

SMALL STATES: A TOOL FOR ANALYSIS

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Any attempt to study foreign policy must start by employing certain research tools to analyze the factors that shape and condition the external behavior of the unit under study, and accordingly choose or disregard the facts and mass of data encountered. In other words, the problem at hand should be approached in such a way as to:

- a) order, systematically study, and relate the information gathered; and
- b) explain behavior in a meaningful way.

To counter this problem students of foreign policy often find it profitable to classify units under study so as to develop order and to establish significant variables.¹ The aim of this paper is to suggest the employment of the small state concept to select, bring together, and relate systematically foreign policy behavior data.²

Foreign policy research is to find out 'why' and 'how' a state behaves as it does; to arrive at generalizations; and to provide data for further studies to lead to regularities, recurrent patterns, etc.

To do this this "one has to assess..... relative potencies (of independant variables). That is, one has to decide which set of variables contribute most to the external behavior, which rank next in influence. There is no need to specify exactly how large a slice of the pie is accounted for by each sets of variables..... (for) a general framework within which data are organized."³

1 See James Rosenau, *The Scientific study of Foreign Policy*, The Free Press, New York, 1971.

2 For an opposite view see Peter Baehr, 'Small States: A Tool For Analysis?', *World Politics*, April, 1975, Vol., XXVII, No. 3.

3 James Rosenau, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

In this task the small state concept can be used as an analytical tool and as a conceptual framework. Using it, a conceptual framework may be constructed as a fundamental frame of reference through which data can be selected, organized, and relative potencies of variables may be established.

A brief analysis of Turkish foreign policy during the Second World War as a case-study may show the usefulness of the small state concept as an analytical tool in explaining foreign policy behavior.

It is indeed very difficult, if not impossible, to arrive at a complete definition of a small state.⁴ Nor is it always desirable. What is needed is to be able to justify the appropriateness of the concept in the foreign policy study of a particular state—in this case Turkish foreign policy during the Second World War. Can Turkey of the 1940's be considered a small power? David Vital considers an underdeveloped country with a population in the range of 20–30 million belonging to the category of small states.⁵ Accordingly, Turkey of the '40's can justifiably be considered a small state. On the other hand, Erling Bjørl thinks that the 'small state' adjective should be considered for "a state in its relationships with greater states".⁶ In this relativistic approach, too, to think of Turkey as a small state is appropriate and analytically useful for, at the time, Turkey's most important and extensive external relations were with great powers, namely Britain, Germany and the Soviet Union. Her foreign policy behavior was geared, most of the time, to their actions and reactions. One should also add that the Turkish leaders at the time perceived themselves as the representatives of a small state. The existence of the perceptual dimension⁷ is yet another

4 For a brief summary of different approaches to the problem of definition see N. Amstrup, "The Perennial Problem of Small States: A Survey of Research Efforts," *Cooperation and Conflict*, XI, 1976, pp. 163–182.

5 David Vital, *Inequality of States: A Study of Small Power in International Relations*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1967, p. 8.

6 Erling Bjørl 'The Small State in International Politics', Schou, August and Brundtland, Arne Olav (Eds.), *Small States in International Relations*, Alquist and Wiksell, Stockholm 1971 (Nobel Symposium 17), p. 28

7 For the perceptual and psychological dimension see Robert Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers*, Columbia University Press, New York and London 1968 (esp. Chapter I).

reason why Turkey can justifiably be considered a small state. "Professor Bert F. Hoselitz... has said that he may not be able to define an underdeveloped area, but he certainly can recognize one when he is there".⁸ In the same vein, a small state can be recognized even if it can not be defined.

