

SECURITY ORIENTED FOREIGN POLICY: A THEORETICAL APPROACH

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Abstract

This article examines the role that foreign policy may play in the realm of security. More specifically it explores a double security role of foreign policy, both in the international and national dimension. In exploring such role, the article focuses on the foreign policy of small states as a unique category of states which may demonstrate somewhat a unique foreign policy behavior. It considers several theoretical approaches which explain not only the behavior of a small states foreign policy in attempt to enhance its security (both externally and internally), but also the potential threats it faces, and the effect that such threats may produce over the security role of foreign policy. The focus is on two particular threats to security, namely on political and societal threats, as two non-traditional threats. Then a relationship between such potential threats and the responsive behavior of foreign policy is analyzed within the context of small states. The article employs the systematic literature review methodology, which, building on existing knowledge, would allow the assessment of the collective evidences which exists in the field of foreign policy's security role, when it comes to small states. The use of such methodology allows the synthetization of relevant existing research in function of advancing the scholastic knowledge on the small states' foreign policy role in enhancing state security.

Keywords: security, foreign policy, small states, political threats, societal threats, foreign policy response/actions

1. Introduction

This article focuses on the analysis of foreign policy behavior, which allows the gaining of a deeper understanding about the importance of foreign policy priorities, relative to the security role it tries to project internationally and nationally. Enhancing state security is merely one of the many roles or functions of foreign policy in service of the national interests' protection. Other roles may include economic diplomacy, multilateral cooperation, and commitment for a secure, stable, and prosperous region. Yet the focus of this work is narrowed down on the security aspect, looked from both the international and national dimension. Through the analysis of foreign policy security role, the article attempts to disclose foreign policy objectives, threats to such objectives, and behavior towards such threats, all in function of preserving and enhancing state security.

Upon examining foreign policy's security role, the article focuses on a particular category of states, as the main actors in foreign policy making. This category is known as small states in the literature of International Relations. Small states are considered as a unique category of states in terms of how they behave in their foreign policy. In other words, their foreign policy behavior differs from that of big states or even micro-states, while most theories place security at the center of such unique behavior. Therefore, the article dwells on the main theoretical approaches which try to explain small states foreign policy behavior, which centers on security objectives and potential threats towards such objectives. The article employs the systematic literature review methodology, which builds on the existing knowledge in the field

of foreign policy. The selection of this methodology is dictated by the research aim, which is to assess the collective evidence existing within the field of foreign policy's security role, when it comes to small states. The use of such methodology allows the synthetization of relevant existing research in function of advancing the scholastic knowledge on the small states' foreign policy role in enhancing state security (Snyder, 2019).

1. Foreign policy of small states

With the fundamental changes of the international system, the scholarly interest to research on the small states' role in the international relations grew significantly. The earliest researches on the small state's foreign policy behavior, were mainly under the influence of the realist perspective of the international relations, which analyses the small states' behavior from a systemic level. This approach revolved mainly around the *security* element, as a factor which defines foreign policy behavior. Vital (1971) is among the first researchers who analyzed the role of small states within a hierarchical international system, in which, he argues that the power of small states is limited. Despite cases where small states have demonstrated and used force against bigger ones (ex. Vietnam against USA, or Afghanistan against USSR), theorists such as Vital argue that generally small states, in conflict with more powerful ones, are limited in their ability to use force. Due to the limited capacity of the small states to use force and protect themselves, their vital preoccupation revolves around the element of security and response towards the external threatening environment. Concerned with security, a common characteristic of small states becomes their search for security through multilateral organizations and alliances (Hey, 2003, p.4). Steinsson and Thorhallsson (2017) name such small state's foreign policy as 'shelter' strategy. In their words "shelter is an alliance relationship where small states alleviate their political, economic and societal vulnerabilities by allying with large states and joining international or regional organizations" (p.10). Thus, it is typical for small states to pursue membership into regional and international organizations in order to ensure security and advance their foreign policy goals (Bailes, Thayer, & Thorhallsson, 2016; Thorhallsson, 2011). Another characteristic of small states' foreign policy behavior, is to compensate for their *inbuilt weakness*, which limits their foreign policy choices, by prioritizing their efforts and invest more (of their limited resources) to specific issues of greater relevance to them; by building coalitions with other small states or relying on technocratic international organizations' bodies in order to exert influence in international relations; by using their informal and flexible diplomatic forces to make decisions quickly; by benefiting from their self-perceived image as neutral and peaceful in gaining fact-finding, investigative and mediating roles in international issues; by focusing on developing soft power which renders them with economic and other benefits, etc. (Steinsson and Thorhallsson, 2017).

