriate levels of analysis where small state research conclusions should be applicable ostensibly continue to vex the academic conversation of small states in IR.

Current Trends and Future Research – International History

The current state of the field of small state foreign policy behavior research represents a research arena that has developed in line with larger theoretical shifts in the IR discipline, as well as developments and needs in global politics. However, it seems that where the original IR debates over how to define size as a variable or how to make conclusions about small state behavior universal lost steam in the 1970s, complementary subfields picked up the conversation, experimenting with new ideas so as to circumvent these snags.

Within the past decade, international history has staunchly developed the field of state studies and continued the agenda of modernized diplomatic history to be more attuned to the various ‘turns’ in History research. Research on smaller states largely fits into this trend. In addressing the predominant questions that founded the small state debate, international historians have argued for a reconsideration of temporality and change or continuity over time when considering theoretical explanations for smaller states’ foreign policy behavior.

Consideration of temporality is a foundational question in IR research as well,⁶¹ although according to William R. Keylor, it is increasingly neglected due to new trends in a portion of theorizing seen in post-1960 IR scholarship.⁶² That said, some of the more innovative suggestions in IR for small state research have taken up proposals of temporality to revolutionize the study of small states. For example, in 2002 Olav Knudsen proposed an analytical focus on a state’s ‘life-cycles,’ thus offering one innovative suggestion for how scholars can examine temporality. For Knudsen, the phases of a small states’ life-cycle could be roughly defined as identity formation, state formation, obtainment of security, and then extinction or integration.⁶³ Despite the disputability of these stages, consideration of time as an analytical focus to put the eclectic variants of small state literature in conversation has potential. Temporality could help scholars sidestep the fraught conversation of defining size and may open conversations such as how smaller state foreign policy institutions develop differently over time in comparison to larger states and how this influences decision making.

⁶⁰ Ole Elgström, “On Christine Ingebritsen, Iver Neumann, Sieglinde Gstöhl and Jessica Beyer, eds., *Small States in International Relations*,” *International History Review* 29:2 (2006): 457-458.

⁶¹ For example see: Colin Elman and Miriam Fendius Elman, eds., *Bridges and Boundaries: Historians, Political Scientists, and the Study of International Relations* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001); Colin Elman and Miriam Fendius Elman, “The Role of History in International Relations,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 37:2 (2008): 357-364. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0305829808097644>; David McCourt, “What’s at Stake in the Historical Turn? Theory, Practice and Phronesis in International Relations,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 41:1 (2012): 23-42. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.1177/0305829812445232>; Duncan Bell, “International Relations: The Dawn of a Historiographical Turn?” *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 3:1 (2001): 115-126. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-856X.00053>; Halvard Leira and Benjamin de Carvalho, “Stubbornly Stumbling into Making History: Constructivism and Historical International Relations,” in Brent J. Steele, Harry D. Gould and Oliver Kessler, eds., *Tactical Constructivism, Method, and International Relations* (New York: Routledge, 2020): 215-231; Jonathan B. Isacoff, “On the Historical Imagination of International Relations: The Case for a Deweyan Reconstruction,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 31:3 (2002): 603-626. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298020310031101>; John Hobson and George Lawson, “What is History in International Relations?” *Millennium Journal of International Studies* 37:2 (2008): 415-435. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0305829808097648>.

⁶² Keylor, “The Problems and Prospects of Diplomatic/International History.”

⁶³ Knudsen, “Small States, Latent and Extant,” 192.

