



CONCEPT NOTE FOR THE FIRST MODULE OF THE MASSIVE OPEN ONLINE COURSE
LEADERSHIP IN SMALL STATES (LIST)

Module 3: Small States Leadership in Foreign and Security Policy

The main aim of this module is to give a concentrated overview of the small states' foreign and security policy characteristics while revealing the importance of the leadership component in it.

Forms and aims of small states leadership in the field of foreign and security policy are directly related to the specific features determined by their size. As noted by a number of scholars, protection and influence are two things that most small states lack and want to achieve (Sherwood, 2016).

Small states' characteristics primarily revolve around their limited capacity to cope with security challenges. Small states lack military as well as diplomatic resources and have weak bargaining power, therefore are more vulnerable to systemic instabilities. Geography might also be an important factor for small states security because of the proximity of a large, revisionist, non-democratic power aggravates all the vulnerabilities (Knudsen 1996, p. 10). As a result, abilities to protect themselves from external threats or to develop a substantially independent security policy are very limited (Bailes 2009). Therefore, in the field of security, small states rely heavily on the rule of international law and on guarantees of protection from powerful states or organisations (Thorhallsson & Steinsson 2017, p. 5).

A second important feature of small states is their structural weakness. Small states' ability to achieve favourable foreign policy outcomes independently is very limited. However, with the growing importance of international organizations, they have gained opportunities to act more independently in the international arena. Various alliances, transnational or international organizations, serve as a platform for small states to exercise the influence by "putting them on a diplomatic and legal footing with larger states" (Sherwood, 2016).

Foreign policy in many cases is also adopted as a tool for the implementation of security policy goals. Using international formats, small states can bring issues "to the table" aiming for favourable decisions that are beneficial for their national security goals. For instance, Lithuania, in a few cases, has been very active in EU and NATO formats seeking sanctions against Russia despite being a weaker party in this asymmetric relationship.

It is important to emphasize that empowerment of small states in foreign and security policy largely depends on the well-functioning international system as well as the leadership performed at the state or political elite level.

As demonstrated by a number of case studies, the leadership of a state in the field of small states foreign and security policy might occur in different forms. Small states might advocate for certain questions in order to gain power as well as to deliver for their own security interests. Leadership can be demonstrated by efforts of international norms building as in the case of Nordic countries. Small states of this region (Denmark, Iceland, Sweden and others) deliberately act as 'norm entrepreneurs' in global eco-politics, conflict resolution, human rights or gender equality fields (Pance 2010, Ingebritsen 2019, Karlsdóttir and Ómarsdóttir 2020). This kind of activism and adoption of leader' role in a particular niche helps small states to increase their relative power as well as in many cases contributes to their security needs.

At the same time, while acting in the international arena, leadership of small states' political elite also has a significant impact. Classical research on small states emphasizes the importance of individual leader perception towards the state that he or she represents. As noted, these perceptions not only might have an effect on the quality of representation but also could impact the state's identity (Keohane 1969). Moreover, newer studies have shown that to some extent a particular leader of foreign policy may determine a specific policy decision or



outcome (Janeliūnas 2020). It demonstrates that a component of individual leaders and their style of leadership is an important part of small states' foreign and security policy and therefore should not be downplayed among the other variables while analyzing it.

Even though, because of reasons that were mentioned above, the status of small states in the international arena have changed remarkably since the end of the Cold War, their freedom of manoeuvre is still limited by a number of factors such as domestic political landscape, level of economic development, the status of membership in various international formats, maturity of diplomatic apparatus, general geopolitical setting etc. Therefore, small states still face a number of challenges in foreign and security policy.

The module includes an outline of academic debates and main theoretical assumptions of the field as well as provides case studies of leadership by the small state in different contexts of foreign and security policy.

Learning outcomes:

- Understand and explain the characteristics of small states in foreign and security policy.
- Provide critical insight into small states' efforts in the international arena employing international organizations and other formats.
- Recognize and assess different patterns of small states' security strategies
- Analyze through case studies the forms of leadership in foreign and security policy occurred at the state or individual level.