Is it then possible to find out and define what common characteristics do small states demonstrate in their foreign policy behavior? From the conducted research which tends to explain small states' foreign policy behavior, a long list of characteristics results. A summary of the general characteristics of small states' behavior is provided below (Hey, 2003, p.5):

- the scope of small states' foreign policy activities is rather small, perhaps also due to lack of or limited possession of essential resources.
- small states have short term goals and are limited to their closer geographic arena, as opposed to great states, whose goals are long termed and their actions are usually global.
- small states tend to behave morally, by supporting international principles and law.
- small states tend to rely on international organizations or multinational institutions, through which they respect and adopt international rules and law; they rely on superpowers for protection, partnership, and resources.

- small states tend to cooperate and avoid conflict, especially when major powers are involved, therefore they may act as good mediators; they also tend to choose neutral positions, whenever possible.

- security is an important factor in small states' foreign policy. To ensure their physical and political survival, small states may choose to join alliances or choose a neutral position.

- small states' foreign policy activity is curtailed by the international system, and they have far less options than the great powers.

According to Hey (2003), this list of characteristics is rough and often contradictory. For instance, it predicts how small states tend to remain neutral and at the same time it explains their tendency of joining defense alliances. Also, many of these points do not find a general applicability in all small states. Therefore, their applicability depends on the conditions or factors which determine their behavior. Depending on the circumstances, a small states foreign policy may be more active or more passive. Thus, a small state's way of responding to different conditions varies greatly, depending on the situation a state finds itself and the factors which influence a particular behavior.

2. Determinants of small states foreign policy behavior

In discussing the existing factors which may determine a small state's foreign policy behavior, it is necessary to account for several levels of analysis, each of which looks at such behavior from a particular stance, and each of which focuses over particular elements or factors that act as determinants of foreign policy. In the quest to analyze the security role of foreign policy, this article focuses on the systemic level, as the most appropriate level of analysis to explore the security factor in foreign policy behavior.

The conventional wisdom on the small states foreign policy behavior derives mainly from the systemic level of analysis. The systemic level focuses upon the external environment and stresses the need of small states for security as main determinants of their foreign policy behavior. This system is considered as a more adequate level for analyzing and explaining the small states' foreign policy behavior, as these states hold security and survival as their main preoccupation. As such, the small and weak states, which in this thesis will be used interchangeably, feel more threatened by the external environment for their security and survival than the great and powerful states. Thus, their foreign policy is defined more by the international environment constraints than by the domestic ones. Consequently, their foreign policy options or choices are curtailed and their space of maneuverability is limited. According to Wolfers (as cited in Elman, 1995), the fear of small states for survival is more of a variable than a constant. Depending on how much threatened a small state feels from external pressures, it will be more compliant with the structural rules of the international system. Due to the security factor, the variability of a small state foreign policy behavior is smaller than that of a big state, which is less constrained by the external environment. Rosenau similarly posits that the external environment is a more important factor when explaining the determinants of a small state's foreign policy, while the domestic factors may apply more in explaining a great state's foreign policy behavior (as cited in Elman, 1995, p.176). Other authors such as (Goetschel 1998, Lake 2009, Sherwood 2016, Thorhallsson and Steinsson 2017, etc.) also hold the security dilemma as the main factor which influences a small state's foreign policy behavior. Many of these authors are in line with Jervis' (1978) argument of small states having a smaller margin of error in response to external threats than big states. Hence, they deem the consequences for possible mistakes to be much more costly for smaller states. Thus, the small states, being small and weak, need to be more attuned to external constraints and act more prudently towards the external circumstances. According to Sutton (1987, p.20), due to the weakness and security objective of small states, they are incapable of acting as agents of change within the international system, and their role is rather passive-reactive.

Another assumption about the small states foreign policy advocated by realists and neo-realists is that small states, which are weak, are most likely to bandwagon with a threatening state than to balance against it. Waltz (1979) explains this behavior of small states from the international level perspective, in which small states are more vulnerable to external aggressiveness and therefore tend to ally with the powers which threaten their security, in order to avoid attacks. This behavior is most likely to take place when the small state finds no other more suitable alternative for alliance with great powers. Labs (as cited in Elman, 1995) holds similar stance when explaining the small state's choice of balancing or bandwagoning against a powerful threat, maintaining that it would depend on the other options for alliance available to a small state.

3. Security oriented foreign policy

Regarding the security function of foreign policy, Thorlthansson and Steinsson (2017) argue that not all small states are affected in the same manner by security challenges. The challenges may differ and so does a state's adopted security policy. The external and domestic unique circumstances dictate the security approach that a small state undertakes. Therefore, not all small states' responses to security threats are applicable to other states. But many scholars agree that small states adopt multilateralist approach both in pursuing their foreign policy goals but also in restraining potential threats. Based on Hey's (2003) characterizing elements of small states' foreign policy, security is an important factor in their foreign policy and in order to preserve it, they tend to join alliances or choose neutral positions. As presented above, other authors such as Rothstein and Keohane also maintain similar positions regarding a small state's search for security through alliances and membership in international organizations. Logically, we may infer that any factor, external or internal, which may affect a state's prospects of joining international organizations, would ultimately risk the state's security, and consequently become a security threat to it. Focused on the external factors and their influence over a state's international integration processes, the question becomes: what kind of foreign policy response does a state adopt in the face of external constraints which block the security prospects that a small state tries to achieve through international integrations? Before reviewing existing approaches of a small state towards external constraints/threats which undermine its security, we must understand thoroughly the concept of security itself and the types of threats to it.

