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**HOW TO STOP THE BEAR: STRATEGY OF SMALL  
STATES**

by

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December 2010

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**HOW TO STOP THE BEAR: STRATEGY OF SMALL STATES**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
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## ABSTRACT

Keeping in mind limited resources available to weak states, and overwhelming misbalances of power, this study looks for an optimal strategy of a small and weak state that increases prospects of protracting the war, decreases the utility of the aggressor's military capabilities, and threatens to deny an aggressor his political objectives. This thesis concentrates on weak states deterrence strategy.

Weak and small states with defensive national security goals but inadequate military strength have always preferred deterrence to fighting. The essence of deterrence is to persuade an actual or potential adversary that they are better off taking different rather actions than fighting. Deterrence succeeds where the potential adversary is persuaded to believe that his planned actions will fail, or that any military action would be result in dire consequences, hence asserting that he is better off not attacking.

According to Arreguín-Toft (2009) in order to succeed, the materially weaker side needs (1) social support, (2) sanctuary (either physical, such as tough terrain, or political, such as a weakly defended interstate border), (3) an idea capable of making self-sacrifice seem both necessary and noble (e.g., nationalism), and (4) a strategy capable of tying all three advantages into a single effort.

With these four assets, weaker opponents can delay, effectively denying their nominally stronger adversaries the ability to use their advantages in technology, materiel, and numbers to obtain expected political objectives; imposing sufficient costs to force strong opponents to reconsider the expected benefits of victory.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

It happens that sometimes the weak win. According to the realist international relations theory, having more power means winning wars, and less power means losing them. Power is useful. “It is useful both because in the real world enough of it can overwhelm deficiencies in the other categories, and because in the theoretical world it is quantifiable, measurable, and comparable in a way that luck or leadership, for example, are not,” stated Ivan Arreguin-Toft in his book *How the Weak Win Wars* (2007, p. 2). One can assume that the strong player should always win, but, in reality, sometimes the strong state loses to the weak one. Arreguin-Toft (2007) explained his theory this way:

*... Although relative power, the nature of the actor, arms diffusion, and interest asymmetry all matter, the best predictor of asymmetric conflict outcomes is strategic interaction. ... (p. 18)*

... for purposes of theory, building the universe of real actor strategies – blitzkrieg, attrition, defense in depth, guerrilla warfare, terrorism, and so on – can be reduced to two ideal-type strategic approaches: direct and indirect. ...When actors employ opposite strategic approaches (direct-indirect or indirect-direct), weak actors are much more likely to win, even when everything we think we know about power says they should not. (p. 18).

Although there is some definite possibility for the small and the weak state to win, at the same time there is a quiet a chance to lose. And the consequences are disastrous and tragic: “... [D]efeath in war means death or slavery.” (Arreguin-Toft, 2007, p. 2)

The world has changed. The main philosophy of today’s world is focused on the avoidance or prevention of wars rather than on winning them. When it comes to small states, the correct questions to ask are not how to win a war but how to avoid it, how to deter a strong state against invasion and what kind of strategies to use.

### A. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND SCOPE

After the end of the Cold War, people hoped for a more peaceful world and expected a decrease in the frequency of wars. However, war is still part of human life.

The ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus' (c. 535–c. 475 BCE) remark, “*Polemos Pater Pantom* (War is the father of all things)” (Will and Ariel Durant, 1968, p. 81) seems to be an immutable truth. Donald Kagan (1995), an American historian at Yale University, specializing in ancient Greece, says that “Statistically, war has been more common than peace” (p. 570). It seems that the arguments of classical realists and neo-realists are true in human history. They argue that conflicts involving the use of force are inevitable. As Hans Joachim Morgenthau, one of the leading twentieth-century figures in the study of international politics (John Glenn, Darryl Howlett, and Stuart Poore, 2004) believed, “The reason why states behave as they do is firmly rooted in human biological impulses: this inevitably generates a capacity for self-interested, egoistic behavior, either by individuals or in interstate relations via collective egoism” (p. 30). The question then becomes what to do: accept the inevitability of war or find the best strategy for avoiding war and reducing tensions?

From the viewpoint of small states, their positions both in the Concert of Europe and in the Cold War system were controlled by the Great Powers (Kenneth Waltz and Robert Art, 1983, p. 37). Thus, the collapse of both systems meant that small states were released from the tight control and political leverage of the powerful. So, what should small states do in order to survive in this ‘real world’?

Some scholars who study security policy (mostly supporters of realism, the one IR theory whose explanatory capacity revolves around power; Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (1948), Robert Gilpin, *War and Change In World Politics* (1981)) have devoted most of their attention to negative and hard instruments such as deterrence, coercive diplomacy, use of military power, and so on. They believe that the best way to achieve security is to build more arms and develop the technology that will win wars. Janice Bially Mattern, professor of international relations at Lehigh University, in her paper, *Why 'Soft Power' Isn't So Soft: Representational Force and the Social Construction of Attraction in World Politics* (2005, p. 587), stated that "when it comes to the practice of world politics the received wisdom that guns and money are "hard" instruments still largely holds; they are thought to speak for themselves as coercive resources and thus to work most effectively" (2005,

p. 587). However, there are not only negative and hard-line approaches but also positive and soft-line strategies for seeking security. Richard N. Haass, president of the Council on Foreign Relations and Meghan L. O'Sullivan, former deputy national security adviser on Iraq and Afghanistan and now a lecturer and senior fellow at Harvard University, state (2000, p. 1) "The strategy of engagement, or the use of incentives alongside other foreign policy tools to persuade governments to change one or more aspects of their behavior, has received relatively little scrutiny."

This study concentrates on weak states, and more specifically, on identifying relevant strategies for weak states against strong ones. With regard to weak states, the characteristic central to the definition of weak states, is that they cannot defend themselves by their own efforts against any of the great powers (Michael Handel, 1981, p. 76). Military weakness and inability to secure their own existence are central in defining what constitutes weak states. But, "weakness" is a relative term by itself. Any state can find itself in a position being either weak or being a "great power," vis-à-vis their particular opponent (e.g., Iraq versus the U.S., and Iraq versus Kuwait, respectively). Thus, the weak state is "one that has a narrow 'power base,' compared to the other state(s) with which it interacts, especially those with which it has conflicts" (Platias, 1994, p. 45).

Being more precise, and going to the essence of the matter, this thesis concentrates on weak states. Weak states, in the words of John J. Mearsheimer (1983), an American professor of political science and an international relations theorist, find themselves in unenviable situations, where "the asymmetry is so great that the attacker does not have the slightest doubt that he will succeed on the battlefield" (p. 59). In this situation, "the concept of [conventional] deterrence does not really apply" (John Mearsheimer, 1983, p. 59). The difficulty of this predicament is nicely illustrated in a popular Finnish war novel (1808-09) when it says, "One Finn may be worth ten Russians but what do we do when the eleventh comes along?" (as cited in Handel, 1981, p. 76). However, this should not preclude one from looking for remedies for this intrinsic weakness. On the other hand, keeping in mind the limited resources available to weak

states, and imbalances of power, this study looks for the optimal deterrence strategy for a weak state that will make a potential attacker believe that its attack will be unsuccessful and costly.

What is a proper strategy for a weak state to deter a strong one? As Arreguín-Toft (2009), former Harvard University Research Fellow and author of the book *How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict* (2005) states:

... a combination of two trends have made it less costly for weaker actors to deter stronger actors. First, the now-established norm of national self-determination directly challenges the legitimacy of military interventions by, or facilitated by, foreign powers... [and s]econd, the tendency of weak actors to defend their interests using an indirect strategy such as guerrilla warfare forces strong actors to use modern militaries in ways that very often harm noncombatants along with targeted combatants. [T]aken together, these two trends explain both why weak actors have won a majority of asymmetric conflicts since 1950, and the puzzle of weak actor success in deterring strong actor interventions (p. 1).

## **B. RESEARCH QUESTION**

The purpose of this study is to examine unconventional deterrence, and thereby, to broaden the deterrence debate, while filling gaps in deterrence theory. The main research question is whether a strategy of unconventional deterrence employed by relatively weak states can deter greater powers from their aggression.

## **C. STATED HYPOTHESIS**

According to Lawrence Freedman (2004), former foreign policy adviser to British prime Minister Tony Blair, and currently professor of War Studies at King's College in London, "It is certainly possible to come up with prepositions about when, in particular situations, certain types of deterrence are more or less likely to work. But the concept requires considerable differentiation, according to the ambition of the task, the number of actors involved and the degree of the antagonism" (p. 117).

The hypothesis to be tested is whether the smaller state may deter the aggressive greater country from attacking by adopting a strategy that makes the aggressor's military

superiority irrelevant. I will try to find conditions under which a strong state may be deterred from intervening in a weak state. While testing this hypothesis, I will take into the consideration that

...when using deterrence to defend an interest, it is necessary not only to demonstrate how deterrence will work if challenged but also the nature of the interest to be defended. What we need to think about is not so much how to make deterrence work, but about what sorts of behavior we now wish to proscribe, and what role deterrence measures can play in this effort (Freedman 2004, p. 118).

... Acts of deterrence cannot be separated out from the wider context of relations which shape them and give them meaning. So deterrence serves as a boundary-setting activity, but only one of a number of related activities (Freedman 2004, p. 118).

#### **D. GENERAL FRAMEWORK**

This study is not intended to reformulate deterrence theory; that is too complex to be covered in detail in a study such as this. This study accepts current deterrence theory “understanding [that] it is inherently imperfect. It does not consistently work, and we cannot manipulate it sufficiently to fix that and make it a completely reliable tool of statecraft” (Patrick M. Morgan 2003, p. 285).

However, there is a belief and strong evidence that deterrence strategy is “a central component of our security” (Morgan 2003, p. 285), and is the proper choice for a weak state in terms of convincing a potential strong attacker to give up the idea of a possible attack and war.

To begin with, this study will examine the phenomenon of the ‘small state’ in the international system; it will explore the theory of Deterrence in general, and unconventional deterrence, in particular; and finally, it will explain the puzzle of weak actor success in deterring strong actor interventions.

As a result, this work will help small states to test whether or not unconventional deterrence is appropriate as a model of defense strategy.

## **E. METHODOLOGY**

The methodology that will be used will ensure that it follows the purpose and objectives of the study. This study will be based on insights from deterrence: elaboration of the small state's role in the international system, and identification of the deterrence strategy of a weak country.

The assumption is that if the weak can deny the objectives of the strong, via a particular type of warfare, it is reasonable to suggest that the threat of this kind of resistance can be used as a deterrent. In addition, this thesis contends that there are no reasons to suggest that the weak state cannot exploit the advantages of this kind of warfare.

The problematic aspect of this study is that there are no cases where a weak state utilizes unconventional deterrence. Therefore, the only option to support or deny propositions made in this study is to theoretically analyze them based on empirical literature. However, theoretical and empirical findings suggest a number of widely agreed upon conditions, which can be useful in shaping coherent deterrence strategies.

