

Small States in the UN Security Council: Means of Influence?

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Received: 8 February 2011; revised: 7 October 2011; accepted; 8 December 2011

Summary

This article argues that there are two broad categories of qualitative factors that determine the ability of small states to influence the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). The first is the internal competence of small states in areas such as knowledge, initiative, and diplomatic, coalition and leadership skills. The second is the image of the state in the international system with specific regard to its perceived neutrality or reputation as a norm entrepreneur in particular policy fields. These qualitative features need to be combined with quantitative variables — such as population, territorial size, gross domestic product (GDP) and military capacity — that are normally used in International Relations (IR) in order to understand small states' ability to become active participants in the UNSC.

Keywords

small states, United Nations Security Council (UNSC), knowledge, initiative, diplomacy, coalition, leadership, image

Introduction

Power in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is often solely ascribed to the institutional position of the five permanent members (P5). Their right to veto places them in a much stronger position than other states to influence the UN decision-making process and world affairs. In international relations, the power of a state is often attributed to quantitative criteria, such as population and territorial size, gross domestic product (GDP) and military capacity.¹ In these terms,

*) The author would like to thank his research assistant, Selina Stenberg, for her valuable contribution to this project; and former students Pia Hansson, Þróstur Freyr Gylfason and Þórhildur Hagalín for inspiring work on small states in the UN.

¹) Clive Archer and Neill Nugent, 'Small States and the European Union', *Current Politics and Economics of Europe*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2002, pp. 1-10.

small states are held to be politically, economically and strategically vulnerable² and, as such, incapable of exerting any real influence in world affairs.³

However, real problems exist in categorizing and classifying states according to these matrices. In the literature, small states are often defined by population thresholds of 10 to 15 million.⁴ These figures coincide with European studies that perceive all European Union (EU) member states as small, apart from Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Spain and Poland. On the other hand, the Commonwealth and the World Bank usually use a threshold of 1.5 million people but, in some instances, larger states, such as Jamaica, Lesotho, Namibia and Papua New Guinea, are included because of their lack of institutional capabilities.⁵ Thus, very often, the figures depend on context.

In 2010, there were 192 UN member states, as shown in Fig. 1; thirteen had less than 100,000 inhabitants and fifteen states had population sizes that fell between 100,000 and 500,000. Altogether there were 39 states with less than one million inhabitants and 71 states with a population between one and ten million. If we draw the line between small and large states at ten million inhabitants, there were 110 states in the UN that can be classified as small — that is, the majority of member states.⁶

Other attempts at categorizing states focus on economic variables such as GDP. Although economic factors are important markers of capabilities and power, the nature of the decision-making process in the UNSC makes them less prominent than in other intergovernmental organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Trade Organization (WTO). States elected to the UNSC are not necessarily elected on the basis of their economic strength (or military power) and in the Council their vote — excluding the P5 — weighs the same. In fact, from 1991 to 2010 42 states in the UNSC had ten million or less inhabitants, and 25 of these had a population of less than five million (see Fig. 2 and Table 1). However, the lack of consensus and agreement in categorizing states within and between international organizations and IR theories make it even more difficult to determine a state's ability to influence decisions on the basis of these quantitative criteria alone.

² David Vital, *The Inequality of States: A Study of Small Power in International Relations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967).

³ Robert O Keohane, 'Lilliputians' Dilemmas: Small States in International Politics', *International Organization*, vol. 23, no. 2, 1969, pp. 291-310.

⁴ Harvey W. Armstrong and Robert Read, 'The Phantom of Liberty? Economic Growth and the Vulnerability of Small States', *Journal of International Development*, vol. 14, no. 4, 2002, pp. 435-458.

⁵ World Bank, 'Small States: Meeting Challenges in the Global Economy', *Report of the Commonwealth Secretariat/World Bank Joint Taskforce*, April 2000, available online at <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/PROJECTS/Resources/meetingchallenginglobaleconomy.pdf>; and World Bank, 'Defining a Small Economy', Projects and Operations, 2007, available online at <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/PROJECTS/0,,contentMDK:21512464~pagePK:41367~piPK:51533~theSitePK:40941,00.html>.

⁶ United Nations, *Member States of the United Nations*, 2006, available online at <http://www.un.org/en/members/index.shtml>; and United States Census Bureau, *International Data Base (IDB): Countries and Areas Ranked by Population*, 2010, available online at <http://www.census.gov/cgi-bin/broker>.

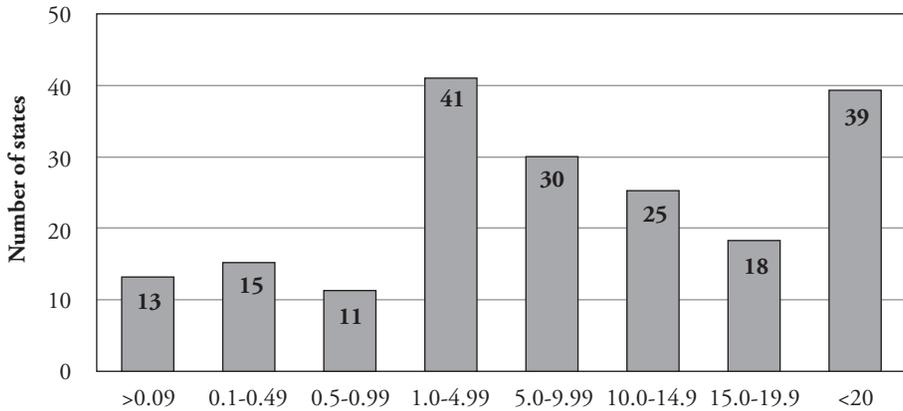


Fig. 1. Number of UN states (192) according to population in millions, 2010.

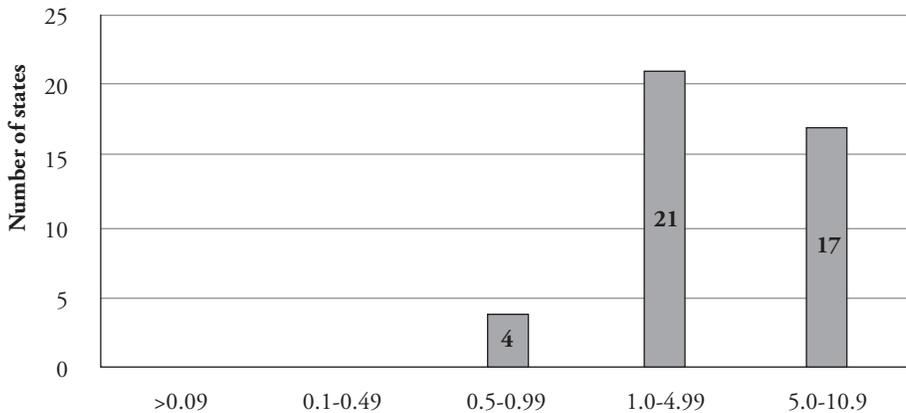


Fig. 2. Number of states with a population of 10 million and fewer that were elected to the UNSC, 1991-2010.

Table 1: States with a Population of 10 Million and Fewer that Were Elected to the UNSC, 1991-2010

States	Population (2010)	Period	No. of countries' UN mission staff (2010)
Belgium	10.4	1991-1992/ 2007-2008	47
Sweden	9.1	1997-1998	42
Portugal	10.7	1997-1998	39
Norway	4.7	2001-2002	32
Denmark	5.5	2005-2006	21
Hungary	9.9	1992-1993	18
Greece**	10.7	2005-2006	18
Libya	6.5	2008-2009	17
Slovakia	5.4	2006-2007	16
New Zealand	4.3	1993-1994	15
Czech Republic	10.2	1994-1995	14
Guinea	10.3	2002-2003	13
Benin	9.1	2004-2005	11
Slovenia	2	1998-1999	10
Panama	3.4	2007-2008	10
Bosnia Herzegovina	4.6	2010-2011	10
Ireland	4.6	2001-2002	10
Bulgaria	7.1	2002-2003	10
Tunisia	10.6	2000-2001	9
Lebanon	4.1	2010-2011	9
Costa Rica	4.5	1997-1999/2008-2009	9
Croatia	4.5	2008-2009	9
Botswana	2.1	1995-1996	8
Singapore	4.7	2001-2002	8
Djibouti	0.7	1993-1994	7
Oman	2.9	1994-1995	7
Cape Verde	0.5	1992-1993	7
Gabon	1.5	1998-1999/2010-2011	6
Qatar**	0.8	2006-2007	6
Gambia	1.8	1998-1999	6
Bahrain	0.7	1998-1999	4
Mauritius	1.3	2001-2002	4
Jamaica	2.8	2000-2001	2
Guinea Bissau	1.6	1996-1997	*

Table 1 (cont.)