3.1. The concept of security

As vital of a concept that security is, at the same time, its meaning is often disputed and contested by different scholars (Buzan 1991, 1998, 2003, Gaspers 2005, Collins 2007, Jolly and Ray 2007, Kaldor 2007, etc.). Because of a conceptual vagueness that the security concept entails, the defining process of it is the more difficult. Nevertheless, most of the definitions emphasize a common element: the existence of a threat to certain values of the referent object, or more precisely, threats which endanger its survival. But different theories attach different meanings to the concept of threat and security. Hence, the realist theory adopts an objective view of security, defining it as the main preoccupation of a state, which tries to preserve it by eliminating or managing threat through force and interaction with other states (Nye and Keohane, 2001). The constructivist theory conceptualizes security in subjective terms. It defines security as an outcome of interactions and negotiations of various actors with certain values and identities. Accordingly, security is reached not by eliminating an objective threat but rather by changing the perception towards it and overcoming fear among one another. Wolfers, in this context, draws a distinction between security in the objective sense, which implies lack of threat, and security in the subjective sense, implying the lack of fear, claiming that both elements are necessary for security to be achieved. The interpretation of security has also varied. To the end of the Cold War period, security has been interpreted as state-centered,

where the state was considered as an absolute category, while the ultimate goal was the protection of sovereignty, in terms of people, political system, and territorial integrity. This concept is otherwise termed as *national security*. But, after the end of Cold War, the concept of security shifts attention from state to human related issues. It focuses on human rights, safety, and sustainable development (Paris 2001, p.88).

This paper builds mainly on Buzan's security theorizing (1998, 2003), since he looks into the concept of security from a much broader perspective than the traditional view. Buzan's framework of security may help us understand the concept of security in a much wider sense, which goes beyond the traditional approach. He builds his theoretical framework starting off the argument that the rational theory on security, which analyzes the latter based on the concepts of *war* and *peace*, reduces its complexity to solely a 'struggle for power'. This theory, whereas functional during the World Wars, where states fought for power, in the period after the Cold War, resulted as insufficiently explanatory. It is much less self-explanatory if the focus is on the small states' security. As described above, the way small states function and securitize issues differs from that of the big states and even among the small states them. Thus, to reduce security only to the struggle for power, would make it difficult to explain many empirical cases of small states. In his work *People, States and Fear* Buzan (1991) supports other authors' (ex. Wolfers, 1952) claims on the difficulty of defining security, yet argues that this should not discourage students from further research into this concept. He admits that security is rather multi-faceted, as he goes about analyzing several interacting levels and sectors, while unfolding security complexes. Through a constructivist approach he doesn't accept a given state of security, but analyses every element which he considers as a constituent part of the security package, thus offering a more holistic understanding over security (Stone, 2009). This approach, besides the main object of reference, the state, also includes other levels (international and sub-unit levels) and several sectors (military, political, economic, societal, and environmental).

Building on Buzan's security theorizing may provide reliable and holistic explanations on the interrelations of internal and external threats a small state faces, which seem to travel not only across different levels of analysis but also across different security sectors. The focus, as already mentioned above, will be on the state, as the main unit of the theoretical analysis. However, this doesn't mean that the other levels (international and sub-unit levels) do not interfere in issues of security with the state (unit) level, as the main referential object of security. Buzan (1983) offers a useful framework for analyzing these levels and sector interactions, by maintaining the focus on the level of the state. He goes about explaining such an interaction by describing three main components of the state, as objects of its security.

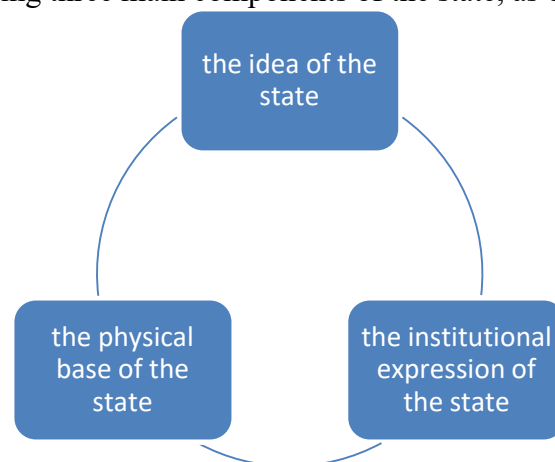


Fig. 1 Taken from Buzan (1983, 40)

This model presents the main components a state should possess, beginning with its physical base, which is mainly composed of its population and territory, the governing institutions, which govern its people and territory, and the existence of an *idea of the state* in people's minds, through which the state applies its authority over them. Beginning with the most concrete component of the state, its physical base, the threats directed towards it are consequently the easiest to identify. Composed of mainly its population and territory, the physical base of a state may be threatened by both external factors, through invasion (ex. Russian annexation of Crimea), and internal factors, through secession (ex. Catalans of Spain). Hence such kinds of threats are mostly territorial. Territorial threats, as described by realists, are the most typical form of threat towards a state; nonetheless, this form is incomprehensive of other types of threats.