## II. SMALL STATES IN A “WORLD OF POWER”

*... right, as the world goes, is only in question between equals in powers, while the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must.*

— Thucydides (431 B.C.E)

### A. WHAT IS A SMALL STATE?

#### 1. The Study of Small States

According to Ronald P. Barston, the author of the book *The External Relations of Small States* (1973, p. 15), most definitions of small states made by academic scholars of international politics are the results of “identifying characteristics and formulating hypotheses on what differentiates small states from other classes of state” rather than “measuring objective elements of state capability and placing them on ranking scale” Barston (1973, p. 15) suggested four approaches to define the term “small state”: (1) setting an upper limit on, for example, the population size; (2) measuring objective elements; (3) analyzing relative influence; and (4) identifying characteristics and formulating hypotheses on what differentiates small states from others. Based on Danish political writer Erling Bjol (1971, p. 29), however, “by itself the concept of small state means nothing. A state is only small in relation to a greater one” or as it was defined by Martin Wight, one of the foremost British scholars of international relations in the twentieth century, in his book *Power Politics* (1978, p. 61): “the smallness we are talking about when we speak of small powers is smallness relative to the international society they belong to.”

Robert Roshstein (1968, p. 29) states, “a small power is a state that recognizes it cannot obtain security primarily by use of its own capabilities, and that it must rely fundamentally on the aid of other states, institutions, processes, or developments to do so; the small power’s belief in its inability to rely on its own means must also be recognized by the other states involved in international politics.” Rothstein is a professor of

international relations at Colgate University and author of several books and publications on small states. In his book *The Small States in International Politics and Organization* (1981), professor Michael I. Handel, an expert on strategic theory, the nature of war, and the future of warfare analyses that “A small state ... is a state which unable to contend in war with the great powers on anything like the equal terms” (p. 36).

Thus, small states can be defined only in a relative and subjective way. Small states are states that have less power than others in a certain context of relationship, compared by the criteria of measuring power, such as weight, domain, range, and scope. In this way, one can distinguish small states from the powerful in every situation because all systems inherently have a visible or invisible spectrum of states arranged from the most powerful to the least in terms of power (Kenneth Waltz, 1979, pp. 40, 80). With the same perception for relationship between small states and international systems, Michael Handel (1981, pp. 5, 37) states that “the position and relative security of any weak state be gauged in terms of the specific international system in which it is operating ... Even at the same period of history, weak states located in different areas have different neighbors and thus face different problems ... Therefore, when speaking of the ability or inability of a weak state to defend itself, one must immediately ask, ‘Against whom?’”

## **2. Small States and the International Systems**

International systems provide opportunities as well as restrictions to small states. Because the international system is mainly changed and established by great powers, and because small states inherently lack the internal countermeasures, they must rely on external sources in order to enhance their strength and improve their position in the system. Yet, according to Handel (1981, p. 171) “their ability to turn to other states and draw on their resources is largely a function of the nature of the particular international system in which they operate. Different types of international systems enhance or weaken their bargaining position or leverage, encourage them from seeking the aid of other states, or isolate them from other states, within the system.” Accordingly, small states usually have a narrow range of countermeasures and thus, they are vulnerable to external pressure. “Having less margin of error than more powerful states, the small states must

carefully manage their external relations in order to minimize risks and reduce the impact of policy failures” (Barston, 1973, p. 19). However, according to Handel (1981) small states are “by no means impotent, helpless victims of the system. On the contrary, some of them are quick to take advantage of the opportunities arising from the nature of any given international system” (pp. 45–46). Take, for instance, Yugoslavia, during the Cold War era, Cuba in 1962, and Israel in 1973; all these states have pursued very active and ambitious foreign policies and have not failed to attain their objectives or, at least, have not lost their initiative due to the pressures of the powerful.

Yet, it is still necessary to distinguish the significant small states, in terms of the balance of power in the international system, from the insignificant ones. For instance, Costa Rica is a small state, but is not as significant to the security of Central America, as Pakistan is for South Asian stability. Also, as the international system is changing, so is the significance of small states. The present Belgium is not important for the security of Europe as much as it was in the nineteenth century because the possibility of a Franco-German conflict has considerably decreased (Joseph Malia, 1986, p. 30). One possible way is the geographical approach.

## **B. FOREIGN POLICY ROLES OF SMALL STATES**

### **1. A Geopolitical Approach**

To some degree, geography decides the fate of a state. Britain and Japan have enjoyed their insular positions while Poland and Georgia have suffered because of their location between hostile neighbors. Many factors affect the geographic value of a state. Traditionally, they are “the distribution of land and sea, the topography, the hydrographic network, the size of territory, and its aptitude to produce” (Jean Gottman, 1951, pp. 157-162). But for small states, strategic location is more important than any other factors. For example, “Germany attacked Belgium and Holland not because of their inherent weakness but because it was at war with France and Great Britain, and the two small countries happened to be located on the strategic highway to France” (Michael Handel, 1981, p. 78). However, this vulnerability stemming from location can also be an asset,

especially in a time of great power amity. Thus, small states located between great powers enjoy their strategic significance or suffer from it according to great powers' policies. Usually, these small states play significant roles in the international system, as a buffer state, a client, a balancer and a risk taker.

*a. A Buffer State*

The term 'buffer state,' as a small independent state lying between two or more larger powers, is defined by a professor of political science and the founder of the Power Transition Theory, Abram Fimo Kenneth Organski (1960, p. 276). However, scholars differ in their identifications of a buffer state. Martin Wight, for instance, one of the foremost British scholars of international relations (1978, p. 160), focused more on the role of neighboring great powers; Thomas Ross in his book, *Buffer States in World Politics* (1986), emphasized the role of a buffer state as an independent player, pointing out that:

buffer states are not satellite or puppet states of either of the powerful neighbors, nor are they necessarily strictly neutral states. The concert of a buffer state, in presupposing a free and effective organism in the region interposed, rules out partition or any form of breakup enforced by the great powers on either flanks (p. 16).

However, both identifications are too extreme; one is too broad, the other is too narrow. Thus, in this study, a buffer state should be: 1) weaker or smaller than neighboring powers; and 2) located between greater powers that maintain an approximate parity or balance of power. Thus, once the balance of power or the parity between great powers breaks down, a buffer state tends to lose its autonomy and then its identity as a buffer state. Several cases support this argument. As World War II ended and Finland's role as a buffer state between Sweden and Russia or between Germany and Russia was over, Finland fell into the Soviet sphere of influence, "without the existence of any great power to counterbalance Soviet military power.... Finland ceased to be a buffer state and became a rimstate" (John Chay and Thomas Ross, 1988, pp. 4-5). The definition of *rimstate* given by the political scientist Efraim Karsh states that "[rimstate is] a state located along the borders of a great power and coming within its defense perimeter, while

not being situated between two great powers” (1986, pp. 43–57). In other words, in terms of conceptual understanding, a buffer state does not have to be geographically located between the great powers. On the other hand, the small states between the ideologically hostile great powers, such as the two superpowers of the Cold War era, can also be defined as buffer states (Chay and Ross, 1986, p. 3).

***b. A Client State***

Another form of small states that have significant weight in the international systems is the client state. This term has frequently been used for defining the state in a relationship between one of two superpowers, and a small state, which belonged to one of two blocs (Handel, 1968, p. 139). Originating from economics, the term ‘client’ includes rather different concepts from ‘satellite’ or ‘puppet state.’ On the contrary, the patron-client relationship implies a “reciprocal flow of benefits and the absence of coercion in the hold that the patron’s leader has over his client states” (Klaus Knorr, 1975, p. 25). A client state pursues economic and military bases of commodities and loyalty or deference. A patron state, conversely, tries to buy political leverage over the client or to acquire and keep strategic interests in the region in exchange for economic and military assistance, like the Soviet Union toward Cuba during the Cold War period (Yaacov Bar-siman-Tov, 1987, pp. 121–122). However, “although the asymmetry of the patron-client relationship may be regarded as a potential power resource for the patron, its conversion to active influence does not necessarily bring about the desired results. Potential bargaining with a client renders the potential power of the patron less effective” (Bar-Siman-Tov, 1980, p. 203). Moreover, a client can penetrate into the internal decision-making process of a patron state. This propensity was intensified in the Cold War system. The comparative bipolar system embodied great opportunities for small states as the competition between the superpowers, for allies, afforded the clients room to maneuver (Bar-Siman-Tov, 1980, p. 203). Therefore, one can say that the position of a

client is determined by “the availability of other patrons who can render the same protection or material support, and the mobility of [the client] between alternative patrons” (Handel, 1968, p. 133).

The policy options of a client state extend from complete allegiance, like the behavior of the pilot fish (Handel, 1968, p. 134), to free-riding, and it chooses its policy according to the environment of the international system. Handel stated:

[T]he more automatic the security promised to a weak state, the more important that state is to the defense system of the superpower, and the fewer of its own resources it has to invest in security. ... [This tendency is] encouraged not only by their perception of their importance to the superpower’s security, but also two other facts. First, they know that whatever they do, they cannot hold out against the onslaught of an attacking superpower. Hence any investment in their own defense is waste of resources. ... The development of nuclear weapons is a second fact that has encouraged the small states to adapt a strategy of coercive defiance. Many of the weak states believe that mutual nuclear deterrence will prevent a war and that therefore it would be foolish to invest in conventional forces that would never be used or would be unhelpful and irrelevant. ... paradoxically, the failure of burden sharing is an indication of the faith of the weak state in the superpower with which it is allied. (pp. 150–151)

If the conditions are reversed, the client states should comply with the requests of their patrons. Thus, one can conclude that, like a buffer state, as for a client state, the external factors are more important than its skillful foreign policy or internal sources of strength when it comes to playing a significant role in the international system.

*c. A Balancer or a Holder of the Balance*

A balancer (or a holder of the balance) is another type of role for small states located in geographically significant positions. Generally, it is believed that this role is accomplished by a great power able to direct and guide the overall international system, such as Great Britain in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Hans J. Morgenthau, 1973, p. 194).

In such a multipolar system, a powerful balancer was needed, one able to “set into motion ... various weights and counterweights on all sides of the chandelier”

(Ernst B. Haas, 1953, p. 458). Yet, there is another balance of power system including the balancer as a significant player. It is the system of two approximately equal, and usually rival, powers with the third one, the holder of the balance between them, such as the bipolar system during the Cold War era. It is in this system that small states can play important roles as balancers. Martin Wight put it that: “Sometimes a small power, through the accident of the strategic position or the energy of its ruler, can contribute useful if not decisive strength to one side or the other...” (Wight, 1966, p. 161). However, the practical policies of those small states are not equal, simple or static.

*d. A Risk Taker State*

The last conceivable type of small state is a risk taker. As Handel (1981) put it;

In general, weak states must take defensive positions against any superpowers. Occasionally, however, a weak state takes a limited offensive posture against a great or superpower, often defying it with a certain degree of success. In fishing disputes, Iceland and Peru have successfully resisted British and American pressures. North Korea challenged the United States with impunity, and went unpunished in the Pueblo incident. Serbia risked the wrath of Austria before World War I. (p. 39)

Moreover, in cases of small states’ defiance, “the response of the great power will be determined by the type of threat, the degree of its active involvement elsewhere, and concern lest any retaliatory action might adversely affect its relations with other states in the region” (Barston, 1973, p. 23). Calculating the costs and benefits very carefully, some leaders of small states have successfully defied the great powers, even the superpowers.