States	Population (2010)	Period	No. of countries' UN mission staff (2010)
Namibia	2.1	1999-2000	*
Congo Brazzaville	4.1	2006-2007	*
Honduras	7.9	1995-1996	*
Austria	8.2	1991-1992/2009-2010	*

Sources: United Nations, *Member States of the United Nations*; United Nations, 'Permanent Mission of Cape Verde to the UN: Letter from the Division of Advancement of Women', 2006, available online at http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw36/CPV_delegation.pdf; United States Census Bureau, *International Data Base (IDB)*; and United Nations Security Council, *UN Security Council Memberships, 1991-2010*.

* Numbers not available.

** Only Geneva numbers available.

In the literature on small states, qualitative variables have received considerable attention in explaining states' international influence. These variables include small states as norm entrepreneurs,⁷ the image and perception of domestic and international actors,⁸ the aims and priorities of state leaders,⁹ and the administrative competence associated with small states' central bureaucracy.¹⁰ These factors contradict traditional IR theories, which have a tendency to reduce explanations of power and action to economic or military variables only.

Furthermore, the relational definition of small states shifts the focus from the power that states possess to the power that they exercise. A small state is seen as tied to a specific spatio-temporal context that is not a general characteristic of the state — that is, a state may be weak in one relation but powerful in another.¹¹ Accordingly, it is not useful to categorize states generally according to quantitative criteria or to come up with a definite category of small states, since their power potential varies according to the subject area. On the other hand, the

⁷ Christine Ingebritsen, 'Norm Entrepreneurs: Scandinavia's Role in International Relations', in *Small States in International Relations* (Seattle WA: University of Washington Press / Reykjavik: University of Iceland Press, 2006).

⁸ Gunnhildur Lily Magnúsdóttir, *Small States' Power Resources in EU Negotiations: The Case of Sweden, Denmark and Finland in the Environmental Policy of the EU*, Ph.D. thesis, University of Iceland, 2009; and Staale Ulriksen, *Deployments for Development? Nordic Peacekeeping Efforts in Africa* (Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 2006), available online at <http://www.nupi.no/Publikasjoner/Notater/2006/Deployments-for-Development-Nordic-Peacekeeping-Efforts-in-Africa>.

⁹ Keohane, 'Lilliputians' Dilemmas'; and Baldur Thorhallsson, 'The Size of States in the European Union: Theoretical and Conceptual Perspectives', *Journal of European integration*, vol. 28, no. 1, 2006, pp. 7-31.

¹⁰ Baldur Thorhallsson, *The Role of Small States in the European Union* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2000).

¹¹ Hans Mouritzen and Anders Wivel (eds), *The Geopolitics of Euro-Atlantic Integration* (London: Routledge, 2005).

literature cannot escape the reality that states in the UN are often perceived according to the traditional quantitative criteria. Hence, in order to analyse the smaller members' means of influence within the UN and to compare it with the larger states, it is necessary to draw a line between the two groups, as in Figure 2, although such a distinction has its limitations, as discussed above and indicated by the article's findings on the importance of qualitative variables.

The purpose of this article is thus to assess what factors are best suited to explaining a small state's ability to participate in, and influence, the UNSC decision-making process. This is, of course, a difficult task, as traditional IR literature is dominated by the capabilities of the P5. However, this article seeks to demonstrate that the nature of power in the UNSC is more nuanced than is often claimed. The article argues that the 'traditional' quantitative variables that are normally used to define state sizes and to predict state behaviours in the international system do not completely grasp the role that small states can play in the decision-making process of the UNSC. The article suggests that the administrative competences of small states — based on quality not quantity, diplomatic skills, knowledge and initiatives — are important factors to explain their accomplishments within the UNSC. In addition, states' image and their reputation as norm entrepreneurs and their perceived neutrality are important sources for success. Moreover, to become active and successful, small states need to demonstrate strong leadership, excellent coalition-building skills and an ability to prioritize heavy workloads.

The article begins by addressing some of the deficits of current IR theories in order to grasp and account for the role that small states play in the international system. This is combined with a discussion on previous ideas and perceptions of small states in the UN system and its predecessor, the League of Nations. The article will then examine the role of small states as non-permanent members of the Security Council. It identifies small states that often participate in the Council's proceedings and those that can be deemed particularly active within it and the UN in general. This leads to an examination of the factors that determine the ability of small states to be influential in the UNSC. The article concludes by combining the theories with the article's main findings and suggests that these factors can be used in a prescriptive manner by small states aiming to be active and successful participants in the UNSC proceedings.

Theoretical Considerations and Opportunities for Small States within the UN

Traditional IR theories commonly maintain that a state's size is closely associated with the concept of capabilities. According to Neumann and Gstöhl,¹² IR is

¹² Iver B. Neumann and Sieglinde Gstöhl, 'Lilliputians in Gulliver's World', in: *Small States in International Relations* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press / Reykjavik: University of Iceland Press, 2006).

preoccupied with measuring state capabilities on the assumption that having them implies pending action. For realist thinkers, international relations are guided by military strength, power politics, warfare and survival under anarchy, limiting capabilities to larger and more powerful states.¹³ Within this framework, the United States will act differently to the EU because of its superior capabilities.¹⁴ This is closely akin to neo-realism, in which anarchy and state capabilities are seen as structural preconditions that can explain and predict state behaviours in the international system.¹⁵ These approaches fail to account for small states as international actors, in part because of their neglect of international norms and rules in determining state behaviour. They also ignore, for example, the existence of links — such as common values, histories, trade and regions — that tie states together. In order to overcome the deficits of assuming that all actors have the same IR starting point of ‘great power capabilities’ and interests, the field of small state studies focuses on the role that ideas and global governance play in determining different states’ behaviour.¹⁶

Within this framework, neo-liberal institutionalism provides a better understanding of the role that small states play in the international system.¹⁷ From this perspective, the five permanent members of the UNSC have to work and cooperate with the elected members, the UN Secretary-General, non-permanent members and other international organizations to gather information and draft resolutions effectively. Thus, in order to be seen as legitimate actors, the procedural aspects of discussing — including information-gathering, drafting and presenting resolutions — are as important as the outcome of resolutions for the P5 and the UNSC. In addition, although the P5 have the right to veto, according to Rule 35 of the Charter any member can bring matters to the attention of the Council. For Hurd, this represents an important source of power for them, which in effect gives them a say in the UNSC’s agenda: ‘Technically, the UNSC cannot veto their introduction nor take it off the agenda’.¹⁸

The power of institutions, then, also lies in the structure, consisting of laws and treaties, which states create and by which they have to abide. Liberal institutionalists often argue that states seek order and stability in anarchy, illustrated by their

¹³ John Mearsheimer, ‘Correspondence: Back to the Future. Part II: International Relations Theory and Post-Cold War Europe’, *International Security*, vol. 15, no. 2, 1990, pp. 194-199; Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 5th edition 1972); Kenneth Walz, ‘Political Structures’, in: Robert Keohane (ed.), *Neorealism and its Critics* (New York: Colombia University Press, 1986); and Martin Wight, ‘The Three Traditions’, in: Brian Porter and Gabriele Wight (eds), *International Theory: The Three Traditions* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1991).

¹⁴ Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order* (New York: Knopf, 2003).

¹⁵ Walz, ‘Political Structures’.

¹⁶ Neumann and Gstöhl, ‘Lilliputians in Gulliver’s World’.

¹⁷ Neumann and Gstöhl, ‘Lilliputians in Gulliver’s World’.