Buzan's elaboration of the *idea of the state* would be the most appropriate model for studying small state's non-typical security issues. In order to understand the idea of the state, Buzan argues that the national security concept can be of help. This term implies that the object of security is the *nation* itself. If we accept this premise, then we should further analyze the relationship between the *state* and the *nation*. Buzan defines the nation as "a large group of people sharing the same cultural heritage...and normally live in one area" (1983, p.45). If the state and the nation happen to coincide, then the state would serve the purpose of defending and expressing the nation and all it entails. If we can define a state as a single, unified nation, then this definition would provide us with an understanding on what is the highest security priorities of this state and which values are mostly threatened. The problem here is, however, that only a few states would fit into this model. There are many cases where state and nation don't coincide, such as cases of nations which don't have their own state (Kurds, Palestinians), states whose nation lives scattered in other states (Germans, Albanians), or states in which more than one nation coexist (Bosnia, India).

By analyzing the link between the *state* and the *nation*, Buzan develops four models of states. The first is the *nation-state* (Japan, France), in which the nation is older than the state; thus, the nation contributes to the emergence of the state. In these cases, the state and the nation are one. The relationship between the two is quite strong and this link gives the state an internal legitimacy and a strong identity in its international relations. The second model is the *state-nation* (USA), which stands in opposition to the first model. According to it, it is the state, which through a top-down approach, constitutes a nation, by projecting unified cultural elements, which are embraced by all diverse populations living in that state. According to Buzan, this model can be tried to be applied to multi-national states as well, however, this would demand the subordination of indigenous people in their territory, which is much more difficult than achieving the subordination of immigrant people who have come to an empty or loosely held territory. The third model is called *part-nation state* (Somalia). In this model fit all cases in which the main nation-state exists, but parts of this nation live as minorities in neighboring states. The idea of unifying this nation-state, according to Buzan, may represent a serious case of security threat. The fourth model is that of *multi-national states* (Bosnia). In these states co-exist at least two full nations. Buzan divides these states into *federal* and *imperial*. In federal states, these nationalities do not necessarily try to impose upon themselves an artificial structure of a nation-state, nor do they attempt to dominate entirely the state structure. The security implications for these states are related with the fact that they lack a unifying principle among these nationalities, hence are more characterized by separatism or dismemberment, or even foreign intervention. Nationalism may convert into a security issue for these states, as was the case with Yugoslavia. In imperial states, one of the nations may try to dominate the whole state structure for its own benefit. Within these states, the dominant nation may attempt to eliminate other nations, in its efforts to create a sort of a nation-state. Such attempts may range from use of violence to softer approaches such as cultural absorption.

This nation may even use the state machinery to maintain its dominant position, without eliminating or absorbing other nations, and it may also act as if it leads a non-nationalist policy which tries to overcome national issues, but in fact maintains its status-quo. Both the federal and imperial states are endangered, in terms of their security, by national divisions. According to Buzan, the stability in these states depends on the ability of the dominant nation to safeguard its control over the state structures. Buzan argues that the imperial state is one of the most endangered types by political threats, either by internal developments or by external interventions, which may undermine the dominance of a nation over the state, bringing the latter on the verge of collapse (1991, pp.44-49).

Elaborating on the institutions, Buzan's argument, which may mostly resonate with this work, is that unstable *institutions* may represent a source of threat to a state. Such institutional instability may come as a result of the lack of a general population's support, which in turn results from the fact that the idea of the state is quite weak. In other words, if the nations that constitute such state do not agree among themselves on the idea of the state, this may shatter the basis for the legitimacy required for exercising power (1983, pp.60). But what if the idea of the state is also contested externally? How may such external contestation threaten to worsen the internal instability? How would such a state react towards threats that come both from the external and internal environments? Buzan divides the states into the ones which belong in either one of these specters and the ones which lay between the two. In relation to the questions above, my research interest concentrates precisely in the states that lie in the center of the two specters, or which in an equal way face both internal and external insecurities (Argentina, Ethiopia, and Pakistan). What should be securitized in these states? In order to answer this question, the level and meaning of the threat should be evaluated. Buzan argues that it is almost impossible to measure or even define these threats, much less distinguish between a domestic and external threat, unless we use the impressionist approach, which claims that states are not the same in terms of their political integrity. In other words, states may be weak not only relative to the power they possess (within the international system), but also relative to the internal dispute of the idea about it and its institutions. In such cases, what is it that needs to be secured?