President of South Korea Syngman Rhee (March 26, 1875–July 19, 1965) was one of them, as is described by General Mark Clark, American general during World War II and the Korean War (1954, p. 256). When the Chinese and North Korean communists began to show a serious willingness to negotiate a truce agreement (1953), especially after the death of Stalin, President Rhee harshly opposed that truce talk and insisted that the war should be ended with the complete reunification of Korea, and even that United Nations occupy the territory of Russia and China, until permanent peace was

established in the Far East. Furthermore, to prohibit the progress of the truce talk, he released several thousand anti-communist North Korean prisoners of war. It was an attempt to “discredit the United States in the eyes of the enemy” and, by doing so, “to stop any attempt to reach an agreement with the Communists at Panmunjom” (Chang Jin park, 1975, pp. 99, 113). Through this very carefully calculated defiance, President Rhee achieved his primary goals: to make the United States sign a bilateral treaty and to get economic aid for rehabilitation. It was the case of a small state’s risk-taking defiance against its own patron in order to increase its commitments.

Another type of defiance is that against its enemy. This can be illustrated by North Korea’s direct challenges against the United States in 1968, 1969 and 1976. These were the Pueblo incident (Jan. 23, 1968), the shooting down of the EC-121 aircraft, and the ax-slaying incident at the Panmunjom area (1976). In the case of the Pueblo incident, North Korean dictator Kim Il Sung (1972–1994) understood the immobility, and also unwillingness, of the United States due to its involvement in the Vietnam War (1955–1975). Also, he knew he could succeed at the negotiation table because North Korea seized a critical ‘bargaining card’: the American hostages taken from the USS Pueblo (Peter Grose, 1968). Moreover, heightened tension in North Korea might well force the withdrawal of nearly fifty thousand South Korean troops then fighting alongside the United States in Vietnam (Peter Grose, 1968). In the case of the EC-121 incident, Kim clearly ascertained that the United States would be self-constrained because of the reflection of the Gulf of Tonkin incident and because of the ongoing Vietnam War. In addition, he might calculate that the United States worried that the North Koreans might have reacted in a way that would precipitate a wider war, if they attacked North Korea (Peter Grose, 1968). Also, even the case of the ax-slaying incident in 1976 when the United States was not bound by the Vietnam War, Kim escaped the crisis with just a verbal concession, saying it was ‘regretful’ (Grose, 1968). Other than the show of force with bombers and other air-power assets, no countermeasure was taken by the United States.

From the perspectives of the great powers, all these roles of small states mentioned so far depend on the geopolitical context of the international systems rather

than their leaders' statesmanship. However, to understand the whole international system and to find the niche or the window of opportunity for small states may depend on the competence of their statecraft.

## **2. Aims of National Interests of Small States**

In a Hobbesian world, the primary goal of a state is to survive (Martinich, 1992, p. 19). Even though the international system is becoming integrated and institutionalized, the basic unit remains the nation-state and, moreover, a statesman's basic concept will continually be "realistic." Besides, since the inequality of states is inevitable, even if there were an effective international organization in the future, the role of small states will still be marginal, not just relatively, but also absolutely. In this self-help system, small states' practical objectives were and still are "simple and clear to stay out of the hostilities" (Annette B. Fox, 1959, p. 181), or "to avoid conflict with a great power" (David Vital, 1971, p. 29). However, in reality, the survivability of small states has considerably increased. Even so, the most significant concerns for small states remain constant. Obviously, it is sovereignty and territorial integrity. Allen Sens, Chair of the International Relations Program at the University of British Columbia, Canada, noted, "The political life of a small power is a struggle for political, economic, and social autonomy as much as it is a struggle for national survival or territorial integrity" (1993, p. 231).

What is sovereignty? It is understood as "the independent right of the state over its own territory and its autonomy vis-a-vis other states" (Joseph Malia, 1986, p. 31), or as "the preeminence of the national polity in relation to both the larger world polity and various local polities" (John Boli, 1993, p. 9). It means the exclusive right of a state to wield its power over its territory and population without being subordinated to another country. Thus, sovereign states "develop their own strategies, chart their own courses, make their own decisions about how to meet whatever needs they experience and whatever desires they develop" (Kenneth Waltz, 1979, p. 96).

However, the concept of sovereignty is not practical. John Boli, Emory University professor, who is the author or co-author of six books and many articles and chapters on

globalization, and political sociology describes it this way: “The essence of sovereignty is thus theoretical, not empirical; it is the theory that the national polity, as organized by the state, is the pinnacle of authority, neither subordinate to the world polity nor defied by local polities or organizations. How much the sovereign state is in fact influenced by external or internal actors is a question of power, status, will, and effectiveness, but not one of authority *per se*” (John Boli, 1993, p. 11). He considered sovereignty as being confronted with the increasing interdependence of the international system:

As the world polity intensifies, state concern to delimit the polity, reduce the influence of outside actors, and gain greater influence over the outside environments is heightened. Conceptually, this triple concern has two major, contradictory implications; (a) National Sovereignty becomes an increasingly powerful ideological claim, and (b) The incapacity of the sovereign state acting alone to assure national success becomes increasingly apparent. (p. 23)

Actually, though the world has been integrated by several technological developments, it could not satisfy or alleviate the demand for the sovereignty of a state or nation. This can be illustrated by the contemporary crises proclaimed by small states in the name of ‘national sovereignty’ or ‘self-determination,’ such as the conflicts in the Balkans and in Russia, Iraq’s rejection of United Nations sanctions on oil exports, several Arab and other states’ rejection of the extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and so on. In other words, it is hard to identify the scope of sovereignty. Sovereignty is a very subjective concept. Thus, on the one hand, it is usually conceived as the natural objective of a state, but on the other hand, it is used as an excuse to legitimize a country’s violation or deviation of international norms. Consequently, especially for small states, sovereignty is not only indispensable as an objective of a state but also useful as propaganda. Accordingly, they may use this term more frequently and enthusiastically than great powers do.

Another conceivable aim of small states is ‘prestige.’ In general, it is believed that prestige is not much related to small states’ policies. Erling Bjol, a Scandinavian analyst (1971) said:

Time and again considerations of prestige tend to influence great power behavior, both in its relation with its peers, and in relations with small states. This concern with prestige seems much less important in playing the small state role. [T]he dimension of security for a small state will often be far wide. (pp. 32–33)

Surely prestige is not the first priority of small states' policies. But, it also can be one of their goals. If one considers the simple meaning of prestige — the recognition of one's strength “by other people” and also “by oneself” (Wight, 1978, p. 98), he could find there is no reason to exclude it as an aim of small states. Accordingly, in a certain environment and in a certain manner, small states can pursue prestige and implement it as a policy aim. There are several typical small states strategies to achieve these aims.

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### III. STRATEGIES OF SMALL STATES

*We live ... amid the debris of Reason.*

Adam Seligman (1994)

Looking into the strategies of small states, one can identify two approaches to enhance power and significance: increasing internal strength and inducing external aid. Accordingly, there is a categorization of a small state's strategies: military build-up and economic independence as for the internal efforts, and neutrality, alliance, non-alignment, and collective security for the external efforts.

#### A. MILITARY BUILD-UP

The importance of the minimum military build-up in small states proved to be an obligatory option when Kuwait was taken over by Iraq within hours in August 1990. It was not rapidly responded to by external powers. On the other hand, in the early stage of the Yom Kippur War in 1973, Israel's well-prepared defense system enabled her to check the initiative of the Arab states—Egypt, Jordan and Syria—and to prevent a *fait accompli*. Other successful cases were the military build-up of Sweden and Switzerland. They could “develop large armies without suffering an overwhelming burden by building up their reserve system. Reserves can be called up on short notice, and their quality and training are almost equal to that of the regular units” (Handel, 1981, p. 79). On the basis of this conceptualization, aid with material support is typically more convenient for the great powers than dispatching their troops. Military build-up in small states can be seen as another way of inducing external aid in times of crisis.

In general, external aid with material support is directly connected with the establishment of domestic military industries, which has several advantages as well as disadvantages in terms of small states;

Advantages: (i) A small state can be less dependent on great powers' aid, especially in wartime, as it does not have to depend on the continued supply of spare

parts or the maintenance services of a great power. (ii) A small state can have its own weapons system appropriate to its strategic environment.

Disadvantages: (i) It is too expensive. It is not reasonable for small states to produce, maintain, research and develop modern technological weapons. (ii) A small state cannot produce the most sophisticated weapons (Handel, 1981, p. 79).

Thus, the success of this policy very much depends on the degree of economic and technological development of small states as well as the competence of decision makers.

## **B. ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE**

In the earlier stages of economic development, and especially in peacetime, economic dependency on great powers is somewhat necessary for small states. That is, small states may benefit disproportionately by imitating the advances of the great powers. As Robert Gilpin, a scholar of international political economy (1981) put it:

In adopting new forms, the backward society is able to skip historical stages, exploit the experience of the more advanced society, and thereby outstrip its predecessors: Although compelled to follow after the advanced countries, a backward country does not take things in the same order. The privilege of historic backwardness – and such privilege exists – permits, or rather compels, the adoption of whatever is ready in advance of any specified date, skipping a whole series of intermediate stages. (p. 179)

However, if great power becomes irredentist or becomes protective of small states, their dependence, or interdependence, is doomed to be an Achilles' tendon. This negative result of economic dependence on a great power was illustrated by the case of Armenia in the South Caucasus, which is predominantly dependent on the Russia Federation.

On the basis of this conceptualization, several small states tried to avoid economic dependence by the policy of self-reliance or autarky. Among them, the most obvious example is North Korea (Ed Paisley, 1994, p. 23). This somewhat extreme policy was employed by them due to political reasons rather than economic ones because they

thought economy was not everything. Kalevi J. Holsti, a research associate at the Centre for International Relations and Political Science at the University of British Columbia (1980) pointed out:

Other values – in the Burmese case, national pride and fear of loss of autonomy – are also relevant. Economic gains may be forsaken in order to maximize other values. ... The incidence of international disintegration or more moat-building foreign policies in the future remain problematic. Weak and vulnerable societies involved in highly asymmetrical relationships no doubt find strategies of self-sufficiency and autarky politically, if not economically appealing: if only to break down dependency and to reduce foreign penetration of their institutions. (pp. 40–46)

Also, Edward Hallett Carr, British historian and international relations theorist (1939, pp. 120–123) said, “Autarky is not a social necessity but an instrument of political power. It is primarily a form of preparedness for war ... and autarky was developed as the natural defensive armament against the weapons of blockade.” However, this policy has a critical weakness. It is expensive and also inefficient. Consequently, it is most likely doomed to fail because it demands the abdication of the benefits of the economies of trade and quarantining oneself from the world of technology and information. Nevertheless, autarky will remain an alternative for small states that fear the loss of their identity as a state or of sovereignty.

These internal efforts, however, are less crucial for small states than external sources of strength and “constitute a relatively [smaller] part of their strength than is the case for the great powers” (Robert L. Rothstein, 1968, p. 26).