¹⁸ Ian Hurd, ‘Legitimacy, Power, and the Symbolic Life of the UN Security Council’, *Global Governance*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2002, pp. 35-51 at p. 40.

willingness to invest resources in expanding international institutions.¹⁹ If process also determines states' behaviour, then the interactions among them are equally important.²⁰ This is illustrated by the actions of larger states that are engaged in multilateral diplomacy. Refusal to follow international laws, norms and treaties means that they will face several difficulties despite their 'traditional' political and economical powers. However, (neo-)liberal institutionalism — like other dominant IR theories — falls into the trap of focusing excessively on 'differences in capabilities' between states.²¹ The argument is often posed that institutions are formed by, and for, the powerful states, giving rise to claims that, for example, the Bretton Woods institutions have been operated more like 'clubs'.²² While small states can lobby for favourable outcomes in international institutions, differences in capabilities between small and large states have a tendency to exclude the possibility of small states' ability to influence.

Theoretical approaches would benefit greatly by redirecting their attention towards the qualitative means that are available to small states to influence the UNSC, such as good image/perception, administrative competence — based on the characteristics of a small bureaucracy — and favourable diplomatic multilateral arrangements. This is partly because states have both similar and different reasons, interests and motivations for participating and becoming members of international organizations. Small states, like other states, aspire to, and achieve, UN membership in order to receive official approval and international recognition of their independence and sovereignty, particularly in instances of decolonization. The UN provides small states, which often have limited resources available to defend their borders, with a framework of multilateralism through international treaties and laws, by which to receive endorsement. By protecting small states, this same framework inhibits larger and more aggressive states. Hence, the founding premises of the UN — to ensure peace and security — as a supplement to bilateral relations are perceived to be crucial to the interests and relations of small states. This position is epitomized by Mahbubani, the former Permanent Representative to Singapore, who argued that 'small states have a greater vested interest in international peace and stability than larger states'.²³

¹⁹ Robert O. Keohane and Lisa Martin, 'The Promise of an Institutional Theory', *International Security*, vol. 20, no. 1, 1995, pp. 39-51.

²⁰ Hedley Bull, 'International Relations as an Academic Pursuit', *Australian Outlook*, vol. 26, no. 3, 1972, pp. 251-265.

²¹ Neumann and Gstöhl, 'Lilliputians in Gulliver's World'.

²² Robert O. Keohane and Joseph Nye, 'Introduction: Governance in a Globalizing World', in: J. Donahue and Joseph Nye (eds), *Governance in a Globalizing World* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2000).

²³ Kishore Mahbubani, 'Message from Permanent Representative: Welcome Note by Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Permanent Representative Permanent Mission of the Republic of Singapore to the United Nations, 2002, available online at http://www.mfa.gov.sg/unsc/unsc_message.html.

In addition to recognition of sovereignty, UN membership amounts to acceptance into the international community by other states and actors, providing small states with access to a variety of international, transnational and multinational bodies, such as the IMF and World Bank, which can facilitate widespread development assistance. In essence, the UN provides states with a venue in which to pursue and promote their interests through engagement with other states. This important facilitative role is highlighted by the fact that all UN member states — except for Kiribati, which has only a handful of diplomatic officers abroad — have a permanent mission at the UN.²⁴ It is important to point out that these interests are neither homogeneous nor bound solely to realist interests with regard to survival or military strength. On the other hand, interest among states cannot be reduced to the liberal institutionalist assertion that small states seek membership in international institutions solely on the grounds that laws, norms and treaties constrain larger states.

Although the foreign policy of the Nordic states (Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland) is directly linked to different international and intergovernmental institutions, Ulriksen claims that the relationship is far more complicated, with the Nordic states actively seeking to influence world affairs through image and perception-building.²⁵ The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs directly links reputation to influence, and the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs has bluntly stated that 'Creating a strong image of Sweden abroad is another means of promoting Sweden'.²⁶ Thus, in the UN, the Nordic states try to influence by active participation and contribution towards humanitarianism, world peace and burden-sharing. Ingebritsen argues that the Nordic states pursue 'social power' by acting to promote a particular view of the 'good society'.²⁷ They hence act as norm entrepreneurs, persuading states to adopt new norms, and are successful if states conform to their norms in the absence of domestic pressure. Moreover, norms may become internationalized if states adopt them almost automatically.²⁸ Accordingly, Nordic strategies are grounded in a commitment to pursue interests through 'soft power'. For Nye, soft power is influence derived from a state's qualitative features — such as diplomatic skills, culture and reputation — as opposed to realist military and political hard power.²⁹ According to Nye, soft power is the ability to get others to want what you want; hard power is the ability to get others to do what they would not otherwise do. Small states can use their soft-power resources

²⁴ United Nations, *Member States of the United Nations*.

²⁵ Ulriksen, *Deployments for Development?*, p. 1.

²⁶ Cited in Ulriksen, *Deployments for Development?*, p. 10.

²⁷ Ingebritsen, 'Norm Entrepreneurs'.

²⁸ Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, 'International Norm Dynamics and Political Change', *International Organization*, vol. 52, no. 4, 1998, pp. 887-917.

²⁹ Joseph S. Nye, 'Soft Power', *Foreign Policy*, vol. 80, 1990, pp. 153-171.

to shape outcomes, such as at the UNSC, and do not need to have great hard-power resources.³⁰

Small states have not always been welcomed to the UN platform on an equal footing with the larger states. Liechtenstein, San Marino and Monaco unsuccessfully sought international recognition from the UN predecessor, the League of Nations, in 1919 and 1920. They were regarded as being too small and therefore incapable of conducting a foreign policy that was independent of their larger neighbouring states.³¹ In 1920, a Committee on Amendments to the Covenant by the League of Nations concluded that smaller states should be admitted to the League, but on different grounds. Three types of membership were suggested: associated membership; limited participation membership; and represented membership.³² The recognition of small states as politically equal to larger states has thus historically been a contentious issue. Understandably, no small state chose to apply for membership based on these alternatives, and the League hence did not amend them to the Charter.

In a similar fashion, during the decolonization processes of the late 1960s and early 1970s, there were considerable debates within the UN as to whether to offer new members, particularly small states, alternative forms of membership. Member states — particularly the large ones — and the UN Secretary-General were concerned about the prospects of providing equal voting powers to small states in the UN Assembly. In addition, the overriding perception was that small states were not able to fulfil the UN's Charter criteria because of their small size and limited resources. The opponents of small-state membership cited Article 4 of the Charter, which stated that only states that in the judgement of the Organization are able and willing to carry out its obligations, such as to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, could join the UN.³³ Several membership alternatives were put forward: observer status; membership that was exempt from the right to vote and hold office; different forms of associated membership; and a distinction between the right to independence and full UN membership.³⁴

³⁰ Joseph S. Nye, *The Future of Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011).

³¹ Stephen Schwebel, 'Mini-States and a More Effective United Nations', *The American Journal of International Law*, vol. 67, no. 1, 1973, pp. 108-116; and Jorri Duursma, *Fragmentation and the International Relations of Micro-States: Self Determination and Statehood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

³² Duursma, *Fragmentation and the International Relations of Micro-States*.

³³ United Nations, *The Charter of the United Nations and Statute of the International Court of Justice* (New York: UN Department of Public Information, 1985), available online at <http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/index.shtml>.

³⁴ Duursma, *Fragmentation and the International Relations of Micro-States*; Michael M. Gunter, 'What Happened to the United Nations Mini-state Problem?', *American Journal of International Law*, vol. 71, 1977, pp. 110-124; David Rapoport, 'The Corrupt State: The Case of Rome Reconsidered', *Political Studies*, vol. 16, no. 3, 1968, pp. 411-432; and Schwebel, 'Mini-States and a More Effective United Nations'.

The UN, however, did not carry out these suggestions. The UN Legal Council came to the conclusion that none of the amendments could be carried out without fundamentally altering the UN Charter. The notion of fundamentally altering the Charter was extremely unpopular, as this would have questioned the core principle of sovereignty and the equal sovereignty of all states.³⁵ The result is that all UN member states have one vote each in the UN General Assembly, despite enormous differences in sizes and capabilities. In addition, in the early 1990s, Liechtenstein, San Marino and Monaco were finally granted full membership of the UN.