Buzan argues that a weak state is one whose idea and institutions are weak. He illustrates this argument through the examples of China and the Soviet Union, which may seem strong states in terms of power, but at the same time, are weak states in the sense that they lack a comprehensive idea of the state and an internal consensus on an organizing ideology. As opposed to the strong states, the identification of external threats to the weak states is more difficult and ambiguous. This is true since in weak states, the idea and institutions are internally contested, to the point of violence, thus, they (idea and institutions) do not represent a strong point of reference for national security. In Buzan's (1983) words:

When there is almost no idea of a state and the governing institutions are themselves the main threat to individuals, national security almost ceases to have content and one must look to individuals and sub-state units for the most meaningful security referents. Foreign intervention becomes much harder to assess in national security terms, because outside powers will be helping factions which are in conflict... [In weak states] who should be classed enemy and who ally simply depends on one's point of view... (p.68)

What we can conclude from Buzan's elaboration of the state's three components is that they may be affected differently by certain threats, since there is no internal consensus on what the national interests, which must be defended against such threats, are. Hence, they give different meanings to the concept of national security, which go beyond the mere military sense. As states are so diverse in structure and circumstances, national security is difficult to be studied in general terms. Buzan suggests that the true essence of this concept may be captured only by linking it to concrete cases of study.

4.1.2. Threats to security

Whereas the definition of security is tightly related to the factors which threaten it, the concept of threat is often difficult to grasp, or define in precise terms. It has furthermore endured evolutions, gradually losing its traditional sense and gaining new attributes in the post-Cold War period. In the conventional wisdom, the threat to a state's security is considered to derive from another state. The security studies, dominated at large by the realist theories, have explained the security of a state through military terms, where the state is central to their analysis (see Morgenthau, 1966). But in the aftermath of the Cold War, these explanations have many times resulted in comprehensive. For instance, the emergence of the EU project, influenced a change in the world order as conceived by the realists, while the dissolution of federations such as the USSR or Yugoslavia, brought to the surface a number of other threats to the security of states. For instance, besides military threats from other states, a state may also be threatened internally by minorities or ethnic groups (Baylis et. al, 2011, p.233). Baldwin mentions another threat, the so called 'communist threat' which has persisted during the Cold War, but argues that the former hasn't been specified for whether it represents an ideological, military, economic threat or a combination of all the above (1997, p.15).

The common denominator of the above authors is that besides the traditional military or territorial threats, states face a number of non-traditional threats, be they economic or social threats, cyberattacks, terrorism, environmental threats, etc. In order to understand the type of threat that a small state may face, and thereafter the response towards it, a definition of *threat* is necessary. Singer defines threat as "capability coupled with intent" (1958, p.94) This definition however, applied to the confrontation of the major powers, the US and USSR during the Cold War period, defines *capability* in military terms. Later, Buzan (1983, p.57) completes the concept of threat by combining two features: a threat by force (capabilities) and by ideas (ideology) to a state as the object of security. Besides providing a more comprehensive definition for threats, Buzan also categorizes all known threats into five main sectors: the military, economic, political, societal, and environmental sector. He determines each sector based on the type of security relationship. Thus, the military sector encompasses relationships of forceful coercion. Relationships of governance, authority, and recognition develop within the political sector. Relationships about the collective identity are categorized under the societal sector. The economic sector represents relationships of trade, finance, etc. And lastly, the environmental sector expresses the relationship between the environment and the human activity. Moreover, the location of security dynamics varies from one sector to the other. The military, political, and societal sector seem to be dominated by regional security complexes, while the economic and ecological sectors by global security dynamics, with the latter sector were being impacted, at large, by local levels as well. Additionally, each sector seems to produce its own units, such as the state, which may then show up in other units as well.

Although when analyzing the concept of national security some of its threats emerge in the surface, in order to understand fundamentally the former, the nature of the threat and the objects towards which they are directed are a prerequisite. Linking Buzan's framework of threats with our research interest into non-typical security threats, suggests the delving of threats which are related to two sectors: political and societal. These two sectors are of particular importance to this work, since they relate to the idea of the state, more specifically to the organizing ideology and the institutions which express it, the two of the three state components, discussed above. The analysis of these two sectors would provide us with insights not only into the nature of threats, their position in the specter of threats, but also into the way

a state may respond to them, by politicizing or securitizing them, and furthermore, the implications such response may have for the state cohesion itself.

4.1.3. The political sector

According to Buzan, political threats tend to emerge in cases where the idea of the state and its institutions are internally contested. However, similarly to the military ones, political threats may also emerge in the form of external penetration. “Political threats stem from the great battle of ideas, information, and traditions, which is the underlying justification for the international anarchy” (1983, p.77). Hence the idea of the state, besides being threatened internally, may become externally threatened as well, if contested by another state. Buzan et al. (1998) define political threats as follows:

Political threats are aimed at the organizational stability of the state. Their purpose may range from pressuring the government on a particular policy...to fomenting secessionism...The idea of the state, particularly its national identity, and organizing ideology, and the institutions which express it are the normal target of political threats. Since the state is essentially a political entity, political threats may be as much feared as military ones. This is particularly so if the target is a weak state (p.142).