### **C. NEUTRALITY**

Another option is to achieve neutrality. Robert L. Rothstein, analyst of international relations (1968) explains why a small state wants to be a neutral:

One reason is that small powers tend to rely on the hope that they can be protected by their own insignificance. If they can appear detached enough, and disinterested enough, and if they can convincingly indicate that they are too powerless to affect the issue, they hope the storm will pass them by. (p. 26)

However, without respect to small states’ will, neutrality seems to be conditional to the acceptance of the great powers:

Neutrality requires the tolerance, agreement, or approval of the great powers—at least those in the immediate vicinity—to underwrite or guarantee the neutrality of the small state, as in the case of Belgium and the Treaty of London. Several neutrality policies adopted in the interwar period were rendered superfluous when Nazi Germany simply chose not to honor them. Neutrality arrangements are usually founded on the mutual self-interest principle, and if this mutual self-interest on the part of the great powers breaks down, so too does the viability of the neutrality policy. (Allen Sens, 1993, pp. 236–237)

[Success] depended on convincing the power pressing the small state that its continued neutrality was advantageous to the great power too. The small state’s leaders had to make clear that the belligerent’s major requirements could be satisfied without the use of force or that the use of force would be too expensive in terms of the benefits sought and the larger dividends available if applied elsewhere. (Annette B. Fox, 1959, p. 180)

As Efraim Karsh (1988) wrote, an analyst who has published extensively on Middle Eastern affairs, Soviet foreign policy, and European neutrality, “neutrality did not constitute a viable foreign policy course for a buffer state” (p. 4), because it “exposes itself to the force of both belligerents at once” (p. 87). This restriction can be illustrated by the experiences of Belgium and the Netherlands.

Neutrality had been the general security policy of Belgium and the Netherlands since the 1815 Congress of Vienna established that they were to be buffer states against future French expansion. But, with the Belgian War of Independence in 1830, this first version of neutrality collapsed and was replaced at the London Conference of 1839 by the policy that the neutrality of both countries would be enforced and protected by the great powers, especially by the United Kingdom.

In 1870, when France and Prussia were on the verge of war, Great Britain extracted a promise from both to leave neutral Belgium untouched. The Belgians were saved and their “achievement noninvolvement and non-immolation created a state of euphoria in the country” (Robert Rothstein, 1968, p. 66). However, the experience of

World War I changed Belgian resistance. This experience of overrun and occupation led the post-World War Belgium to attempt to make bilateral treaties with Britain and France rather than stick to the neutrality syndrome, simultaneously trying to join the League of Nations. The first result was the military accord with France, but the accord did not guarantee automatic military assistance. As Rothstein (1968) said, “the official version of the accord eliminated ‘a la fois (at once).’ Hence the accord would come into operation if either Belgium or France were attacked separately” (p. 83). In 1924, Belgium took part in the Locarno Pact, which “strengthened the guarantee provided by Great Britain and the League of Nations and rectified the imbalance exhibited by the accord with France” (Luc Reyckler, 1985, p. 4). For Belgium, Locarno meant a return to the past. Belgium could concentrate on other matters, while security was left to the great powers. She “began to feel as secure as under the aegis of the treaties of 1839, and, again, began to make the same mistakes” (Rothstein, 1968, p. 95). In the late 1930s, Belgium came to perceive that the scene had changed and proclaimed a new policy of armed neutrality. But, it was too late.

On the other hand, the Netherlands avoided all the disasters of World War I and stayed untouched. Thus, her security policy during the inter-war period was “simply a continuation of the successful policy of unarmed neutrality, a moralistic public philosophy stressing the role of international law, and abstentionism from security alliance” (George J. Stein, 1990, p. 4). At the same time, the Dutch were reluctant to join the League of Nations, since “league members might have to apply sanctions against aggressor states” (Jan G. Siccamo, 1985, p. 115). Thus, despite the increasing insecurity in Europe, they remained firm on declaring unarmed neutrality.

#### **D. ALLIANCE**

Another alternative of small states’ policies is to seek allies. Generally, two different ways are employed; balancing and bandwagoning. As Stephen Walt (1987), an influential scholar in international relations who developed the Balance of Threat Theory, which defined threats in terms of aggregate power, geographic proximity, offensive power, and aggressive intentions explained in his book *The Origins of Alliance*, “When

confronted by a significant external threat, states may either balance or bandwagon. Balancing is defined as allying with others against the prevailing threat: bandwagoning refers to alignment with the source of danger” (p. 17).

### **1. Balancing and Bandwagoning**

Traditionally, balancing as a way of foreign policy implied balance against the emergence of a predominant power. This idea was formed during the Renaissance period (Alfred Vagts, 1948, p. 83), and consolidated by its real implementation into the international system through interstate agreements, such as the Treaty of Utrecht (which established the Peace of Utrecht, signed in the Dutch city of Utrecht in March and April 1713) and the Congress of Vienna (that was held in Vienna from September, 1814 to June, 1815 with the objective of settling the issues arising from the French Revolutionary Wars, the Napoleonic Wars, and the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire). Rather than confirming this belief, Stephen Walt (1987) reveals the missing point of the traditional balance of power concept. He proposes that “states do not balance solely against power, but they balance against threat” (Stephen Walt, 1987, pp. 17–31), especially in case of a small state, because in general, they are “indifferent to the global balance of power” (pp. 147–180). Here, the concept of threat is broader than that of power, since “it includes [the several variables, such as] aggregate power, proximity to a target, offensive capability, and perceived intentions” (Robert O. Keohane, 1988, p. 171).

However, the more important thing for small states is geographic location. If a small state is situated in the middle of two confronting great powers, its balancing behavior will be effective. Since its own weight is not heavy enough, a small state can hold the balance only in very limited situations. Thus, in most cases, as Walt mentions, small states are “likely to bandwagon rather than balance” (Stephen Walt, 1987, pp. 28–32). On the other hand, another view of alliance reveals the missing point of the Walt’s (Stephen Walt, 1987) ‘balance of power’ theory. Randall L. Schweller (1994), an analyst of international security and international relations theory, who is best known for his Balance of Interests theory, which is a revision of Kenneth Waltz's Balance of Power theory and Stephen Walt's Balance of Threat theory, criticizes: “Balance of threat theory

is designed to consider only cases in which the goal of alignment is security, and so it systematically excludes alliance driven by profit” (p. 74), in other words, “bandwagoning for profits” or “predatory buck-passing: riding free on the offensive efforts of others to gain unearned spoils” (Randall L. Schweller, 1994, p. 79). Noticing that “the concept of bandwagoning is not the opposite of balancing” (Randall L. Schweller, 1994, p. 74), he defined them this way: “balancing is driven by desire to avoid losses; bandwagoning by the opportunity for gain ... In the language of systems theory, bandwagoning is a form of positive feedback.

By contrast, the purpose of balancing behavior is to prevent systemic disequilibrium or, when deterrence fails, to restore the balance. Balancing is a form of negative feedback” (pp. 92–93). However, his explanation is still ambiguous in terms of small states’ behavior, since they also bandwagon to avoid losses or to be delivered (passed over) from the crisis, such as the bandwagoning of Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria before Nazi Germany’s threat. Therefore, to distinguish balancing from bandwagoning in terms of aims, whether it is to avoid losses or to gain profit is not necessary, because balancing and bandwagoning are simply opposite sides of the same coin. The value of the coin is not affected by its posture, but rather by the general monetary market. Similarly, the two main policies of alliance, balancing and bandwagoning, are seemingly different. But, the effectiveness of alliance does not depend on the policy itself but on the international system that the alliance belongs to. On the other hand, the different types of alliances can be distinguished by the number of members composing it: bilateral, multilateral, and alliance among small states.

## **2. Bilateral With Great Power Alliance**

Alliances, and particularly a bilateral alliance, are based on both participants’ common interests. Small states driven by their concerns about security from regional threats, rather than global ones, and regional stability, are committed to searching out a strong ally (George Liska, 1968, pp. 27–29). On the other hand, the great powers’ motives to enter into a bilateral alliance with a small state can be summed up by: 1)

aggregation or addition of power; 2) preclusive alliance, that is, diversion of small state power from alliance with an adversary; and 3) disguise of their control over the lesser ally's actions (George Liska, 1968, pp. 30–32).

However, despite common interests, there are still several problems for each state because the small state may “insist on its right to be consulted, but de-emphasize the relevancy of the power contribution it can make” (Rothstein, 1968, p. 58) and, on the other hand, the great power, “with interests and responsibilities in various areas, may seek a narrowly conceived alliance in order to be free to use its noncommitted power elsewhere” (p. 58). Besides, small states would fear unwilling involvement in the conflicts of the great powers, the great power's unilateral abdication of the alliance, the reduction in foreign policy flexibility and freedom, and the great power's economic, social and cultural penetration, and so on, The great powers would also be reluctant to ally with small states because they tend to shop freely (Michael Handel, 1981, pp. 127–129). How then can a small state induce a great power and strengthen its commitment to the alliance? Michael Handel (1981) answered this clearly:

- 1) Strategy of unilateral invoking: The small state will very often clarify the verbal commitments unilaterally, in such a way as to favor its own interests. The great or superpower can do very little about this, short of openly repudiating the weak state's actions and thus further diluting its own commitments.
- 2) Strategy of penetration: The small state appeal to public opinion in the strong state. Penetration is achieved through public officials, lobbyists and foreign propaganda.
- 3) Strategy of trip-wire: The small state can induce the great power to station troops and maintain bases on their territory (pp. 123–126).

### **3. Multilateral Alliance**

Since it is usually a more institutionalized type of alliance, the multilateral alliance has “traditionally been regarded as a favorable option for small states” (Allen Sens, 1993, p. 235). Several advantages for small states are enumerated: 1) greater deterrent effects; 2) the potential defense capability; 3) heavier political weight in the

decision making process among allies; 4) less dependence on a single powerful state within or outside the alliance than a bilateral alliance; 5) expanded role of small state as mediator among the allies; and 6) increased influence and prestige of small states (Sens, 1993, pp. 235–236).

Nevertheless, this type of alliance is hard to achieve, since it is not easy to find common interests among several states. Moreover, even if there are stakes for all of them, the profit of the alliance does not dispel the problem of the responsibility. The decision making process would be more complex and less flexible. Also, when a crisis emerges, it would be more fragile than the bilateral one. Furthermore, in terms of military operations, it needs hard-to-achieve cooperation, such as a combined command and control system, a combined doctrine and weapons system, and so on. Thus, it tends to be more nominal than the bilateral one. On the other hand, if the alliance is based on the strong leadership of a predominant power and if she is willing to take the burden, like the United States in NATO, the situation, called “the equilibrium of complementary (global or regional) imbalances under the leadership of a primary world power” (George Liska, 1968, p. 17), would be very practical and beneficial to small states.

#### **4. Alliances Among Small States**

Besides alliances with great powers, it is possible for a small state to ally with other small states for coping with the ‘regional’ threat. An alliance among small states is restricted in terms of its capability to meet the threats. Rothstein (1968) stated:

An alliance of small powers is an instrument of limited utility. It neither can nor is designed to handle major military threats. When small powers are threatened by great powers, they must turn to other powers for support... Statesmen are wrong in assuming that a combination of small powers is equivalent to a great power. (pp. 169–171)

In the same manner, Handel (1981), scholar on small and weak states, stated that “alliances of weak states are usually created ad hoc for a temporally limited goal or a single issue” (p153). Accordingly, as Liska (1968), the expert who was studying small states, noted that small states, in general, gather together for the limited purposes of: 1) “showing the coordinated opposition” to the expansionist state, and thus, enabling her to

save face; 2) controlling or preventing other small allies from provoking expansionism; 3) consolidating the economic, political, social and cultural exchanges (pp. 50–53).