However, real concerns about the independence and capacity of some of the smallest UN member states to participate in the UNSC have remained. For instance, The Marshall Islands, Micronesia and Palau are committed to having to consult the United States on their foreign affairs; Monaco is obliged to consider the political, economic and military interests of France; and Andorra is bound by a trilateral treaty with both France and Spain, in which it commits itself to French and Spanish foreign policy interests.³⁶

Ten countries are elected by the General Assembly to serve as non-permanent members for two-year terms and are not eligible for immediate re-election: two from Africa; two from Latin America and the Caribbean; two from Asia; two from Eastern Europe; and two from Western European and other states. From 1991 to 2010, 100 countries were elected to participate in the UNSC.³⁷ Of these, four had a population of between 500,000 and one million (Cape Verde, Djibouti, Bahrain and Qatar), 21 had a population of between one and five million, and seventeen had a population of between five and ten million (see Table 1 and Fig. 2). It is noticeable that none of the 28 states with a population of less than 500,000 (see Fig. 1) has been elected to the UNSC, as Fig. 2 demonstrates.

From a traditional realist perspective, small states faced by the anarchical system do not have many alternatives other than to bandwagon with, or balance against, larger states to ensure their survival.³⁸ As such, they are presumed to have limited influence within the decision-making process. However, the current UNSC operates in a different environment than during the era of Cold War realpolitik. From the 1990s onwards, the majority of conflicts and UNSC resolutions have involved intra-state and civil conflicts rather than traditional wars between states. Since 1990, the UNSC has been responsible for 56 peace missions,

³⁵ Duursma, *Fragmentation and the International Relations of Micro-States*; and Gunter, 'What Happened to the United Nations Mini-state Problem?'

³⁶ Þórhildur Ósk Hagalin, *Real Independence of Micro-states in International Organizations and State Relations*, BA thesis, University of Iceland, 2005.

³⁷ United Nations Security Council, *UN Security Council Memberships, 1991-2010* (New York: UNSC, 2010), available online at <http://www.un.org/sc/members.asp>.

³⁸ Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987).

including peacekeeping, observations, stabilization, support, transition, police and other operations.³⁹ According to Hulton,

[...] peacekeeping operations in such contexts have evolved into a more complex and multidimensional mechanism; in addition to military components, they may have a humanitarian relief component, as well as elements aimed at bringing about national reconciliation and re-establishing effective government.⁴⁰

Furthermore, Hulton emphasizes the way in which the P5 recognized their limitations in these new conflicts.⁴¹ The P5 acknowledged that good decisions are dependent on the inputs that, because of different capacities and areas of focus in their information-gathering, had to be gleaned from wider sources than the fifteen members. Reforms have also increased transparency and openness, and made the decision-making procedure more efficient,⁴² leading to claims that the UNSC has turned into a problem-solving institution.⁴³

As old Cold War power relations have been transformed or have diminished in prominence, the UNSC opened itself up to face a new era beset by different types of conflicts. This, in turn, opened up space for smaller states to step up and contribute in certain policy areas. Despite unequal voting rights between the Elected 10 (E10) and P5, the majority of countries still aspire to membership of the UNSC.

From a Beneficiary to a Contributor and an Active Member

To understand when and how a state considers that it can contribute to, rather than merely receiving benefits from, the UN, one has to look at its domestic and external competencies. Motivation among political leaders to contribute to the UN is essential. A government has to have the ambition to play an active role in the UN's work, set an aim of involvement and prioritize the UN cause. Ideology may also play a significant part in such a mission. For example, the value of equality for the long-serving Social Democratic Parties in the Nordic states may provide an ideological basis for supporting humanitarian and peacekeeping missions. In addition, politicians need to regard their state as able to make a difference

³⁹) United Nations, 'List of Operations, 1948-2010', Peacekeeping Department, 2010, available online at <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/list.shtml>.

⁴⁰) Susan C. Hulton, 'Council Working Methods and Procedures', in: David Malone and David M. Boulder (eds), *The UN Security Council: From the Cold War to the 21st Century* (London: Lynne Rienner, 2004), pp. 240-241.

⁴¹) Hulton, 'Council Working Methods and Procedures', p. 241.

⁴²) Hulton, 'Council Working Methods and Procedures', p. 337.

⁴³) Kishore Mahbubandi, 'Permanent and Elected Council Members', in: David Malone and David M. Boulder (eds), *The UN Security Council: From the Cold War to the 21st Century* (London: Lynne Rienner, 2004), p. 254.

within the UN apparatus. Moreover, the cohesion and national unity that are evident in the Nordic states' foreign policy objectives towards the UN (that is, in the case of Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland) contributed greatly to their commitment to the UN's cause.⁴⁴

This is illustrated by the Nordic financial support for UN organizations such as the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Norway and Sweden were the second and fourth largest donors to OCHA in 2004, with contributions of US\$ 12 and US\$ 9 million respectively, while Denmark and Finland were ranked as twelfth and fourteenth, with contributions of between one and two million dollars — far more than Japan and Germany.⁴⁵ In general, the Nordic states have an astonishing track record of supporting the UN, providing, for example, 25 per cent of all the military personnel deployed in UN peacekeeping operations during the Cold War.⁴⁶ In addition, Norway, Sweden and Denmark have, for a number of years, been some of the few countries, along with Luxembourg and the Netherlands, to reach the UN's target of 0.7 per cent of GDP in Overseas Development Aid (ODA). The high ODA score and its associated 'good international practice' is an asset that is quite effectively utilized by the Nordic states on the international scene.⁴⁷

This is important, as international institutional expectations rise in accordance with perceived changes in states' wealth and competence. In accordance with good international practice, states may feel pressurized by the international community — both by individual states and the UN — to contribute both financial and human resources to UN activities. Both Iceland and Ireland experienced considerable pressure during the late 1990s from the international community to increase development funding and aid, and to create peacekeeping units as they became more affluent and developed more comprehensive foreign policies.⁴⁸

A government that does not regard the UN apparatus favourably in its attempt to be influential and to gain benefits from its activeness is unlikely to pool resources towards the UN cause. This was the case of the Icelandic government, which was divided in its bid for UNSC membership. Iceland's Prime Minister Davíð Oddsson (1991-2004), who later become Foreign Minister (2004-2005),

⁴⁴ Baldur Thorhallsson, 'Iceland's Involvement in Global Affairs since the Mid-1990s: What Features Determine the Size of a State', *Stjórnmal og Stjórnysla Vefþimarit* [Politics and Administration Web Journal], 2006, available online at <http://stjornmalogstjornysla.is/images/stories/fg2006h/baldur.pdf>.

⁴⁵ OCHA cited in Ulriksen, *Deployments for Development?*, pp. 14-15.

⁴⁶ Danish Institute for International Studies, 'Nordic Peace Diplomacy: Looking Back, Moving Forward', background note for conference part of Norway's Centennial Anniversary 1905-2005 programme, Copenhagen, 24 February 2005, available online at <http://www.diis.dk/sw9099.asp>.

⁴⁷ Ulriksen, *Deployments for Development?*, p. 14.

⁴⁸ Christophe Gillissen, 'The Back to the Future? Ireland at the UN Security Council, 2001-2002', *Nordic Irish Studies*, vol. 5, 2006, pp. 23-40; Katsumi Ishizuka, *Ireland and International Peacekeeping Operations, 1960-2000* (London: Frank Cass, 2004); and Thorhallsson, 'Iceland's Involvement in Global Affairs Since the Mid-1990s'.

argued that Iceland, as a small state, would not be able to exercise any influence within the Security Council or to receive any benefits from membership. Oddsson and some other Conservative MPs hence saw no reason to continue the campaign and considered withdrawing from it. When they failed to get the government to withdraw from the bid, they limited the resources available for it. Iceland's challengers, Turkey and Austria, then openly questioned Iceland's seriousness about its application, and this seriously undermined Iceland's campaign.⁴⁹

The importance of small states' administrative competences and their activity in the UN work is demonstrated by the number of times that countries have been invited as outsiders to the UNSC meetings on the basis of Rule 37, as indicated in Table 2. According to the rule, states that either have a particular interest in issues being discussed in the UNSC or have brought the matter to the Security Council's attention may be invited, or request an invitation, to the UNSC without the right to vote.⁵⁰ The ability of non-members to exert influence on specific issues has increased with the publishing of the Security Council's monthly programme of work and a provisional agenda in advance of its meetings,⁵¹ making it possible for states to be informed and prepare for proceedings. Importantly, countries that score high on the Human Development Index (HDI)⁵² are more likely to be proactive within the UN (see Table 2). A state's high ranking on the HDI is seen as a significant source of prestige and adds to the country's international image (as demonstrated in newspaper coverage around the globe — for example, the Nordic states are often hailed for their high HDI ranking).