The fundamental frame of reference for a small power, within which she ultimately has to act, is characterised by *limitations* – limited capabilities, limited resources, limited interests, etc., and *vulnerability* – vulnerability to coercion, to pressure, threats, etc. In its relations with the exterior world the small state is faced with a preponderance of "extra", usable force. That is, to put it in simpler terms, the small state is the weaker party in the relationship. Since "limitations of capabilities is the most fundamental restraint upon foreign policy"⁹ one can say that the very condition of being a small state has a profound impact on the external relations of such a power. Noting that foreign policy is governmental activity directed towards the external environment with the purpose of either;

- 1) Inducing change in the external environment, or
- 2) Reacting to "inputs" from that environment so as to limit their consequences to acceptable levels,

it is then by necessity conditioned by capabilities and restraints. Capabilities and limitations, therefore, are the key criteria in assessing the unit's strength. Thus a small state which is weak by definition, has a distinctive feature in its foreign relations; "that fundamentally, and in the long run, it leads a defensive life"¹⁰. The aim of its foreign policy is "to avoid, mitigate or postpone conflict".^{11*}

8 Quoted from George I. Blanksten, "International Politics and Foreign Policy in Developing Systems" in Barry Farrell (Ed.). *Approaches to Comparative and International Politics*, Northwestern University press, Evanston, 1966, p. 120.

9 Joseph Frankel, *International Politics: Conflict and Harmony*, Penguin Books, 1973, p. 175.

10 David Vital, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 149.

* This, of course, should not be construed as meaning that small states are necessarily non-aggressive or non-violent although they have often been considered to be so. This would be theoretically wrong-headed considering "that the state and violence are synonymous". This inner characteristic is extended to, and reflected by, external behavior. (See Krippendorff Ekkehart, "The state as a focus of Peace Research", Peace Research Society; Papers, XVI, The Rome Conference, 1970, pp. 48-60 and p. 55

Even a casual study of Turkish foreign policy during the Second World War shows how it was consistent with this maxim of small-state behavior. Even before the war, for example, the tripartite alliance with Britain and France (October 1939) had a protocol appended to it which said: "The obligations undertaken by by virtue of the above mentioned treaty cannot compel that country to take action having as its effect, or involving as its consequence, entry into armed conflict with the Soviet Union". And between 1939-45, Turkey, then a newly emerged, barely 20 year old nation state, found herself in the midst of the greatest armed conflict of all times. Amidst the destruction and havoc that followed Hitler's attempt at world conquest, Turkish leaders, conscious of their country's limitations and vulnerabilities, and intent on preserving its independence and territorial integrity, decided upon a course which seemed both dangerous and impractical. All the geographic entities surrounding Turkey were important theatres of war: Soviet Union was the major theatre of war where only Germany employed some 5,5 million troops, more than 4,500 tanks, about 5,000 aircraft and no less than 48,000 artillery. Soviet Union alone suffered some 20 million dead; Persia was occupied by the Soviets and the British; Iraq, under Geylani, could not escape the conflict either; Syria was embroiled in the war first as the part of one of the warring metropolises, and later as the contested area between the Vichy and the Free French; Mediterranean and the Aegean were major sea theatres including their major islands and ports; Bulgaria participated in the war; and finally Greece was overrun by the invading forces.

Then, perhaps, it was not an exaggeration when Churchill said that Turkey had no choice but to enter the war if she cherished her independence. If not, he continued, all her neighbours would be swallowed, she'd be left alone and defenceless. She would thus be an irresistible booty for Hitler. The British minister in Yugoslavia, Sir Ronald Campbell, bluntly summarized the grim facts for the small nations of Eastern Europe as follows: that they "would have to decide whether they would become (Germany's) vassals or defend their independence"¹² that

12 J. B. Hoptner, *Yugoslavia in Crisis. 1934-1941*, Colombia University Press, New York and London, 1963, p. 145.

is, fight with the allies. In short, it was thought that there were two options for countries like Turkey: they would either drift towards the Axis or resist fascist aggression by joining the Allies and entering the war. In other words, they must have fought or expect to be 'swallowed'. There was no other way, or so it was thought without taking into account the 'instinctive' will of the small states to remain outside conflict. Neutrality was not possible (it was also deemed to be immoral as Molotov had had liked to imply often) and it was precisely that policy the Turkish leaders have opted for. Nor was it consistent with the concept of 'heroism' prevalent at the time, as Mussolini's damning judgement showed: "... to stay neutral until the end of the war would make us play in the second division among the European powers"¹³ as, he said on another occasion, they "write history"¹⁴. Moral arguments and legal points advanced against it notwithstanding,¹⁵ the fact is that Turkey was successful in achieving what she wanted to avoid conflict. If "for the small state diplomacy is the tool of statecraft in whose use it can on occasion hope to excel"¹⁶ the Turkish leaders have indeed showed remarkable diplomatic expertise.