In the case of the security alliance, the aggregation of small states does not yield sufficient weight. On the contrary, it would aggravate the situation once the threat from a great power emerges, due to disorder among the allies. In this case, each member of the alliance would seek another great power instead of consolidating the alliance. Thus, this type of alliance is not fit for confronting serious security threats. As an illustration of the failure of that type of alliance would be the Little Entente, which was formed in 1920 and 1921 by Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia with the goal of common defense against Hungarian irredentism and the prevention of a Habsburg restoration. France supported the alliance by signing treaties with each member country. The Little Entente began to break down in 1936 and disbanded completely in 1938. France had seen the Little Entente as an opportunity, in the interests of French security, to revitalize the threat of a two-front war against Germany. However, keeping the solidarity among allies in the face of the German threat illustrates the weakness of an alliance of small states (Wight, 1978, pp. 134–135).

## **5. Non-Alignment**

Nonalignment was the by-product of the East-West confrontation. One of the non-alignment advocates, Hae Kwang Chang proclaimed, “The world does not consist of black or white only. There are many grey areas too. Since there is a third choice, why should one color-blindly and inflexibly follow either the black or white path? We will follow our own path separately from the East and the West” (1984, p. 144).

Also, it should be differentiated from ‘neutrality’ or ‘neutralism.’ Professor Radovan Vukadinovic (1971), director of the Croatian International Studies Association who has published extensively on international relations, stated;

In the first years of their action, the non-aligned countries resolutely refused the policy of neutrality in international relations, emphasizing that they were not passive observers of international relations, but that they wanted to influence by their policy in international relations, a new trend indicating the abolition of the bloc restraint and of the domination of great countries. (p. 106)

Opposing the duopolistic international system, where the two superpowers succeeded in emphasizing their “privileged rights” (Vukadinovic, 1971, p. 103), the supporters of non-alignment policy proclaimed “the universal democratization of international relations” (p. 105); respect for the sovereignty, independence and equality of all states, and the repugnance of the policy of force and of interference into the businesses of other countries (p. 110). Accordingly, their power-base was the aggregate veto in the international organizations.

However, like the alliance system among small states, non-aligned states were inherently unable to cope with threats, especially those from great powers. Thus, once the danger increases in the region, nonaligned states would “veer toward alignment” (Liska, 1968, p. 20), because they would find that “a free hand” means an “empty and unarmed hand” (p. 20). Actually, non-alignment was not only nominal and propagandistic, such as Cuba’s “crypto alignment” (Cuba was a prominent member of the conferences of the non-aligned countries, but, its actual policy was bandwagoning with the Soviet Union), but also a disguise for nationalism, furthered by anti-colonial movements and the emergence of independent small states in the Third World. Moreover, it was also possible only in the diffusive “international system, that is, a less coercive or hierarchical system” (Holsti, 1977, p. 361).

## **6. Collective Security**

If it works well, the collective security system would be the most favorable one for small states to pursue. It “binds and restricts the great powers, and in the case of potential aggressors, deters them in a fashion the small states could not hope to achieve through bilateral or even multilateral efforts” (Sens, 1993, p. 232). The idea of collective security came from the critics of the evil nature of balance of power policy. To keep the world out of war, international organizations have been embodied in the name of collective security. The League of Nations and the United Nations were the products. However, this idea inherently lacks the understanding of the nature of international politics. International relations theorist, Inis L. Claude (1962), criticized it as just an ideological and moralistic device:

Collective security has been adopted but not accepted; it had been vaguely institutionalized but without serious prospect of implementation. The wilsonian drama had been a success at the ideological box office and a flop in the critical circles where policy was determined... It requires a belief that what is good for the world is good for the state... It's not unrealistic about power but unrealistic about policy. (pp. 155, 200–204)

In addition, even when it is working well, the principal requirements of the implementation of its norm is the existence of a leader. This was illustrated by the successful cases of UN operations in the Korean War (1950–1953) and the Iraq-Kuwait War (1990). Conversely, the collapse of the Warsaw Treaty Organization (1991) after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the disputes in NATO on the issue of its enlargement are cases that illustrate how much importance the leadership role of a great power is in a collective security organization.

Moreover, there are several assumptions that joining the NATO is both sustainable and unsustainable, in theory, for small states. Obviously, small states join an alliance because they “take refuge” (Reiter, E., 2010) in alliances to be safe from hostile big states. An essential question is whether small states can rely on alliances, or if small states can still pursue their security interests within an alliance. The judgment may be focused on the “alliances which have a protection function or, respectively, a deterrence function *vis-à-vis* aggressors” (Reiter, E, 2010). Evidently, NATO can be considered a desired alliance for threatened countries. However, if a small state’s NATO integration process provokes hostile great powers’ ‘revived expansionism,’ it will support catalyzing a conflict between them. If the alliance is considered an ultimate condition of survival for weak states, why is it that the Republics of Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Poland, while being NATO members, still consider the neighboring Russian Federation a potential threat? One can assume that small states are not confident enough that the system will come to their aid “in the eventuality of aggression from outside [...] because great powers might consider such a threat not worthy of collective action” (Reiter, 2010), and, as a result, small states can find themselves abandoned. On the other hand, small states have the risk of being trapped into participating in a conflict initiated by big states in which they have no direct interest.

This observation indicates a little problem with the logic of a small state's inevitable integration into NATO. However, that particular organization and the collective security organization, in general, remains a most desirable provider of all security guarantees, or the higher deterrence capabilities that support the small and weak state to keep it safe.

## **E. SUMMARY**

Biologically, all living species have their own last countermeasures to defend themselves from external attacks. So do small states. Nevertheless, like a weak animal unable to defend itself from the attack of a natural strong enemy, small states cannot generally stand up to attacks from a great power. However, even though it is true, it is still necessary to “avoid becoming just a defenseless prey” (Handel, 1981, p. 92). Analysts of small states, Handel (1981) and Freymond (1963) stated:

A weak state needs to be able to holdout long enough to prevent a quick takeover, or until external help from other states can be obtained. Second, and more interesting, is the development of military power by a weak state in order to deter stronger states from attacking it. (Handel, 1981, p. 92)

The greater danger for a small country is that of being speedily overrun by a great power, thus establishing a *fait accompli*, which the other powers would be inclined to accept, for fear of being exposed to an atomic [or any other] conflict, for an objective which, in itself, is of no great importance. (Freymond, 1963, p. 155)

Keeping in mind the limited resources available to weak states, and the overwhelming imbalances of power, even with all the strategies elaborated above, it is hard to achieve a victory. Thus, this study looks for the optimal strategy for a weak state that would inflict the largest amount of pain and cost and use it as a deterrent. The way this works is that a small state tries to set up repercussions that will cost a great power a lot if it attacks the small state. How can the small state increase the perceived costs of possible intervention? Maybe this is the time for a small state to introduce a deterrent strategy that would increase its prospects of protracting the war, decrease the utility of the aggressor's military capabilities, and threaten to deny an aggressor his political objectives.

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## IV. DETERRENCE STRATEGY FOR SMALL STATES

*Do not press a desperate enemy.*

— *Sun Tzu (6th century BC)*

### A. INTRODUCTION

Small states with defensive national security goals but inadequate military strength have always preferred deterrence to fighting. The essence of deterrence is to persuade an actual or potential adversary that they are better off taking different actions that would mitigate fighting. Deterrence succeeds when the potential adversary is persuaded to believe either that his planned exertions are doomed to fail or that any military action would be answered with dire consequences, hence asserting that he is better off not attacking. According to Thomas Schelling (1960), American economist and professor of foreign affairs, who was awarded the 2005 Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences for game-theory analysis of conflict, “the difference between deterrence and defense is that defense seeks to fend off an actual or possible assault while deterrence concerns making the possible adversaries afraid of assaulting the targeted states. It is a win-win situation in which an adversary opts to lose what it can acquire through the application of force and instead gives it all up to avoid any foreseeable damages or risks” (p. 131).

Deterrence is more psychological because it works more in the mind of the deteree with the aim of influencing his decision-making process.

Since the end of the Second World War (1939–1945) and the Cold War (1947–1991), circumstances in the socio-political cycle have significantly changed. In fact, most of the developed and developing countries have calculated the risk of engaging in combat. Logically, at the end of these calculations, every state defined clear strategies of keeping aggressors in check, perhaps small states included. No country wants to see its civilians or institutions destabilized by any form of subversion, and that is why small states have come up with strategies to deter well-established states from aggression

against them. Additionally, small states are keen on maintaining their sovereignty and would not wish to be controlled by the powerful states. Freedman wrote, “Tactical games developed by small states over a period of time have really contributed to asymmetric conflict management to an extent that powerful states have not been able to utilize their killing powers on the weak rivals” (2004, p. 27). Various deterrence strategies have been successful in preventing powerful states from exercising their deadly power on weak nations.

## **B. THE MEANING OF UNCONVENTIONAL DETERRENCE**

The essence of deterrence is preventing the other state from doing something unacceptable, through threats of harming him if he does (Patrick Morgan, 2003, p. 1). According to strategist Freedman (2004), deterrence is a deliberate manipulation of the “behavior of others through conditional threats” (p. 6). In other strategic studies, however, deterrence is defined more narrowly and precisely. Paul K. Huth (1988), an analyst of international relations and strategist, for instance, defines deterrence “as a policy that seeks to persuade an adversary, through the threat of military retaliation, that the cost of using military force to resolve political conflict will outweigh the benefits” (p. 15).

Thus, military threats, as a means of persuading an enemy not to attack, are central to deterrence. Threats, either through denial of the opponent’s objectives on the battlefield (i.e., “counter-force strategies”), or via punishment strikes that have no military purposes, at all (i.e., “counter-value strategies”), are designed to change an opponent’s calculations about any prospective gains, if he considers attacking.

Two types of deterrence—conventional and nuclear—are based on different kinds of capabilities, and on different modes of inflicting cost through the use of these capabilities. Conventional deterrence is associated with punishment (e.g., strategic bombing campaigns with conventional weapons), and nuclear weapons can be used on tactical levels to deny an opponent’s objectives on the battlefield. Furthermore, war-

fighting schools argue that the credibility of nuclear deterrence depends on the threatening party's ability to fight and win at any level, even in an all-out nuclear war (Patrick Morgan, 2003, p. 24).

Following the logic of distinguishing between conventional and nuclear deterrence, unconventional deterrence can be defined as persuasion of the opponent not to attack via threats of unconventional warfare.

Unconventional deterrence has come into play in a powerful way, but only in some conflict dyads and not others. The key determinant of unconventional deterrence success turns out to be a function of the strategic interaction of adversaries (Arreguin-Toft, 2005, Chapter 2). It is important to note that the unconventional deterrence strategies used by weak nations comprise a mixture of culture, history and ideology. Circumventing these strategies is a complex maneuver that strong nations are yet to master. For instance, weaker nations are more likely to use unconventional and disorganized guerilla war tactics in their mission to deter the stronger nations from accomplishing their political objectives. On the other hand, cultural practices in most strong nations frown upon such strategies since they consider them dishonorable. As such, since there is no appropriate military response to guerilla tactics other than adopting a similar approach, strong nations end up suffering defeat in their mission to deter the weak. For instance, in Indochina (1946–1954), Algeria (1954–1962), Vietnam (1955–1975), and Afghanistan (1979–1989), the weaker player proved able to deny the stronger side its political objectives, and the stronger side was forced to give up after a costly effort (Arreguin-Toft, 2009, p. 291).

Thus, the usage of 'unconventional warfare' seems appropriate in this study, such as guerrilla war and terrorism, including their various subcategories, e.g., assassinations of politico-military leadership, cyber-terrorism, terrorism by weapons of mass destruction and others. While guerrilla warfare is mostly connected with counter-force strategies, deterrence of terrorism is based on punishment.