Establishing the argument that political threats are directed towards the state’s sovereignty, Buzan et al. claim that they may be directed both to the internal and the external legitimacy of the state, the legitimacy being the domestic pillar of a state. Threats to the internal legitimacy of the state have to do with the ideologies or ideas and other issues which define the state. External threats may also target the domestic legitimacy, in other words, the internal idea of the state (1998, p.144).

Since the physical base of the state is mostly related to other sectors (such as the military, economic, and environmental one), the idea of the state and its institutions, as the two other components of the state, would be more appropriately dealt with within the political sector. Comparing these two components, the idea prevails over the institutions, since the latter are built upon the idea which serves for consolidating the state. Typical examples of such ideas, which help hold a state together, are nationalism and/or ethno-nationalism, which oftentimes rise above the civic aspect, and the political ideology. Since institutions are created on the basis of these ideas, a threat to the latter may also put to risk the political order. Threats to the political order may be of different kinds, such as threats to the government, to the territorial integrity, or to the existence of the state itself, by not recognizing its autonomy/independence.

The problem here, however, is how to define *what is* and *what is not* a political threat, and moreover, who has the competence of making such decision. The question of what should be ‘defended’ in the case of political threats may produce ambiguous and contradicting answers. If we assume the government is the legitimate actor for securitizing political threats, the question is whether all political actors would interpret in the same way the issues that represent a ‘threat’ to the object of reference?

According to Buzan et al. (1998), the main element based on which a threat may be qualified as a political threat to the state is its *sovereignty*. The threat to sovereignty is ultimately considered a threat to the state. By equating sovereignty with self-determination, or with “the right to decide on the political form of the state without external forceful interference” (p.152), any type of external interference, which goes against such internal will about the form of the state, may be considered as a threat towards the state security. From here, we may derive that a typical political security issue involves a state, which for the sake of its sovereignty, tries to avoid threats by another actor, which is usually external, i.e. by another state. But this framework is further complicated if we are to apply it over weak states, where the nation and state do not coincide. In such cases, according to Buzan et al., the ethnic division, which in turn

is caused by other issues and then it is politicized, would be the main problem, as it has the tendency of causing instability. Such type of a weak state, questions its sovereignty in terms of self-determination, since it doesn't reflect an internal unity on the idea of the state's political form. In this case, such state would open up to external actors' influences, who may play a significant role. Through their actions, the external actors (i.e. states) may aggravate the existing fragmentations within a weak state. The question then becomes, which type of threats the state security action focuses upon and consequently how is the state-to-state security interaction built within a regional context?

Out of the nine categories of the threat types that Buzan et al. (1998) develop within the political sector, the first and third type may be resonate more closely with this paper. The first type, defined as *Intentional threats to (weak) states on the basis of their state-nation split*, contains security dilemmas which arise as a result of the inconsistency between the state and the nation and are reflected as secessionist or irredentist demands by internal actors, such as ethnic groups, or external actors, such as neighboring states. Such type of threats may undermine the stability of the state structures and its national ideology. They often are bilateral, trilateral, and link several sectors, especially the political with the societal one, but may also involve the military sector. The second type, named as the *Inadvertent, unit-based threat to state-nation vulnerable states*, includes threats which occur between two or more states due to their incompatibility in terms of their state organizing principles. In other words, the conflict between the two states may take place if the way state A defines itself is considered as a threat to state B and its policy, and vice-versa. Examples of a state's organizing principle may be its ideological basis, but also the material components of it, such as its territory. The national identity of a state, which is opposed by another state or by an entity within the state, is also an example of such organizing principle. Buzan et al. (1998) argue that such security dilemmas require that the involved parties self-reflect upon their identity and their concept of statehood (pp.150-157).

4.1.4. *Societal sector*

However, the political sector cannot explain entirely the concept of national security threats. Due to the term *national security* itself, this type of security requires delving into a more profound analysis that may go beyond the state. Accepting the premise that the state may not coincide with the nation, then the latter should be analyzed in its own right, and the societal sector may be of help in this direction. Although the societal may overlap with the political sector, it still has substantial differences from the latter. The concept *society* as opposed to the concept *state* is not fixed. As Buzan et al. (1998) state, "society is about identity, self-conception of communities, and of individuals identifying themselves as members of a community." As *identity* is the organizing concept of a society, a security threat would be any event which may threaten the survival of this identity. As opposed to the political sector, where the main value to be defended against threats is sovereignty, in the societal sector, this value is identity. Defense against threats in the societal sector therefore means defense of the identity, which may or may not correspond with the state borders. The identity should not necessarily be national; it may also be religious or racial, however, our focus in this work would be on the former one, i.e. on the national identity, as it may be more explanatory for our case of study (pp.119-210).