Norway was invited to the UNSC 78 times during the period from 2000 to 2007, despite not being part of any conflict, as Table 2 indicates. Only Israel was invited more often. However, Norway's total number of invitations might actually have been higher had it not been an elected member of the Security Council from 2001-2002. During the same period, Bangladesh, which is the biggest troop contributor to UN peacekeeping missions with nearly 11,000 police, experts and troops in 2010 and a population of 156 million,⁵³ was only invited 30 times to the Security Council.

⁴⁹ Utanríkisráðuneytið [Iceland's Ministry of Foreign Affairs], *Skýrsla um framboð Íslands og kosning-
abaráttu til setis í öryggisráði Sameinuðu þjóðanna, 2009-1010* [Report on Iceland's bid for a seat in the
UN Security Council], 2009, available online at [http://captainfigolu.appspot.com/www.utanrikisra-
duneyti.is/media/PDF/Lokaskýrsla_um_oryggisradsframboðid_2008PDF](http://captainfigolu.appspot.com/www.utanrikisra-
duneyti.is/media/PDF/Lokaskýrsla_um_oryggisradsframboðid_2008PDF).

⁵⁰ United Nations, 'Provisional Rules of Procedure of the Security Council', *S/96/Rev.7*, 1983, available
online at <http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/scrules.htm>.

⁵¹ Hulton, 'Council Working Methods and Procedures', p. 245.

⁵² The purpose of HDI is to assess the quality of life based on: 1) a long and healthy life/life expectancy
at birth; 2) access to knowledge/mean years of schooling and expected years of schooling; and 3) a decent
standard of living/GDP per capita (in purchasing power parity, or PPP).

⁵³ United Nations, 'Contributors to United Nations Peacekeeping Operations' (New York: Peacekeeping
Department, 2010), available online at http://www.un.org/peacekeeping/contributors/2010/aug10_1.pdf.

Table 2: States with a Population of 10 Million and Fewer that were Invited 25 Times or More to the UNSC under Rule 37, 2000-2007

States	Population (2010)	HDI (ranking)	Number of invitations 2000-03	Number of invitations 2004-07	Total number of invitations 2000-07
Israel	7.4	0.932 (23)	33	47	80
Norway	4.7	0.968 (2)	26	52	78
New Zealand	4.3	0.943 (19)	44	30	74
Lebanon	4.1	0.772 (88)	14	53	67
Portugal	10.7	0.897 (29)	39	22	61
Sierra Leone	5.2	0.336 (177)	22	25	47
Liechtenstein (2009)	0.035	0.951 (19)	16	31	47
Austria	8.2	0.948 (15)	15	28	43
Bosnia and Herzegovina	4.6	0.803 (66)	17	23	40
Switzerland	7.6	0.955 (7)	11	28	39
Jordan	6.4	0.773 (86)	25	12	37
Serbia	8	0.826 (67)	7	30	37
Sweden	9.1	0.956 (6)	29	8	37
Albania	3	0.801 (68)	19	17	36
Burundi	9.8	0.413 (167)	19	24	35
Finland	5.2	0.952 (11)	6	28	34
Croatia	4.5	0.850 (47)	22	12	34
Libya	6.4	0.818 (56)	25	9	34
Belgium	10.4	0.946 (17)	31	3	34
Tunisia	10.6	0.766 (91)	19	10	29
Costa Rica	4.5	0.846 (48)	17	12	29
Somalia	10.1	*	4	24	28
Singapore	4.7	0.922 (25)	11	17	28
Namibia	2.1	0.650(125)	16	9	27
Liberia	3.7	*	6	21	27
Georgia	4.6	0.754 (96)	11	16	27
Ireland	4.6	0.959 (5)	4	23	27

Table 2 (cont.)

States	Population (2010)	HDI (ranking)	Number of invitations 2000-03	Number of invitations 2004-07	Total number of invitations 2000-07
Bahrain	0.7	0.866 (41)	21	5	26
Denmark	5.5	0.949 (14)	22	3	25

Sources: Human Development Report (HDR), 'Human Development Index 2005: Monitoring Human Development, Enlarging People's Choices', *Fighting Climate Change: Human Solidarity in a Divided World*, 2007/2008, available online at http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR_20072008_EN_Indicator_tables.pdf; HDR, 'Human Development Index 2007 and its Components', *Overcoming Barriers*, 2009, available online at http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR_2009_EN_Complete.pdf; United States Census Bureau, *International Data Base (IDB)*; United Nations Security Council, 'Chapter III: Participation in the Proceedings of the Security Council', *Repertoire of the Practice of the Security Council, 2000-2003*; and United Nations Security Council, 'Chapter III: Participation in the Proceedings of the Security Council', *Repertoire of the Practice of the Security Council, 2004-2007*.

* Numbers not available.

Of the larger states, Japan was invited a total of 155 times over the same period; India, 79 times; and Germany, 61.⁵⁴ Comparing the small states in Table 2, it is possible to detect a trend. Those countries, such as Israel, that have a stake in the proceedings by being parties to a conflict, and/or neighbouring states, are invited often (as demonstrated by the white background). Many of these often score low on the HDI, which is consistent with the argument that fragile states which suffer from poverty, exclusion, weak institutions and low levels of human development are more prone to internal conflicts.⁵⁵ On the other hand, countries that are not a party to conflicts and enjoy relatively high levels of development — such as Norway, New Zealand, Portugal, Liechtenstein, the Netherlands, Finland, Belgium, Ireland and Denmark (as demonstrated by the grey background) — are equally invited many times, suggesting that these states' activities are related to particular knowledge and expertise in certain policy fields.

Smaller states, particularly those without a colonial legacy, are perceived to be more neutral when mediating in the affairs of other, often developing, states. Perceived historical neutrality has benefited the Nordic states in their international work, in particular in Africa, distinguishing them from other active small states, such as the Netherlands, Portugal and Belgium, whose intentions will

⁵⁴ United Nations Security Council, 'Chapter III: Participation in the Proceedings of the Security Council', *Repertoire of the Practice of the Security Council, 2000-2003* (New York: UNSC, 2003), available online at <http://www.un.org/en/sc/repertoire/>; and United Nations Security Council, 'Chapter III: Participation in the Proceedings of the Security Council', *Repertoire of the Practice of the Security Council, 2004-2007* (New York: UNSC, 2007), available online at <http://www.un.org/en/sc/repertoire/>.

⁵⁵ Ravi Kanbur, 'Poverty and Conflict: The Inequality Link', *Coping with Crisis Working Paper* (New York: International Peace Academy, 2007), available online at http://www.ipinst.org/media/pdf/publications/mgs_povr.pdf.

always be tainted by the colonial legacy.⁵⁶ However, a state's perceived neutrality is not automatically transformed into an asset for international influence. In order to become an asset, it must be combined with image-building and factors such as experience and skills, which take time, leadership and initiative to develop. Norway's reputation and engagement with the UN's conflict resolution work expanded with the Oslo process in the Middle East in the early 1990s. Since then, Norway's experience includes facilitating talks between the government of Sri Lanka and guerrillas of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, and between the government of the Philippines and the communist National Democratic Front. According to Whitfield,⁵⁷ Switzerland, the Netherlands and Sweden have followed Norway's footsteps by also establishing themselves as international peacemakers. Each of these small states has frequently attended UNSC meetings under Rule 37, as Table 2 indicates. Another small state that is often present at the UNSC meetings is New Zealand, because of the conflict in East Timor. Despite regional proximity, Whitfield argues that New Zealand took part in the process because of its status as a small, neutral state in addition to its regional expertise and diplomatic skills.⁵⁸ Also, Costa Rica's activeness in the UNSC, despite its generally lower HDI score compared to other states that are also not part of any conflict (as indicated by Table 2), is a result of its perceived neutral position and its role as 'the spokesperson' on behalf of the Rio Group.⁵⁹ Interestingly, states with a population of less than 500,000 seem not to have competence to take an active part in the UNSC's work, except for Liechtenstein, which is the only state with less than 500,000 inhabitants to have been invited 25 times or more to the Security Council under Rule 37 during the period 2000 to 2007 (see discussion below and Table 2).