### C. UNCONVENTIONAL DETERRENCE STRATEGIES

Deterrence theory groups deterrence strategies into two general categories—punishment and denial (Freedman, 2004, p. 14). International relations theorist Mearsheimer (1983), for example, considers denial only “a function of denying an aggressor his battlefield objectives” (p. 15). Pape (1996), appears to criticize deterrence theorists, because, he says, they “usually refer to denial only to defeat of an anticipated attack” (p. 12). According to Pape (1996), “denial operates via military means to prevent the targeted party from achieving its political objectives” (p. 13). Thus, in unconventional deterrence, the function of denial is to threaten the challenger in order to deny to him his political, rather than his battlefield, objectives. In contrast to conventional deterrence, battlefields are to be deliberately avoided, and holding territory is not an objective in unconventional deterrence.

In fact, the boundaries between denial and punishment strategies are far blurrier than in conventional and nuclear deterrence. Freedman (2004) argues that “denial has punitive elements, as well, but, essentially, tends toward controlling a situation in order to deny the opponent strategic options” (p. 37). Deterrence strategies range in a punishment-denial spectrum. The more important question that needs to be considered is whether denial or punishment would be more effective as an unconventional deterrence strategy. Lawrence Freedman (2004) makes an argument that, “in principle, denial is a more reliable strategy than punishment, because if the threats have to be implemented, it offers control rather than continuing coercion. With punishment, the target is left to decide how much more to take. With denial the choice is removed” (p. 39). Samuel Huntington, American political scientist, adds that denial alone is not enough, and that a punitive element needs to boost the threat (as cited in Freedman, 2004, p. 38). In addition, political theorists Kenneth Watman and Dean Wilkening (1996) suggest that, “for opponents who are motivated to avert a perceived loss (i.e., harder to deter), deterrence requires threats to deny their objectives, with additional threats to punish the regime” (p. 85). Overall, Freedman (2004) concludes, “comparative advantage of one over the other will in the end depend on the options available” (p. 39).

Based on the distinction between denial and punishment, one can identify two main strategies of unconventional deterrence—guerrilla warfare and terrorism. Samuel Huntington stated that, “guerrilla warfare is a form of warfare by which the strategically weaker side assumes the tactical offensive in selected forms, times, and places” (as cited in Walter Zeev Laqueur, 1998, p. 392). In other words, guerrilla warfare is all about harassing the enemy and exhausting him, via hit-and-run attacks in a frontless war, instead of trying to annihilate him in decisive battles (Hans Delbruck, 1985, pp. 293-295). Guerrillas seek to protract conflicts, thus making them too costly and uncomfortable for the enemy, instead of trying to win it quickly, via attrition of the enemy’s forces. Urban and rural guerrilla warfare is usually distinguished as being two different alternatives. However, many analysts observe that urban guerrilla warfare tends to move rather quickly into terrorism (Laqueur, 1998, p. 399). Decapitation, or targeting political and/or military leadership, is usually a part of guerrilla warfare, implemented on a tactical level. However, it can also be used also as a separate strategy of unconventional deterrence. In other words, “assassinations of key leadership, especially high-level decision-makers, can be utilized as a basic deterrent threat, employed on a strategic level” (Pape, 1996, pp. 79–86).

The adoption of any strategy depends on the strategic environment, available options, and the opponent’s vulnerabilities. What is reasonable to argue is that if an aggressor’s attack has only limited aims, unconventional deterrence by denial would most likely not succeed. For example, if the aggressor needs to occupy a small piece of the deterrer’s territory for limited military aims (e.g., to install a missile launching pad), and does not have any long-term political objectives in said country, the threat of guerrilla warfare probably would not work. Since the opponent does not have any long-term political objectives, it makes no sense to threaten him with the denial of his political objectives. In this case, a punishment strategy would be a priority over denial.

In other words, due to the limited destructiveness of unconventional threats (with the possible exception of weapons of mass destruction), the declared response to aggression has to be tailored much more carefully to the fears of the specific opponent, his society, and the leadership involved.

The relatively limited destructiveness of unconventional threats appears to be one of the most problematic parts of unconventional deterrence. As Morgan (2003) suggests, “motivating opponents via threats of precise loss is far more complex than through threats of doing vast damage” (p. 223). Even conventional deterrence has been criticized as being inherently unreliable because of its relatively low destructive power when compared with nuclear weapons. In other words, in “conventional deterrence, there is always a possibility that the aggressor will take the risk” (Barry Buzan, 1994, p. 26). Watman and Wilkening (1995) also agree that “conventional forces will never be as deterring as nuclear weapons.” “Nuclear forces simply are inherently more impressive and clear in their destructiveness” (1995, p. 29). Obviously, this problem of low destructiveness is exacerbated in unconventional deterrence.

Limited destructiveness is closely connected with the aggressors’ cost sensitivity, in both material and human terms. Since the deterrent threats need to change the aggressor’s cost-benefit calculations, there would always be a question, in unconventional deterrence, whether the cost that can be inflicted by unconventional deterrence is large enough to be “unbearable,” or unacceptable for the aggressor. Because of the limited destructiveness of threats, it may be very rational that an aggressor would choose to suffer the cost. Thus, the degree to which the opponent is cost-sensitive is of high importance in unconventional deterrence. That is, the more the aggressor is insensitive to the cost, the more unreliable unconventional deterrence would be in practice.

In addition to the possibility that the aggressor’s decision to attack and suffer a cost may be rational, because of the low destructiveness of unconventional threats, the prospects of deterrence success can be even more impaired by the “bounded,” or limited, rationality of an opponent. According to the concept of limited rationality (which seems to be broadly acknowledged in deterrence theory as closely reflecting decision-making in practice), decision-making usually satisfies the minimum criteria of rationality, or “reasonable” relationship between values, objectives, and decisions. At the same time, however, decision making can suffer from a wide range of errors and misperceptions, such as lack of information, group-think, time constraint, “analytic bias” (i.e.,

overestimating one's own and underestimating the opponent's capabilities), general psychological (i.e., non-pathological) influences, miscalculations, cognitive biases, ignorance of low-probability outcomes, wishful thinking, etc. (Paul Davis and John Arquilla, 1991). Therefore, Keith B. Payne suggests that it is necessary "to examine as closely as possible the particular opponent's thinking—its beliefs and thought filters" (2003, p. xi).

Hence, the limited destructiveness of unconventional threats seems to be a problem inherent in unconventional deterrence: to deter an opponent via threats of precise loss is more difficult than through threats of devastating damage. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that in unconventional deterrence, strategies and threats have to be tailored very carefully and precisely to a specific opponent, his leadership, and his society in order to produce the desired deterrent effect. As examples, one can consider what happened in Algeria (1954–1962), Vietnam (1955–1975), and Afghanistan (1979–1989) where the weaker state forced the stronger state to withdraw after a costly effort. Based on his analysis of asymmetric conflicts since 1950, Arreguin-Toft (2009) explains the puzzle of weak-actor success in deterring strong-actor interventions. He states,

in order to win, the materially weaker side needs (1) social support, (2) sanctuary (either physical, such as tough terrain, or political, such as a weakly defended interstate border), (3) an idea capable of making self-sacrifice seem both necessary and noble (e.g., nationalism, jihad), and (4) a strategy capable of tying all three advantages into a single effort. With these four assets, weaker opponents can delay, effectively denying their nominally stronger adversaries the ability to use their advantages in technology, materiel, and numbers to obtain expected political objectives; imposing sufficient costs to force strong opponents to reconsider the expected benefits of victory. (p. 291)

#### **D. INTERNALIZED DETERRENCE**

What began as a difficult and costly process of deterrence by denial in combat, evolved gradually into internalized deterrence after the end of the Cold War (1991) (Arreguin-Toft, 2009, p. 293); in which strong actors with adversaries whose location and history suggest a credible threat of indirect defense (e.g. guerrilla warfare) can rely on the

precedent of previous successful insurgencies to deter would-be aggressors from attempting coercion via military intervention. (Arreguin-Toft, 2009, p. 293)

The element of communication concerns the ability of the defendant to deliver an assertive and articulated warning to the perceived attacker who must receive and interpret the deterrent message in the manner that is intended (Roberts 2007, p 121). A recent example (1992) of well-communicated deterrent threat came from a Bosnian Serb Army commander, General Ratko Mladic, who warned the West against intervening in Bosnia-Herzegovina, holding that if they did, then he would bomb London and that any Western ground troops who intervened would be certain to leave their bones in Bosnia. This was powerful imagery that ensured that the West fully understood General Ratko's capability to actualize his threats (Marlise Simons, 1999). In 1994, North Korea failed to deter the United States from plans to destroy its nuclear facilities by aerial bombardment, but was spared an assault by the intervention of former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, who brokered a last-minute deal that averted the planned strike.

The only case of unconventional deterrence failure where deterrence was of the internalized type, according to Arreguin-Toft (2009) was in 2002's Operation Enduring Freedom. Arreguin-Toft observes:

[T]he United States sought the destruction of the Taliban in Afghanistan, a place said to be the "graveyard" of modern militaries. But by the time of the U.S. -led assault on Afghanistan, the Taliban had so alienated its popular base there that its strategic options were limited to a conventional or direct defense; as opposed to the indirect defense which had given the Soviets in the 1980s and the British a century earlier so much trouble. On the cost side there is little controversy about why the Taliban failed to deter the United States from military intervention: the connection between the Taliban and the recent assaults against the United States by Al Qaeda meant that the United States would have cost tolerances approaching that of WWII. (p. 294)

This explanation makes even clearer the controversial causes of the intervention to Saddam Hussein's Iraq in 2003: even after a couple of years since September 11 "the connection between Hussein and Al Qaeda could never be established" (Arreguin-Toft, 2009, p. 295). One cannot consider the attack on Iraq as a failure of unconventional

deterrence because “Iraqi Armed Forces were directed to defend Iraq with a conventional or direct defense strategy, and were [...] weaker *vis-à-vis* their adversaries” (Arreguin-Toft, 2009, p. 295).

As stated by Freedman (2004), internalized deterrence is a common phenomenon in practice. From the strategic perspective, however, the problem is not the existence of internalized deterrence, but “the development of strategies designed to produce a reliable deterrent effect” (p. 32). What is of high importance for unconventional deterrence is that weak states need to track the internal fears of great powers and adopt strategies that seek to reinforce and play on this internalized deterrence.

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## V. CONCLUSION: HOW THE WEAK DETER THE STRONG?

*You know you never defeated us on the battlefield” said the American colonel. The North Vietnamese colonel pondered this remark, a moment. That may be so, he replied, but it is also irrelevant.-*

Harry G. Summer (1995)

### A. INTRODUCTION

The essence of deterrence is to persuade an actual or potential adversary that they are better off taking different rather actions than fighting. As Schelling (1960) stated: “[...] deterrence concerns making the possible adversaries afraid of assaulting the targeted states” (p. 131). Deterrence succeeds when the potential adversary is persuaded to believe either that his planned actions will fail, or that any military action would result in dire consequences, hence asserting that he is better off not attacking.