But both the societal and national terms are ambiguous and multi-faceted. Buzan et al.(1998) argue this is true since they are self-constructed elements which refer to an imaginary community that individuals wish to identify with. If we accept the premise that identity is a human construction, then the threats towards it are consequently constructed as factors which threaten the sense of "us". Buzan et al. identify two ways of responding towards these threats. The first way is through activities undertaken by the community itself. The second way is by

taking the issue to the political or military level, hence by placing it on the agenda of the state. If the issue is taken to the state level, then it may become resolved through legislation or political agreements. In this case, the societal sector merges with the political sector (p.122).

The referential object (or who is being threatened), according to the constructivist approach is what the main group treats, in a way or level, as the feeling that the “we” is being threatened. In the societal sector, “we” means the identity. The latter has taken different forms throughout time. But in the modern time, the nation is one of the main objects of reference within a society (1998, p.123). Buzan et al. analyze two scenarios when the nation is the threatened object: when the nation and the state align and when they don’t. If the state and the nation correspond more or less, those in power are usually the ones who make references to the nation and identity. Since the nation and state align, by referring to the nation, powerholders refer at the same time to the state and its sovereignty. In these cases, national and state threats usually merge together. In the cases where the nation and state don’t correspond, the object of reference are the minority nations, by actors who vary from the groups who demand separation and founding of their own state, to the ones who try to protect the identity of that minority. In these cases, national and state threats don’t always coincide.

Since identity is a social construction, the threats towards it depend on the way identity is constructed or on what is perceived as a vital value being threatened. Hence, if a nation controls a state, but represents a majority only by a marginal difference, then a natality increase in minority groups may represent a threat to it. Buzan, during the definition of threats in the societal sector, groups them into three categories: migration, vertical competition, and horizontal competition. The latter provides a theoretical framework which may resonate more closely with this work’s case of study. Horizontal competition operates in all levels. At the local level it describes situations where the minorities within a state are concerned about the domination by the majority. At the regional level the weak or small states are afraid of the influence of the stronger states. At the global level some smaller civilizations fear the impact of the greater ones (pp.123-126).

5. Foreign policy action/options in the face of external threats to security

As presented above, the system level of analysis discusses security issues, such as survival and independence, as the main preoccupation of small and weak states within the international system. Depending on the external threat, its nature but also its intensity, a small state may project different foreign policy behaviors or actions. In his research about *The Foreign Policy of Sweden during the Mosul Crisis*, Rogers (2007) constructs a theoretical framework which explains the behavior of a small state’s foreign policy based on the presence and intensity of an external threat. The small state’s perception of an external threat may motivate in the former certain foreign policy behavior such as an anti-balance behavior, in order to ensure protection for itself. In the contrary, if there doesn’t exist any potent threat for a small state, its foreign policies may be oriented more towards supporting international rules and finding of solutions within the international organizations. As he states in his article, “The presence of an external threat to the existence of a small state is thus a critical factor in considering the options open to small states” (p.354). Considering this factor and the way of how small states perceive their position in the international environment, the author explains that a small state’s foreign policy behavior may be based on four strategic options: realism, isolationism, idealism, and expansionism.

The realist approach places security in a central position. If small states perceive that their security is threatened by external factors, considering their size, and weak and limited military capacities, they tend to project anti-balancing behavior. In the face of external threats, small states tend to side with the strongest and the most powerful states in order to ensure protection for them. Rogers describes the isolationist approach as an extreme form of realism.

The states which adopt such strategy tend to protect themselves from getting involved into conflicts. For this reason, they either withdraw or play a passive role in international relations, maintaining a rather observant role over the events. The idealists base their foreign policy on values and principles. Employing moralistic attitudes, the premise of idealist foreign policy is relying on international rules of law to ensure security and protection. The expansionist approach of foreign policy has to do with the tendency of the small states to realize their goals through an enhanced role in the international relations (p.355).

Rogers (2007) relates the foreign policy alternatives of a small state with the presence of an external threat to their existence. Depending on the perceived degree or intensity of the external threat by a small state, the foreign policy options of such state may range from limited to multiple, and consequently the actions of foreign policy from highest to lowest. Hence, Rogers relates the realist approach with the highest foreign policy action. If a state perceives an external threat to be salient to their survival or to represent an imminent danger, then their foreign policy options are quite limited. In such situations, the state must demonstrate high foreign policy action, making quick choices which would be based on a realistic judgement of the available options, in order to avoid negative consequences for its security. In the contrary, if threats aren't perceived as imminent, then small states have greater foreign policy maneuverability. Thus, states may adopt an isolationist approach if they assess that this approach would help preserve their security through maintaining a status-quo towards external threats. Acting passively in their foreign policy, small states, through a status-quo behavior, expect that the external threats will diminish or disappear with time on their own. The idealist strategy is adopted by a small state if the external threat is perceived in vague terms to their security, or if such threat may represent an issue for the security only in the long term. In such case, the foreign policy action may be low and oriented towards international protection of security, through organizations such as the UN or the ICJ (pp.355-356).