The use of temporality as a significant consideration in mid-level theorizing has achieved traction in other schools of thought such as historical institutionalism. Historical institutionalism's consideration of time as a key variable along with its analytical inclusion of cultural, social, economic, and political factors provides analytical range for greater transdisciplinary discussion.⁶⁴ There are numerous critiques that historical institutionalism as a 'theoretical school' is too inclusive, leading to an inability to truly define what the school is and is not. Nonetheless, it is a developing field of transdisciplinary cooperation that creates a common language between historians and theoretically focused political scientists who retain an interest in 'structuralist' explanations.⁶⁵ A historical institutional approach in the small state discussion was offered as early as 1995 by Elman⁶⁶ and is a pertinent thread of research that should continue.⁶⁷

One example of how temporality can help nuance existing research on smaller states can be seen in the study of Finnish foreign policy and questions of Finlandisation. A key tenant of this debate is whether Finland's policy choices were influenced by Russia during the twentieth century. Various authors have argued that the asymmetric influence of Russia on Finnish policy decisions (Finlandisation) existed, and then culminated with the end of the Cold War.⁶⁸ However, the premise of these arguments seems to be that system-level variables are paramount in explaining small state policy perspectives. Questions of how different periods in the development of the international system, such as the rise of Détente in the 1970s⁶⁹ or uncertainty in the early 1990s,⁷⁰ influence small state policymaking institutions, culture, and mentalities could nuance our understanding of how policy and policymaking culture may have different life-cycles.

International historians within the past decade have largely taken up this consideration and commenced applying IR theory more copiously to help explain smaller state foreign policy behavior as a corollary of temporality. In comparing small state neutrality, for example, Johanna Rainio-Niemi reconsidered Hans Morgenthau and applied public opinion polls in Austria

⁶⁴ André Lecours, ed., *New Institutionalism: Theory and Analysis*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005); Orfeo Fioretos, Tulia G. Falleti, and Adam Sheingate, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Historical Institutionalism* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 2016). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199662814.001.0001>; Orfeo Fioretos, ed., *International Politics and Institutions in Time* (Oxford Scholarship Online, 2017); Paul Pierson, *Politics in Time: History, Institutions, and Social Analysis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

⁶⁵ Orfeo Fioretos, Tulia G. Falleti, and Adam Sheingate, "Historical Institutionalism in Political Science," in Orfeo Fioretos, Tulia G. Falleti, and Adam Sheingate, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Historical Institutionalism* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 2016): 18. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199662814.001.0001>

⁶⁶ Elman, "The Foreign Policies of Small States," 187-189.

⁶⁷ For a contemporary analytical combination of historical institutionalism and small state survival see: Jesse Dillon Savage. *Political Survival and Sovereignty in International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Charles E. Ziegler. "Review of Savage, Jesse Dillon. *Political Survival and Sovereignty in International Relations*," *H-Diplo, H-Net Reviews*, January, 2021. <https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showpdf.php?id=55540>.

⁶⁸ Timo Vihavainen, *Kansakunta räähmällään: suomettumisen lyhyt historia [A nation on its knees: a brief history of Finlandisation]* (Helsinki, Finland: Otava, 1991); Tuomas Forsberg and Matti Pesu, "The 'Finlandisation' of Finland: The Ideal Type, the Historical Model, and the Lessons Learnt," *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 27:3 (2016): 473-495. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592296.2016.1196069>.

⁶⁹ Fischer, "A Mustard Seed Grew into a Bushy Tree," 177-201.

⁷⁰ Browning, "Coming Home or Moving Home?"; "Small, Smart and Salient?"; Juhana Aunesluoma, Johanna Rainio-Niemi, "Neutrality as Identity? Finland's Quest for Security in the Cold War," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 18:4 (2016): 51-78. DOI: https://doi.org/doi:10.1162/JCWS_a_00680.

and Finland to analyze how policies of neutrality became critical in national identity formation.⁷¹ In doing so, Rainio-Niemi effectively considered the temporal causality and connectivity of different levels of analysis to show ‘how concrete historical actors in concrete historical contexts and situations gave meanings to the ideological bipolarization of the Cold War.’⁷²

In her work on Dutch and Swedish security policy from 1942-1948, Erlandsson reconceptualized strategies of bandwagoning and non-alignment in the academic conversation of small state survival. Erlandsson argues that both Dutch and Swedish long-term policy strategies may have been similar, but historical experience and perceptions of the international environment influenced how each foreign policy community thought they could obtain said goals. In doing so Erlandsson suggests that traditional security policy labels such as non-alignment and alignment should be reconceptualized to foster “better understanding of the margin for manoeuvre of small states and the shaping of international relations.”⁷³ Erlandsson implicitly posits that small state policy choices can also influence how the international environment develops, expanding how researchers consider a smaller state agency-structure relationship.