This study focuses on deterrence strategies of weak and small states. These deterrence strategies are grouped into two general categories – punishment and denial (Freedman, 2004, p. 14). A punishment is a strategy where the deterrer threatens to punish the aggressor’s population by making retaliatory terrorist strikes, while denial strategy is defined as guerrilla warfare. By adopting a guerrilla warfare strategy, the deterrer threatens to protract a war, thereby, making it more costly for the aggressor, and to deny, eventually, the aggressor from achieving their political objectives (Freedman, 2004, p. 17).

This thesis contends that, the deterrence power of weaker states can be seen clearly as “important internal source” (Gill Merom, 2003, p. 71) of weak states. As a political scientist Michael Handel (1981) suggested; “The weak states are not entirely weak. They have important internal sources of strength which they have learned to use to their advantage. They have also learned to manipulate the strength of the great powers on their own behalf and to draw on this external source of strength to further their own national interests” (p. 51).

The deterrence power of weaker states can be seen clearly in the issue of military warfare. Even though more developed and economically stronger countries have better militaries, they are not always able to achieve their political or military objectives towards weaker states. The present study contends that the balance of military capabilities is not an overriding determinant in deterrence. Deterrence theory considers the opponents' strategies (i.e., weighing military strategies). If an inferior opponent adopts a strategy that makes the aggressor's military superiority irrelevant, to a certain degree, "deterrence may hold, notwithstanding an overwhelming imbalance in military capabilities" (Freedman, 2004, p. 23). Hence, strategy is also a determinant in deterrence situations. In unconventional deterrence, especially, the "deterrent's strategy is more important than the balance of military capabilities between the opponents" (Pape, 1996, p. 13).

Hence, by adopting a certain military strategy, a weak state may deter stronger state from intervention. This study contends how the weak countries across the globe deter the more powerful states in spite of the arm-twisting tactics employed by stronger nations such as the threat of military attack, withdrawal of foreign aid and use of economic sanctions against these weak countries. According to Arreugin-Toft (2009):

Two key developments have made it easier for weak actors to deter stronger actors from intervention in conflicts of interest. First, strong actors have encountered a class of weak actors who have not only come to reject the idea that "others" may legitimately rule them, but these same "weak" actors are increasingly apt to use an indirect strategy to prevent others from coercing them. This combination of nationalism and guerrilla warfare strategy made it possible for weak actors to defeat their materially stronger adversaries in a string of asymmetric conflicts following the Second World War. Strong actors are therefore less able to coerce weak actors with violence or the threat of violence.

Second, since the end of the Cold War (1991) strong actors have grown increasingly reluctant to use their advantages in killing power to harm weak actors...[and] are therefore increasingly less willing to coerce weak actors with violence or the threat of violence (p. 272).

The recent past, established states have not considered invading developing countries, due to the circumstances that include significantly high costs of coercing weak players, and declining benefits of that coercion. Arreguin-Toft (2009) writes: “Weak actors ... find it easier to deter strong actors from intervening in their affairs even when the disparity in material power is very large” (p. 273).

When the imbalance in capabilities is overwhelming, deterrence is most likely to succeed when the weak state adopts a strategy that does not play to the strengths of the enemy. Guerrilla warfare may be an optimal weapon of the weak (Freedman, 2004, pp. 29-32). In other words, compared to the conventional defenses, as it was suggested by Dr. Gordon McCormick during the lectures on Guerrilla Warfare (Navy Postgraduate School, Defense Analyses Department),

hit-and-run tactics, the avoidance of pitched battles, operating through a decentralized command, the ability to blend with civilian populations, and a much lower reliance on uninterrupted logistic support, all allow the [weaker part] to counteract a great deal of the superior firepower of the enemy, and to tie down large numbers of the enemy’s troops. As well, in a small war, [the weaker part] does not need to defeat the opponent, militarily. All he must do is protracting war by not losing, thus gradually wearing down the opponent’s political will in persisting (2009).

Hence, these insights suggest that, by adopting guerrilla warfare strategies, weak actors would likely increase the deterrent effect of their military forces, *vis-à-vis* the superior enemy. By resisting unconventionally, the weak state has a possibility to succeed in protracting a conflict, and denying the great power from acquiring his political objectives.

Another factor that makes stronger nations less willing to allow their military forces to intervene in weaker countries is the strong sense of nationalism among its citizens (Walker Connor, 1968, pp. 51–86).

Using these two factors in their militaries, weaker nations have been able to deter stronger nation’s militaries since 1950. As a result, some of the various military conflicts have ended in victory for weaker states and defeat for stronger states. For instance, between 1950 and 1954 alone, the stronger nations in the west had experienced three losses at military wars fought with weaker nations. During this period, China, Algeria and

Indochina had all managed to frustrate western superpowers which were much stronger than themselves (Arreguin-Toft, 2009, p. 276). Defeat here implies that the weaker states have often been able to deter stronger nations from accomplishing the political objectives which they hope to achieve by initiating the various military interventions. As Arreguin Toft (2009) put it: "... weak powers won a majority of such asymmetric wars. "Power," as commonly understood, has not correlated with expected outcomes" (p. 275).

## **B. DETERRENCE AND THE NATIONALISM OF SMALL STATES**

Nationalism plays a crucial role in helping weak nations deter strong states (Walker Connor, 1968, pp. 51–86). If imbued with the spirit of nationalism the military forces of weaker nations may believe that self-sacrifice in war is heroic. This attitude effectively defeats the strategic measures put in place by the militaries of the stronger nation that they are at war with.

While stronger nations may focus on ensuring that they guard the lives and wellbeing of their soldiers, this concern is almost irrelevant for weaker countries and the result is that their forces are able to deter the stronger nations.

Arreguin-Toft (1999) put it: "by 1954, the West had experienced three losses against weak actor insurgencies, and three wins. On the loss side stood China, Indochina, and Algeria; on the win side stood Greece, Malaya and the Philippines" (p. 276). In the second Indochina war, Vietnamese nationalism was very strong. Especially after the execution of Ngo Dinh Diem who was "only credible non-communist nationalist" Vietnamese leader (Walker Connor, 1969, p. 51). In addition to this, the increase in the number of troops from stronger foreign nations in Vietnam served to make the Vietnamese people more determined to resist the stronger nations' intentions to subdue them.

In this particular war, United States chose to deal with the resistance it was receiving from Vietnamese military forces by increasing their killing power with superior weapons and more ammunition. "...[M]assive firepower meant massive collateral damage; and massive collateral damage became a crucial mobilization grievance for the Viet Cong" (as it is cited in Arreguin-Toft, 2009, p. 278). However, what they failed to

consider was that no amount of military power could defeat the much weaker Vietnamese military because its soldiers were willing to die in the name of nationalism.

...[A]fter World War II, nationalism, guerrilla warfare strategy, and – after unexpected strong actor defeats in Vietnam and Afghanistan – a loss of confidence in domino logic combined to turn the chief advantage of advanced-industrial state militaries – killing power – into something of a liability. (Arreguin-Toft, 2009, p. 279)

### **C. DETERRENCE, RATIONALITY AND THE CASE FOR SMALL STATES**

The common assumption of all types and dimensions of deterrence is that “the actor to be deterred is rational” (Paul, 1994, p. 46). The concept of rationality demands that the “target of a deterrent threat can undertake a net assessment: when costs of possible action or inaction are calculated to exceed benefits, that specific action will not be undertaken” (Freedman, 2004, p. 49). In deterrence theory, a deteree would be seen to be irrational if it acts in a manner that is inconsistent with its hierarchy of values and logical means. The defining link between deterrence and rationality is that of risk taking. A deteree is often expected to be guided by all the other factors that might justify its actions but rationally be deterred from actualizing such actions due the potential risks posed by the defender (Nye, 2004, p 5).

Rationality in deterrence puts a potential adversary in a paradoxical situation of either choosing to assume the risks and carry on the attack or shy away from the deterrent threats and hold his guns. Rational deterrence is a probabilistic theory which requires that states only exercise deterrence where there is a probability of convincing the other party to give up its adversarial intentions (Jervis, 1979, pp. 289-312).

Under rational deterrence, both the potential attacker and the defendants are expected to be acting from different value systems and logical hierarchies which either motivate one party to attack or the other party to seek deterrent defense. Rational deterrence holds that deterrence must be undertaken as a conceptually sound behavior and a good predictor of the desired strategic behavior geared to manage conflict between opponents. Deterrence is thus undertaken as a strategic choice rather than a retaliatory gesture with the aim of sustaining territorial security (Freedman, 2004, p. 50).

While it is possible for small states to deter rational adversaries with the aid of their people and technologies, rationality would require these states to rally their military strengths to limit the various weaknesses that may prevent them from compelling desired behavioral change among in their potential adversaries because in reality small nations are often too small to last in the face of sustained attrition. Rationality would therefore demand of the small nations address limiting factors such as space constraints, time constraints, technological constraints and populace constraints. While engaging in acts of deterrence, the small states should always be aware that any irrational act from the big states may often escalate into wars of devastating magnitude hence the deterrence strategies used should usually be realistic and they must certainly possess the military, political or diplomatic power to actualize such demands (Nye, 2004, p. 58).

The weak states, however, are often able to deter the strong by using irrational strategies by themselves. For instance, a stronger nation will warn the weaker nations that if they do not comply with certain orders, then stern measures such as military action or denial of foreign aid will be imposed on them. Such threats are rarely effective in deterring weak nations since their irrationality does not allow them to weigh the consequences of going against the will of the stronger nations. Eventually, faced with the irrationality of decisions made by weak countries, strong nations are forced to retreat and this amounts to a failure in their mission to deter the weak (Arreguin-Toft, 2009, p. 281).

This irrationality on the part of the weak made stronger players such as United States and Western Europe more cautious because irrational individuals or states are usually unpredictable and it is almost impossible to determine how they will react to various actions such as military attacks. As a result, the Cold War was just that cold and without any military action (Arreguin-Toft, 2009, p. 281).

In any scenario, deterrence works best when the party who seeks to deter another understands how the other party thinks and how the other person is likely to respond to various situations or actions. However, in order to reach such an understanding, the individual or group being deterred must demonstrate a track record of rational and

consistent behavior. Since consistent norms and values among the weak are difficult to find, this makes it difficult for the strong state to use specific arguments in the process of deterring the weak state.

#### **D. DETERRENCE AND RELEVANT POWER**

In the case of weak and strong nations, it is a well-established fact that most strong nations, especially in the West, place emphasis on values such as self-preservation. In the introduction of Allan Bloom's (1979) translation of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Emile*, the author pointed out that "European bourgeoisie have shared a common denominator that could be relied upon to provide coercive leverage." Rousseau continued, "Most simply, following Hegel's formula, he is the man motivated by fear of violent death, the man whose primary concern is self-preservation or, according to Locke's correction of Hobbes, comfortable self-preservation" (Allan Bloom, 1979, p. 5).

By using this knowledge, the weak players have been able to deter strong super powers in their tracks simply by using the threat of casing death and destruction. According to Arreugin-Toft (2009), the main argument is that "the western man fears death above all else and assumes that this fear is universal; the point is that fear of death above all else is spatially and historically banded, not universal" (p. 283).

#### **E. KILLING AND COERCION OVER TIME**

For years now, stronger nations have derived the power of deterrence from their capability to kill using advanced warfare equipment and trained militaries. Using this killing power, stronger nations have effectively coerced weaker states into submitting to various conditions. For instance, in the Vietnam War (1955–1975) of the United States responded to the increased resistance by the Vietnamese insurgents and North Vietnamese army by increasing the force used by the American army (John Mueller, 1980, p. 525).