Regarding external conditions and state's reaction towards them, many authors (Handel 1990, Hey 2003, Browning 2006) argue that a small state's foreign policy action/initiative depends on the volatility of the external environment, respectively on the perception of a salient external threat to its survival by another state. Nonetheless, such changeability in the international arena, according to some authors (Browning 2004, Gvalia et. al 2011), is not necessarily caused only by external threats but also by opportunities that motivate such high-level actions. Although conventional (Vital 1971, Jervis 1978, Snyder 1991) thinking argues that the external circumstances pressure small states to act prudently towards them, as their 'margin of error' is small and often 'beyond repair', the post-Cold War created external circumstances which represented opportunity rather than constraint for small state's foreign policy action (Browning 2006). From here, we may predict two modes of foreign policy behavior based on the state's perception about the external constraints' variation and their effect on the security of the state. On one hand, if we accept the conventional position, we may argue that if external constraints are threatening and unlikely to change from a status-quo, then the small states would not undertake active foreign policy initiative. But if we extend this proposition by maintaining that if a state considers that its enhanced external actions may produce significant benefits, then we'd argue that such a state would pursue a higher level of foreign policy initiative, regardless of the (changed or not) position of the external factors. On the contrary, if the state perceives the status quo as more favorable, the state would not undertake foreign policy action. In this case, a small state's foreign policy action or inaction would depend on the perception of meaningful threats or potential benefits to their security.

6. Discussion and Conclusions

To find out whether there is any pattern of small state's foreign policy behavior, in its efforts to enhance external and internal security, it is necessary to synthesize some of the most relevant theories which explain the behavior of foreign policy towards external conditioning factors or threats. One of them is the realist theory, which perceives the small state's security as its main objective (Vital, 1971). This theory argues that small states face greater external threats to their existence and independence in comparison to bigger states. Hence, the small states' main foreign policy preoccupation becomes ensuring security of their survival. In relation to this function, among the main characteristics of small state's foreign policy, presented mainly through the liberal perspective, are the endeavors of small states to shield under the protective umbrella of larger international structures, which they strive to achieve through membership in alliances and multilateral organizations (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2009, Chong and Maass 2010, Johnson & Leeds, 2011). Hence, we'd argue that any threat or constrain to the accession of a small state in international organizations and alliances, ultimately becomes a threat to the security of the targeted state. In the context of this paper, such threats, which lead to foreign policy blockades of the targeted state, were defined in the literature review as political and societal threats, directed towards the obstruction of international integrations and against the state's national identity (Gellner 1964, Buzan 1983 and 2003, Zahariadis, 1994). The response of the state towards the external threats would depend upon the perception of the threat's intensity and its meaning to security. According to the theory on *coercive diplomacy* (George 1992, Rothchild 2002, Lund 2003, Jentleson 2006), the targeted state acts towards an external threat based on its rational perception towards the threat. Hence, in line with the constructivist approach, we can imply that the small state's position towards external threats is closely tied to its *perception* of the effects that such threats may produce over its security. And in order to find out about such perceived effects, security, in terms of what/who is being threatened, should be simultaneously determined. In the context of this paper, based on a synthetization of the above theories, two hypothetical conclusions about the small state's response can be derived: If a small state assesses that security lies in the political sector, namely in the international integration processes (as its main foreign policy objective), and the external threats are potent enough to block such processes, then the tendency of this state may be to resolve or mitigate the external threats, by accepting external demands. If, however, a state considers that security lies in the societal sector, namely in the protection of its identity (which may be ethno-national), and the acceptance of external demands may lead to the redefinition of that identity, then a small state's tendency may be to engage less with the resolution of these threats or may choose to maintain the status quo, even at the cost of remaining outside of some relevant international organizations.

These hypothetical assumptions reveal two important aspects of a small state's foreign policy. The first aspect is the security role that a small state's foreign policy tries to project internationally, by integrating the state into alliances or multilateral organizations. As such, any threats, deriving from external or internal factors diminishes the security role of foreign policy. Such threats include not only typical military ones, but also political and societal threats. The second aspect is the security role that foreign policy tries to project internally, by providing domestic stability through international integrations, given that there is internal consensus on foreign policy objectives. Consequently, existing threats to foreign policy objectives risk not only the external security of the small state in the international arena, but also the domestic security. Since foreign policy may act as security enhancer both internally and nationally, its response towards threats would ultimately produce a double effect: internationally and nationally.

In conclusion to the above analysis, we may state that that a small state's foreign policy is indeed a role player in enhancing state security, both within the international and national

domain. Hence, the more successful foreign policy is in carrying out its objectives, the greater is the small state's security, in terms of positioning itself within powerful alliances and multilateral organizations. Also, successful foreign policy which enjoys domestic consensus also provides internal security, by enabling stability and integration among groups, who may otherwise be divided. Whereas this paper shines light over the security dimension, and how it reveals foreign policy's double role over international and national integration, other aspects of it, such as economic prosperity, may also be investigated in future research for their potential effect over a small state's international posture and national stability.

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