



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

Module 5: Small State Foreign Policy - Taking Leadership in International Diplomacy

This module offers a comprehensive introduction to small state leadership in international diplomacy. The module will introduce students to the literatures on foreign policy analysis and small state foreign policy and build on these general insights when zooming in on small state leadership in foreign policy and diplomacy.

Small states are usually viewed as followers or bystanders in the literature on international relations. This view is historically rooted in the 19th century European Concert, when the great powers of the time constituted a directorate governing European and international society and writing international law. Today, small states actively pursue leadership in international affairs, although success tends to vary from issue area to issue area and some small states do considerably better than others. This module identifies the characteristics of small state leadership in international diplomacy, explores the conditions for success and discusses the dilemmas faced by small states seeking an international leadership role.

The first part of the module introduces students to prominent theoretical perspectives on foreign policy analysis and diplomacy. These perspectives are used as conceptual and theoretical prisms for understanding what a small state is and what a small state can do in international affairs. We connect our discussions to lessons from module 1 on small states and leadership in general and discuss small action spaces for taking a leadership role in international affairs.

The second part of the module focuses on variations. We discuss variations between small states in different regional and institutional settings and the importance of domestic politics and strategic culture to take advantage of opportunities and meet challenges effectively. We explore small state leadership across different issue areas – e.g. security policy, foreign economic policy, environmental and climate policy and development policy – and discuss how and why small state leadership tends to vary between issue areas.

The third part of the module zooms in on strategy. We identify the pros and cons for small states seeking leadership through strategies such as shelter-seeking, leash-slipping, hedging and smart state strategies and discuss when each of these strategies is likely to succeed and fail, when small states seek to take on a leadership role in international affairs. In doing so we reconnect our discussions of small states to the more general International Relations literature by embedding our discussions in the strategic studies literature and linking back to our starting point in foreign policy analysis.

Throughout the course we work with empirical illustrations and cases from around the world and seek to include the practical experience of political decision-makers and diplomats.

Learning outcomes:

- Understand and explain the characteristics of small state leadership in foreign policy and diplomacy.
 - Critically apply the tools of foreign policy analysis on small state leadership in foreign policy and diplomacy.
 - Analyze the leadership of small states in foreign policy and diplomacy using concepts of small state strategy.
 - Evaluate opportunities and challenges and discuss dilemmas faced by small states seeking leadership in foreign policy and diplomacy.
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