These examples highlight a central feature of a small state's ability to contribute to the UN: it needs to have administrative competence and knowledge in a particular policy area. This is not to say that economic and military resources are unimportant. Given that the UN's peacekeeping missions, peace-support operations and peace-building initiatives are dependent on the military and the financial contributions of UN member states, the countries contributing troops and finances are essential to the functioning of specific aspects of the UNSC organization. However, increased contributions of troops and money do not necessarily translate into increased influence in the UNSC.

⁵⁶ Ulriksen, *Deployments for Development?*, pp. 11-12.

⁵⁷ Teresa Whitfield, *Friends Indeed? The United Nations, Groups of Friends, and the Resolution of Conflict* (Washington, DC: US Institute of Peace Press, 2007), p. 42.

⁵⁸ Whitfield, *Friends Indeed?*, p. 202.

⁵⁹ United Nations Security Council, 'Chapter III: Participation in the Proceedings of the Security Council'.

How Small States Can Influence the UNSC

In order for a country to be elected to the UN Security Council, it has to have the support of a large part of the international community. The other UN members have to regard the state in question as capable of participating in the Council's work, presenting its positions and views, and/or representing other states' or actors' interests. States that wish to be elected to the UNSC hence have to set up a programme of work for their period in the Council, lobby their case and demonstrate their commitment to the other UN member states. Hansson identified three factors that are of key importance in determining whether small states become active, influential participants in the UNSC: knowledge; diplomatic skills; and initiatives.⁶⁰ In addition to these, there appear to be four other important factors: the ability to prioritize; leadership; coalition; and image-/perception-building.

Knowledge and Prioritizing

The importance of the P5 lies in their permanent status and right to veto, which give them in-depth knowledge of the Security Council's affairs, missions, and operating procedures, and enable close collaboration with other permanent and elected members. Small states, with less administrative capacity for collecting and analysing information,⁶¹ have to rely on the UN Secretariat and other Security Council members to inform their decision-making. Knowledge — with its preparation and prioritization — thus remains one of the most important and demanding aspects of UNSC membership. From Table 2, it is possible to discern that it is not necessarily economic growth or military strength *per se* that determines attendance of the UNSC meetings, but the human factors behind knowledge, expertise and diplomatic skills. Acquiring and building the necessary knowledge is thus important for a small state to become an active and influential participant in the UNSC as a member. To deal with the structural disadvantage and to maximize influence, small states have to prioritize, delegate and decide upon which issues are manageable, and which can be dealt with more effectively by others in the Security Council.⁶²

Ireland's period in the Security Council was considered a success because of its pragmatic approach to prioritizing workloads. Ireland knew that it could not change the procedural functioning of UNSC operations and, as such, prioritized

⁶⁰ Pia Hansson, *Against All Odds: Small State Candidature and Membership of the United Nations Security Council*, MA thesis, University of Iceland, 2007.

⁶¹ Þröstur Freyr Gylfason, *The Distinctive Characteristics and Behaviour of Small States which have been Elected Members to the United Nations Security Council*, BA thesis, University of Iceland, 2004.

⁶² See United Nations Security Council, draft report of the workshop 'Hitting the Ground Running', a workshop for newly elected members of the Security Council (held at the Harrison Conference Center at Glen Cove, Long Island, New York, 13 and 14 November 2003), S/2004/135, 2004, available online at <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N04/248/41/PDF/N0424841.pdf?OpenElement>.

those tasks that lay in areas over which it believed that it could influence.⁶³ One of Ireland's successes included its robust stance against the proposition to lift the arms' embargo when combatants in the Ethiopia/Eritrea conflict had reached an agreement, with this position eventually winning the support of the other member states.⁶⁴

Success is also highly dependent on a state's preparation in building up the necessary knowledge base for its foreign service to be able to deal with the demands of the Security Council. Sweden's preparatory work included the construction of a database of the issues on the agenda corresponding to the positions of different members. Subsequently, the knowledge compiled in the database was used to construct mini-seminars for the Swedish delegation leading up to its term on the Security Council.⁶⁵ Although unsuccessful, by 2008, Iceland's preparation for UNSC membership comprised the making of a catalogue of issues and analyses of principal subjects of discussion in the Security Council.⁶⁶ Another successful strategy is evident in Norway's preparation for membership, which included close cooperation with its knowledge institutions, such as universities, research institutes and non-governmental organizations.⁶⁷ Also Liechtenstein, despite being one of the smallest UN members in terms of inhabitants, has built up a reputation regarding knowledge and expertise through initiatives such as the Princeton University-based Liechtenstein Institute on Self-Determination — with direct links to the Permanent Mission of Liechtenstein at the UN.⁶⁸ The long-serving officials at the Liechtenstein's Permanent Mission have built up capacity to take an active part in discussion on issues such as 'Civilians in armed Conflict',⁶⁹ 'Women, Peace and Security'⁷⁰ and 'Post-conflict Peace-building'.⁷¹ As Table 2 shows, Liechtenstein has participated many times in the Security Council's

⁶³ Gillissen, 'The Back to the Future?', p. 37.

⁶⁴ Ryan cited in Gillissen, 'The Back to the Future?', p. 34.

⁶⁵ Robert Rydberg, '*Sverige i säkerhetsrådet: arbete och organisation i Stockholm*' [Sweden in the Security Council: Work and Organization in Stockholm], in: Promemoria 1998-12-28 (Stockholm: *Regeringskansliet Utenriksdepartementet* [Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs], 1998).

⁶⁶ Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, 'Address on Foreign Affairs by Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade, Delivered at the Althing on 8 April 2008', 2008, available online at http://www.iceland.org/media/jp/Address_on_Foreign_Affairs_8_April_2008.doc.

⁶⁷ Halvard Buhaug and Eva Terese Voldhagen, 'Norge i Sikkerhetsraadet', report by *Utenriksdepartementet* [Norwegian Foreign Department] in collaboration with NTNU, Trondheim, 19 April 2001, available online at http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/ud/dok/rapporter_planet/rapporter/2001/norge-i-sikkerhetsraadet-utvidet-sikkerhe.html?id=105680.

⁶⁸ See Liechtenstein Institute on Self Determination, *Links*, 2006, available online at <http://www.princeton.edu/~lisd/archived/links.html>.

⁶⁹ United Nations, 'Effective Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Requires Stronger Partnerships', Security Council SC/8575, 9 December 2005, available online at <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2005/sc8575.doc.htm>.

⁷⁰ United Nations, 'Security Council Stresses Urgency of Full, Effective Implementation of Landmark Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security', Security Council SC/8538, 27 October 2005, available online at <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2005/sc8538.doc.htm>.

⁷¹ United Nations, 'Security Council Hears 60 Speakers, Asks Secretary-General to Advise Organization

proceedings under Rule 37. These cases highlight a general feature of UNSC membership: states have to commit to serious competence-building and training of officials to respond to possible scenarios.

On the other hand, this can be a difficult task. For instance, this was demonstrated by the events of 9/11, as few states were adequately prepared to deal with such an attack within the UN framework. In addition, to be able to handle excess workloads, states need to increase staff capacity.⁷² The high number of Belgian UN mission staff, compared with other small states, is a result of Belgium being elected to UNSC membership twice since 1991 (see Table 1).