However, over time, weak nations have realized that since they cannot compete effectively with the strong in terms of killing power; their only option is to make the killing power of the strong irrelevant. As such, there has been a steady rise of religious

and political ideals in weaker states which allow individuals in such nations more willing to die for what they believe in (Arreguin-Toft, 2009, p. 283).

While this ideological strategy has been taking shape in weak nations, stronger nations on the other hand have become less and less willing to risk lives for their ideals. This can be illustrated by the decreasing number of individuals who choose to join the military in developed nations. These contrasting trends have been largely responsible for the unwillingness of strong nations to tackle weaker states using warfare. Instead, strong countries now opt for a more diplomatic approach to attain compliance or deterrence from the weak.

In the second part of the twentieth century, there was a high number of indigenous peoples killed in wars such as the Vietnam War (1955–1975) and the Soviet led intervention of Afghanistan (1979–1989). However, the increase in killing did not help strong nations accomplish their intentions to deter certain events in weak nations. As Arreguin-Toft (2009) put it: “It is no coincidence that within this same historical period, the consolidation of nationalism as a system-wide norm of legitimacy and as a force multiplier and an increasing use of indirect defense strategies by nominally weak actors can be observed” (p. 284).

In fact, stronger nations have been accused of failing to deter certain human rights violations in weak states even when they had the power to do so. “And this is the core argument: the string of unexpected – indeed, largely unexplained – defeats of the strong by the weak after WWII led to the preposterous condition of unconventional deterrence” (Arreguin-Toft, 2009, p. 285).

Strategist Lawrence Freedman (2004) put it: “The unacceptable practices of foreign governments are denounced but they are left untouched; ideological ambitions are shelved; inconveniences, disruptions, outrages are tolerated; punches are pulled” (p. 30).

In United States military history, the Vietnam War (1955–1975) stands as “a watershed conflict in this regard” (Arreguin-Toft, 2009, p. 286). During the war a great deal of debate surrounded the question of how many casualties North Vietnam could sustain before giving in (John Mueller, 1980, p. 497). United States Defense Secretary Robert McNamara (8th U.S. Secretary of Defense, in office from January 21, 1961 to

February 29, 1968) went on record as speculating that there might be no number of deaths short of actual genocide that could coerce the North into accepting a divided Vietnam (Steven Rosen, 1972, pp. 167–168). If true, the level of killing would have shifted the characterization of the use of force in Vietnam from coercive to destructive in the way suggested by Thomas Schelling (1966), an American economist and professor of foreign affairs. Arreguin-Toft (2009) posits: “The coercive use of armed force, under limited circumstances, falls well within the purview of legitimacy for most Americans; but brute force does not” (p. 287).

As Arreguin-Toft (2009) put it: “The toll of unexpected losses in the Third World has caused a core policy constituency—the military—to internalize the idea that employing the state’s killing power against adversaries in unconventional settings is either of low utility or counterproductive” (p. 287). He continues:

Operations against “unconventional” adversaries share three liabilities in this view. First, they invariably involve the killing of non-combatants because [...] insurgents systematically hide behind non-combatants. Second, they promise the killing of others when others cannot by definition levy a direct or mortal threat to the killers’ state. [...] Third, the potential imperative to improve battlefield performance often acts to force militaries to alter doctrine, training, and leadership. These new capabilities then become a potential threat to the conventional mission, which favors heavily equipped, firepower-intensive, and hierarchically disciplined units.” (pp. 287-288)

## **F. CONCLUSION**

Over the years, several strategies have been identified to explain the non-sequitur scenario that causes weaker states to triumph over stronger nations. Arreguin-Toft (2009) writes, “The key determinant of unconventional deterrence success turns out to be a function of the strategic interaction of adversaries” (p. 288). In order to win, the materially weaker side needs (1) social support, (2) sanctuary (either physical or political), (3) an idea capable of making self-sacrifice seem both necessary and noble (nationalism), and (4) a strategy capable of trying all three advantages into a single effort (Arreguin-Toft, 2009, p. 291).

Therefore, in almost all confrontations between strong and weak nations, social support is crucial. Because weaker nations are have more closely knit societies decisions such as going to war with stronger adversaries often reflect the wishes of the majority of the population.

Availability of social support enables weaker nations to focus on their chosen mission and not engage in second guessing themselves. On the other hand, the democracy in stronger nations such as the United States makes it impossible for the entire society to agree on most things. As such, during their missions to deter weak nations, strong nations often have to contend with some amount of societal disapproval in their own country.

This is easily demonstrated by the American invasion of Iraq (March 20 - May 1, 2003) less than ten years ago. During this invasion, the weaker nation (Iraq) had social support while American leadership had to contend with disapproval from many, and eventually most, Americans.

Another factor that enables weak nations to accomplish the unconventional deterrence of strong nations is the existence of ideals that enable them to overlook their insufficiencies. Just like in society where the weak get into risky situations because they feel they have nothing to lose, weak nations are able to deter their strong rivals because of their willingness to defend their ideals at any cost.

The combination of these two factors has enabled materially weak nations to succeed in the unconventional deterrence of strong and better equipped nations. An example of a situation is the Rwandan Genocide of 1994. During this genocide, individuals belonging to two different ethnic groups butchered each other at the rate of over 100 a day. In spite of the fact that Rwanda was one of the poorest and weakest states in Africa and in the world, the stronger western nations were unable to stop the killing. In fact, these nations admitted that they were incapable of deterring members of the two ethnic groups from changing their ethnic bound ideologies.

It is important to note that the unconventional deterrence strategies used by weak nations comprise a mixture of culture, history and ideology circumventing these strategies is a complex maneuver which strong nations are yet to master. For instance, weaker nations are more likely to use unconventional and disorganized guerilla war

tactics in their mission to deter the stronger nations from accomplishing their political objectives. On the other hand, the cultural practices in most strong nations frown upon such strategies since they consider them dishonorable. As such, since there is no appropriate military response to guerilla tactics other than adopting a similar approach, strong nations end up suffering defeat in their mission to deter the weak.

The main reason why weak states are able to accomplish unconventional deterrence of strong states is because they use unconventional tactics such as those described above. In order to deal with this unconventional deterrence, stronger states would therefore have to adopt a more unconventional and rigid approach. However, this is yet to happen and hence the current situation of smaller countries being powerful adversaries is bound to continue for quite some time.

Because most strong countries have opted to remain steadfast in their decision to use only conventional deterrence tactics, it has become increasingly difficult to achieve any tangible success in terms of deterring their opponents. If this trend is to change, several stronger nations must be willing to use a use more direct strategies (Freedman, 2004, p. 37). An example of the failure of conventional deterrence methods in unconventional situations can be seen in the military tactics that were used before World War I. During this period, resistance from insurgents in weaker countries was often resolved with brute force achieved through the use of advanced weaponry.

For instance, in the African colonies during the period before World War I, colonial powers such as Britain used the threat of force to deter their colonies from rebelling against the foreign rule that was imposed upon them. While the colonial powers were using a more conventional method of using armies to fight the African dissenters, Africans and other colonies in Asia chose to use more unconventional tactics such as guerilla warfare. However, colonial powers soon discovered the futility of their conventional methods in light of the fact that their weaker opponents did not appear to be deterred from their rebellion. Instead of increased firepower convincing the weaker opponents to desist from their actions, the opposite effect was achieved. Eventually, Britain and other colonial powers in this pre-World War I decided to use other unconventional methods.

Strong countries are constantly debating the rational of attempting to deter weaker countries from various activities. Factors such as the financial and manpower cost of intervening in the affairs of weaker nations are causing developed nations to desist from any such missions. Studies indicate that in the absence of a financial incentive (in terms of the possibility of acquiring resources from the weaker countries) or a power incentive such as solving a power crisis between two super powers, developed and rich countries are not willing to engage in any conventional deterrence mechanism to resolve issues in weak nations. Samantha Power an Irish American academic, governmental official and writer put it:

In the absence of either a vital strategic resource or a superpower rivalry, [...], there was and remains no strategic rationale for intervention, and by that logic we should have expected what actually transpired: no meaningful intervention. (as cited by Arreguin-Toft, 2009, p. 298)

This unwillingness of strong countries to risk failure in their political objectives can be seen in several recent conflicts.

Firstly, during the ethnic cleansing in Kosovo (1998-1999), the interventions of strong countries were easily deterred by the much weaker Kosovo. “[...] Kosovar Albanian courage, anger, and determination after the war undid [...] the Serb goal” (Arreguin-Toft, 2009, p. 299). This deterrence has been blamed on the West’s disinterest in taking any firm action in the Kosovo conflict since there were no tangible gains.

Another example that illustrates how strong countries actually aid weaker nations in accomplishing unconventional deterrence is the Darfur war in Sudan (2003-present). Even though this particular conflict has been going on for close to ten years now, there has been no real interest from the west in terms of willingness to deter the fighting insurgents in that African country. As demonstrated by the Darfur (February 2003-present) scenario, it is much easier for a weak country to deter the intervention of a much stronger nation if the situation which is in need of intervention has been ongoing for some time. In this case, the current efforts by United States and other strong states to deter the insurgents in Sudan from further attacks are almost futile because they are too late.

Unconventional deterrence has worked more and more often for weaker states because “the nature of power itself – the power to destroy, the power to coerce and deter” (Arreguin-Toft, 2009, p. 301) and the measures used to achieve deterrence are culturally and historically accurately and specific to their own societal systems.

Weaker nations make use of methods and ideals that are unique to them such as nationalism and self-sacrifice to defeat the methods employed by stronger nations such as the threat to kill by use of superior weapon technology.

Moreover, the fact that strong states share the view that national self-determination is legitimate imposes a cost on them, which is that killing those fighting for national self-determination – as opposed to other goals – becomes a bad thing. Thus in addition to being less able to coerce weaker parties over time, strong states have shown themselves to be progressively less willing to do so as well (Arreguin-Toft, 2009, p. 301). Arreguin-Toft continues his analyses and contends:

...[N]ationalist actors in tough terrain, using indirect defense strategies, or those whose defeat implies no material benefit to the attacker, generally find it much easier to deter the [stronger states] from intervention, even in cases that shock or sicken, such as Rwanda and Darfur. The benefits of a positive outcome are low to nil; and the costs are likely to be high – perhaps a Vietnam-like quagmire. Whether this is due to social squeamishness [...], or simple public cost sensitivity, is beside the point.

Perhaps the most efficient way to conquer unconventional deterrence would be for stronger states to use military strategies which are designed to attain and sustain counterinsurgency if faced with unconventional warfare tactics from weaker states. By doing so, then perhaps strong states can effectively deal with the situation in weaker states such as Darfur and avoid a reoccurrence of situations such as the Rwanda genocide.

However, weak states, in case of protecting themselves from often devastating aggression from stronger opponents, must continuously convince their stronger adversaries that engaging in full blown warfare is counterproductive and often ill advised and find a way of coalescing their powers in a manner that will ultimately deter stronger opponents from actualizing their threats of warfare. At the same time, while there have been various instances of deterrence failure, small states should continue in very cautious

and watchful manner of the political, economic and military intentions, to form alliances to cushion themselves from attacks from powerful states. They should form the allies that are capable of sending powerful deterrent messages to their potential adversaries in order to reestablish or enhance their security in a volatile world.

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