This trend of IR theory critique and rediscovery in international history was expanded in the 2020 volume *Margins for Manoeuvre in Cold War Europe: The Influence of Smaller Powers*, which was edited by Crump and Erlandsson. Within this volume, authors such as Suvi Kansikas, Mila Oiva, and Saara Matala nimbly employ Bjøl’s 1968 power of the weak argument when contemplating negotiating culture in Polish-Soviet and Finnish-Soviet trade relations in order to critique larger conceptions about Cold War economic, political, and cultural systems.⁷⁴

International historians of Swedish and Finnish Cold War policy also continue to push this trend. From reconsidering Sweden’s Cold War international image as possessing an idealist foreign policy,⁷⁵ to considering how Finland applied peacekeeping policy to expand and nuance its neutrality policy during the Cold War,⁷⁶ international historians continue to develop analysis on decision-makers’ self-perceptions of smallness in the agency-structure debate.

Considering multilateralism and small state foreign policy, Crump and Kansikas respectively considered the Warsaw Pact and Council for Mutual Economic Assistance to nuance not only conceptions of small states but also the opportunities and limitations great powers had in alliance policy formation.⁷⁷ As such, international historians have shown the value of a focus

⁷¹ Morgenthau’s works used by Rainio-Niemi include: Hans Morgenthau, *Dilemmas of Politics* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1958); Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1950).

⁷² Rainio-Niemi, *The Ideological Cold War*, 12-13.

⁷³ Susanna Erlandsson, *Window of Opportunity. Dutch and Swedish Security Ideas and Strategies 1942–1948* (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 2015): 244.

⁷⁴ Suvi Kansikas, Mila Oiva, and Saara Matala, “Manoeuvring into the Soviet Market: Polish and Finnish Eastern Trade Practices During the Cold War,” in Crump and Erlandsson, eds., *Margins for Manoeuvre in Cold War Europe: The Influence of Smaller Powers* (London: Routledge, 2020): 91-110.

⁷⁵ Aryo Makko, *Ambassadors of Realpolitik Sweden, the CSCE and the Cold War* (New York: Berghahn, 2016).

⁷⁶ Jukka Pesu, “Suomi, rauhanurvaaminen ja kylmä sota 1956-1990: rauhanurvaaminen osana Suomen ulko- ja turvallisuuspolitiikkaa sekä YK-politiikkaa [Finland, Peacekeeping and the Cold War 1956-1990: Peacekeeping as a part of Finnish Foreign and Security Policy as well as UN Policy],” PhD dissertation (Turku, Finland: University of Turku, 2020).

⁷⁷ Crump, *The Warsaw Pact Reconsidered*; Kansikas, *Socialist Countries Face the European Community*.

on small state research not only for understanding smaller states' foreign policy behavior but also in nuancing analysis of great powers' foreign policy behavior.

In his 2015 essay "The Problems and Prospects of Diplomatic/International History," Keylor argued that in the past half-decade or so diplomatic/international historians have kept a channel open to a small group of International Relations scholars in political science departments who are interested in this conversation.⁷⁸ The 'New diplomatic history' or international history of small states seen in the past decade largely fits into trends outlined by Keylor. The international history of small state studies mentioned above continues to enhance both theoretical and empirical knowledge of smaller state foreign policy behavior.

While small state study in general may have again encountered a lull in the past decade, international historians have continued to ponder the vague 'causal connection between external events and theory.' Still, the 'development of theory' aspect could be expanded upon and is a key area for international historians and International Relations scholars to utilize their respective disciplinary strengths in maintaining a common research goal. In attempting to resurrect the common language and cooperation between IR theorists and international historians alluded to by Keylor, a rehabilitated mid-level theoretical interest in smaller state research is one field where this renewed language and increased empathy for temporality may have the potential to be rebuilt.

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⁷⁸ Keylor "The Problems and Prospects of Diplomatic/International History."