Diplomatic Skills and Image/Perception

Diplomatic skills are a crucial factor for the ability of states to become active and influential within the UNSC. As already emphasized, a small state needs to have the administrative capacity to tackle a wide range of complex issues and duties. The more competence that a state's diplomatic service has, the more influence it can yield. The combination of Norway's experience and skills as a mediator in the Middle East and Sri Lanka has given it more international credibility. This enabled Norway to play a constructive role in negotiations between Eritrea and Ethiopia, and to take leadership in the Eritrea-Ethiopia Committee during its term in the Security Council. Norway prepared suggestions and led the way in drafting the resolution, the presidential statement and media talking points for the Security Council president.⁷³

Norway's ability to assume that position and role was assisted by its long diplomatic experience and the perception of Norway as an international norm-setter. In fact, all the Nordic states are seen as norm entrepreneurs in the fields of human rights, development assistance, women's rights, participation in peace operations, humanitarian efforts and environmental protection.⁷⁴ This perception is related to the Nordic states' long history of military, police and civilian support for UN peace operations such as ONUC (1960-1964), UNAVEM I-III (1988-1999), UNTAG (1989-1990), ONUMOZ (1992-1994), UNSOM I-II (1992-1995) and UNOMSIL (1998-1999),⁷⁵ to mention but a few. More recently, Norway,

within One Year of Best Ways to Support National Peace-building Efforts', Security Council SC/9333, 20 May 2008, available online at <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2008/sc9333.doc.htm>.

⁷² Osvald cited in Hansson, *Against All Odds*; Colin Keating, 'The United Nations Security Council: Options for Small States', speech by the Executive Director, Security Council Report, Reykjavik, 16 June 2008, available online at <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Media%20Small%20States%20Reykjavik.pdf>; and Rydberg, 'Sverige i Säkerhetsrådet: arbete och organisation i Stockholm'.

⁷³ Ole Petter Kolby, 'Norge i FN's Sikkerhetsrad, 2001-2002', *Internasjonal Politikk*, vol. 61, no. 2, 2003, pp. 277-287.

⁷⁴ See Ingebritsen, 'Norm Entrepreneurs'.

⁷⁵ See Ulriksen, *Deployments for Development?*

Sweden, Denmark and Finland — in collaboration with Austria, Canada, the Netherlands and Poland — established the UN Standby High Readiness Brigade (SHIRBRIG) with headquarters situated in Copenhagen,⁷⁶ in effect bringing UN operations and decisions closer to home. This also illustrates the importance of *initiative* for attempts to become important actors within the UN system, while strengthening the Nordic position and image.

As already mentioned, this image has been of enormous value for the Nordic countries in international affairs, and they have used it actively to build coalitions and have issues placed on the agenda of the UNSC.⁷⁷ The Nordic countries have, over the years, jointly initiated a number of UN reform projects. The Nordic UN Project's aim was to transform the UN Development Programme (UNDP) from a funding mechanism into a stronger development institution.⁷⁸ The latest reform attempt can be found in the high-level panel entitled *Deliver as One*, from 2006, which tried to provide some critical answers as to why the UN has become fragmented and weak.⁷⁹

It is important to remember that the influence and support that the Nordic countries enjoy within the UN are the result of years of experience, investment in the UN's work and, not least, image-building. Iceland's campaign for UNSC membership in 2010 tried to build on these Nordic ideals of promoting human rights, development assistance and women's rights. However, the failure of the Icelandic campaign was partly because of free-riding on the Nordic image without previously having the experience and history of being an active promoter of the UN's ideals. Thus, image/perception and skills/experience go hand in hand, and for a state to be successful and influential it needs a combination of each.

In addition, small states have to maximize their diplomatic skills and small bureaucracy, exemplified by informality, flexibility, prioritization and room for manoeuvre. The Irish delegation, during its term in the Security Council, proved that these traits can make a huge difference. In the aftermath of 9/11, when the United States showed signs of uncertainty about taking the attack to the UNSC, the Irish delegation — informally — managed to persuade the United States to take the issue of the attack to the UNSC,⁸⁰ thus strengthening the institution. The Irish case also shows that skilful negotiation tactics, competence and autonomy of officials are crucial in the Security Council. States need excellent negotiators in the Security Council to be able to influence.⁸¹ Despite the permanent

⁷⁶ See Ulriksen, *Deployments for Development?*, p. 14.

⁷⁷ See Hansson, *Against All Odds*.

⁷⁸ Nordic UN Project, cited in Bertil Oden, 'Review Essay', *Forum for Development Studies*, vol. 37, no. 2, 2010, pp. 269-279 at p. 273.

⁷⁹ See Oden, 'Review Essay', pp. 273-274.

⁸⁰ See Gillissen, 'The Back to the Future?', p. 36.

⁸¹ See Kolby, 'Norge i FNs Sikkerhetsrad, 2001-2002'.

members' right to veto, the Security Council's proceedings normally follow the protocol that issues should be negotiated until consensus is reached and the elected members can use this to their advantage.

Initiatives and Leadership

The high quality and long experience of the Nordic countries in the UN's work are also represented in UN leadership positions. Finland's former president, Martti Ahtisaari, assumed the lead in the effort to determine the future status of Kosovo — as UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's special envoy in 2005 — and also served as a mediator in Aceh, Indonesia.⁸² Kai Aage Eide, a Norwegian diplomat, was appointed the UN Special Representative to Afghanistan and Head of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan from 2008-2010,⁸³ only to be succeeded by Swedish diplomat Staffan de Mistura in March 2010.⁸⁴ Other well-known Nordic persons involved in the UN's work include Hans Blix, of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission, and Jan Egeland, the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator. Although these examples are not directly linked to UNSC membership, they highlight the importance of leadership and initiative to small states seeking to influence the Security Council.

The best opportunity for influence by small states is when holding the UNSC Presidency.⁸⁵ Small states can use the Presidency to present a theme that is not formally on the agenda or, as in the Irish case, to keep things on the agenda. While the Security Council was caught up in 9/11, Ireland managed to maintain focus, attention and support for the peace processes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Burundi, and Somalia.⁸⁶ In addition, during the Irish Presidency — in a context of rising violence in the Middle East following the collapse of the Oslo peace agreement — 'Ireland managed to obtain unanimous agreement on a call "for immediate withdrawal of all Israeli forces" from Palestinian-ruled areas'.⁸⁷ Furthermore, Doyle argued that, despite the lack of progress, the Irish position was maintained, affirmed and decisive in shaping the overall policy of the Security Council.

Another small state whose time in the Security Council is remembered for its strong leadership skills and initiative is New Zealand (1993-1994). New Zealand was mainly concerned with the lack of transparency in the UNSC

⁸² See Whitfield, *Friends Indeed?*, pp. 35 and 268.

⁸³ United Nations, 'Secretary-General Appoints Kai Eide of Norway as Special Representative for Afghanistan', 2008, available online at <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2008/sga1123.doc.htm>.

⁸⁴ United Nations, 'Secretary-General Appoints Staffan de Mistura of Sweden as Special Representative for Afghanistan', 2010, available online at <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2010/sga1217.doc.htm>.

⁸⁵ See United Nations Security Council, draft report of the workshop 'Hitting the Ground Running'.

⁸⁶ Gillissen, 'The Back to the Future?', p. 34.

⁸⁷ Doyle cited in Gillissen, 'The Back to the Future?', p. 36.

decision-making procedure and suggested that the Security Council's secret deliberations should be transmitted through closed-circuit televisions for the other UN members to be kept informed of, and updated on, the Council's activities. This decision did not win the hearts and minds of the permanent members.⁸⁸ However, the problem of secret consultations became apparent a few months later, at a time when New Zealand held the Presidency of the Security Council, in quite dire circumstances. Renewed violence in Bosnia and a humiliating defeat and departure for US forces in Somalia made the conflict in Rwanda seem quite quiet in comparison. It became apparent, however, for New Zealand's Permanent Representative that the E10 were not adequately informed about what was going on in Rwanda, with the Representative claiming that the E10 should be able to access information gathered by the intelligence services of the P5. When complaints were not heard, and even the Secretariat withheld information, New Zealand's Permanent Representative submitted, on his second to last day of holding the Security Council Presidency, a draft statement to the Security Council that included the word 'genocide'. Rwanda — an elected member on the Security Council during that period — heavily objected to the statement and spread disinformation about the severity of the situation. The debate was headed towards a stalemate, so, in a last desperate attempt, New Zealand called for a draft resolution that would require a vote. A compromise was reached, with a watered-down statement excluding the word 'genocide'.⁸⁹ Although Rwanda represents a huge failure of the UNSC to act, without New Zealand's initiative and decisive leadership skills, no statement at all would have been released. The case thus represents a good example of a way in which a small state can be in a pivotal position at a critical moment and make an impact.⁹⁰

Coalition-Building

The last important factor is the development of allies or, in other words, coalition-building. Having support is crucial for a small state to be able to influence the UNSC. The Nordic countries always support each other by opting for one Nordic country in the Security Council every other two-year term. There is also the CANZ group of countries, consisting of Canada, Australia and New Zealand. These three countries, according to Malone, 'work to ensure that their candidacies prove mutually reinforcing and do not clash'.⁹¹ There is also the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), consisting of 118 members.⁹² According to Hurd, it has been

⁸⁸ Linda Melvern, 'Behind Closed Doors', *The World Today*, vol. 56, nos. 8/9, 2000, p. 9.

⁸⁹ See Melvern, 'Behind Closed Doors'.

⁹⁰ See Ken Ross, 'Power in Numbers', *The World Today*, vol. 57, no. 5, 2001, p. 23.

⁹¹ David Malone, 'Eyes On the Prize', *Global Governance: A Review of Multilateralism and International Organizations*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2000, pp. 1-21.

⁹² See BBC, 'Profile: Non-Aligned Movement', 7 August 2009, available online at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/2798187.stm>.

quite common practice for certain groups of states, such as the NAM, to have extensive consultations between those members that have a Security Council seat and the other members in the General Assembly.⁹³ There is also the Forum for Small States (FOSS), which is a loose coalition of small countries that meets regularly to exchange views and coordinate positions.⁹⁴ In addition to forging alliances, Malone argues that the trading of votes is not a rare occurrence either.⁹⁵ Also, during Iceland's bid for a UNSC seat, Iceland established diplomatic relations with 75 countries.⁹⁶

Coalitions can make a huge difference in the ability of small states to become influential and/or UNSC members. However, they can also be a source of pressure for states to become members. Iceland experienced strong pressure from the other Nordic states to continue to strengthen its bid for a seat at the UNSC when it was considering withdrawal of its candidacy.⁹⁷ Financial pressures are also real, and the process of campaigning for UNSC membership can be costly.

Furthermore, coalitions, collaborations and networks with other important international actors have become crucial factors in determining whether a small state is able to influence the UNSC. The elected members have increasingly presented a thematic issue or two during the month of their Presidency on topics such as disarmament, armed conflict and women's rights. If successful in bringing other actors on board, small states have a better chance of succeeding in the Security Council and in promoting their thematic issues. However, in order to succeed, the issue has to be well prepared, non-controversial and highly relevant.⁹⁸ There is no doubt that this networking and coalition-building takes enormous time and effort and, with limited resources, small states may have to choose between presenting thematic issues within the Security Council and focusing on efficient participation in the daily work of the Council.⁹⁹

⁹³ See Hurd, 'Legitimacy, Power, and the Symbolic Life of the UN Security Council', p. 42.

⁹⁴ See Keating, 'The United Nations Security Council'.

⁹⁵ See Malone, 'Eyes On the Prize'.

⁹⁶ See Gísladóttir, 'Address on Foreign Affairs by Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade, Delivered at the Althing on 8 April 2008'.

⁹⁷ Árni Helgason, 'Fullur stuðningur við framboð Íslands til Öryggisráðsins' [Full Support for Iceland's Candidacy to the Security Council], *Morgunblaðið*, 29 June 2005, available online at http://www.mbl.is/mm/gagnasafn/grein.html?grein_id=1025465; *Morgunblaðið*, 'Öryggisráðið og aðrar leiðir' [Other Options to Security], 27 January 2005, available online at http://www.mbl.is/mm/gagnasafn/grein.html?grein_id=841523; and *Morgunblaðið*, 'Mörg fordæmi fyrir því að ríki hætti við' [The Many Precedents for State Direction], 14 July 2005, available online at http://www.mbl.is/mm/gagnasafn/grein.html?grein_id=1028007.

⁹⁸ See Hansson, *Against All Odds*.

⁹⁹ See Malone, 'Eyes On the Prize'.

Conclusion

Current IR theories are preoccupied with the concept of the capabilities of big states,¹⁰⁰ despite the fact that small states comprise a large proportion of the world's states. The theories rightly point to several disadvantages and structural constraints in small states' efforts to take on active international roles. In the UN, although all member states enjoy one vote each in the General Assembly and the E10 enjoy one vote each in the UNSC, small states have had to fight for their equal membership, and real inequalities in states' abilities to influence UN decision-making prevail. Thus, *prima facie*, realpolitik — with its focus on power relations — seems to be the underlying premise of international relations and states' activities within the UNSC.¹⁰¹ Opposing this view, neo-liberal institutionalists argue that a small state's interest in international organizations such as the UN lies in the protection that they receive from international laws, norms and treaties.¹⁰² The UN is also seen to provide small states with an opportunity to forge alliances, cooperate on a range of issues, and lobby for particular, favourable solutions, but without much power directly to influence outcomes.¹⁰³

Contrary to these theoretical approaches, this article has sought to demonstrate ways for small states to be active and successful participants within the UN and the Security Council. A number of small states have utilized activities related to good international practice and favourable image, particularly with regard to being norm entrepreneurs, as means of garnering international influence, merging realism with idealism through soft power. The article argues that there are two broad categories of qualitative factors that determine the ability of small states to influence the UNSC: the first is administrative competence in areas such as knowledge, initiative, and diplomatic, coalition and leadership skills; the second is the image of the state in the international system, with specific regard to its perceived neutrality or reputation as a norm entrepreneur in particular policy fields.

On the basis of these categories, small states can move beyond being merely a beneficiary of UN membership to become an active participant in international affairs. Accordingly, we need to look at both qualitative and quantitative resources to explain states' ability to have a say within the UN. In addition, small states in the EU are not equal. Larger material capabilities, such as in terms of wealth and alliance formation, in addition to soft power resources, make a difference among small states. According to Nye, 'when ideals are an important source of power, the classic distinction between realpolitik and liberalism becomes blurred'.¹⁰⁴ Moreover,

¹⁰⁰ See Neumann and Gstöhl, 'Lilliputians in Gulliver's World'.

¹⁰¹ See Walz, 'Political Structures'.

¹⁰² Keohane, 'Lilliputians' Dilemmas'.

¹⁰³ Keohane and Nye, 'Introduction'.

¹⁰⁴ See Nye, 'Soft Power', p. 170.

this article confirms Keohane's assessment that multilateral institutions — in this case the UN — provide disproportionate access to the materially weak.

To conclude, the article has identified several factors that determine the activeness and influence of small states. First, countries have to have political incentives and ambition to adopt an active role in the UN. Some states may simply lack ambition in this respect. The state in question needs to be prepared to spend time, effort and money on working within the UN. Moreover, the governing elite in the state in question has to consider it possible to have a say within the UN. If the political elite does not consider that it can have a say, it may not even try to contribute to, or influence, decision-making within the UN. Second, governments interested in taking on the role of an elected member of the UNSC have to convince others that they can take on the duties that are associated with membership. The state's image is important in this respect, as it must be perceived as having the competence to carry out the Security Council's obligations. Third, countries need to be able to prioritize their work within the UNSC in order to be able to influence the Security Council's decisions. Small states hence need to find their niches. Fourth, small states must have particularly good knowledge of their chosen issues. Fifth, they must have the ability to take initiatives and the necessary diplomatic skills to pursue their initiatives and fulfil their responsibilities. Sixth, leadership and coalition-building are of fundamental importance with regard to power relations in the Security Council. Seventh, a small state must be able to present itself as more neutral than others, while the ability to develop a reputation as a norm entrepreneur or norm-setter in its chosen policy field is of enormous help in getting its policy objectives through the Security Council. Hence, the way in which international actors regard the state in question is of fundamental importance when considering the state's power potential within the UNSC.

The failure of IR theories to take seriously these factors undermines their ability to understand and explain the role of small states in the UNSC. The IR theories need to consider the administrative competence and perception of states, along with the traditional variables, in order to produce a fuller picture of the power potential of small states in the international system.

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