A senior Turkish diplomat summarized the Turkish policy to Ribbentrop in 1938: "Turkey wants to follow a neutralist path... Turkey does not need a revisionist policy. Turkey is aware of the fact that she has to cope with her internal development in peace and that she ought to regain the century she lost..... Turkey will never return to the imperialist foreign policy of the Ottoman Empire."¹⁷ In 1939 the new Turkish ambassador to London was sent with the following instruction directly from the president of the Republic:

1) If war breaks out Turkey will remain neutral; and,

13 Galeazzo Ciano, *Diario: 1939-43*, Rizzoli Editore, Milano, 1946, p. 244, Jan. 23, 1940.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 283, April II, 1939

15 For a criticism see George Kirk, "Turkey", *The war and the Neutrals*, Toynbee, Arnold and Veronica, Royal Institute of International Relations, London, 1956, pp. 345-366.

16 A. Baker Fox, *The Power of Small States: Diplomacy in World War II*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1959, p. 2.

17 Quoted from Doğan Avcıoğlu, *Millî Kurtuluş Tarihi (History of National Liberation)* İstanbul Matbaası, İstanbul, 1974, Vol. 3, p. 1474.

2) It will engage in armed conflict only when attacked.”¹⁸ This point was reiterated many times during the war: On December 1943 a governmental decision was conveyed to the British Embassy in Ankara which repeated that “Turkey will never be pushed into the war with the full understanding of the consequences that such refusal might entail”.¹⁹ The same year a future Foreign Minister warned the British ambassador thus: “I will repeat you those with sincerity and deep feelings of friendship: Turkey is determined to refuse to enter the war... She will not accept to be pushed into the war and will certainly react strongly against any *fait-accomplis* to involve her in the conflict”²⁰.

For a small state the risks to engage in an armed conflict with a militarily superior power can be minimised either by:

1) exercising utmost care not to create new conflicts while eliminating existing, potential or actual ones to a degree to preclude use of force by the opponent;

2) ensuring that an armed aggression would be prohibitively costly, so that the costs to be incurred by the aggressor would be incommensurable with the benefits it can expect;

3) Allying itself with other(s); or 4) Capitulating

Turkey had used the first alternative extensively during the Second World War. She thus helped the British forces in the Aegean islands close to the Turkish coast, to alleviate the strategic need to secure Turkish ports by force. She prevented the Allied bombing of the Rumanian oil fields from her territory so as not to make their defence contingent upon Germany's securing Turkish territory by force.

The second alternative was an important weapon in the hands of the leaders of small states. Switzerland, for instance, was saved from a German attack to a considerable extent by its determination and ability to inflict a cost to the German army out of proportion to the value of the country. Turkey was among those small powers that Peter Calvocoressi aptly called

18 *Ibid.*, p. 1479.

19 T. C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı, *İkinci Dünya Savaşı Yılları (Years of the Second World War)*, Ankara, p. 6.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

"weak but not meek"²¹. As an example, one can point out the extensive military deployment and mobilization in the Thrace against Germany and Bulgaria. Turkish leaders, on numerous occasions, clearly declared their determination to make as costly as possible any attempt of aggression on Turkey. Even in 1941 when Germany was the sole and undisputed master of Europe (and in alliance with Turkey's neighbour in the North-The Soviet Union), İnönü could write to Hitler that "Turkey cannot view her independence and territorial integrity from the vantage point of politico-military combinations between this or that power blocks and cannot accept the definition of her sacred rights in terms of the victories of a particular foreign nation. Precisely because of this, Turkey will react most strongly against any attack against her territory... I would reassure his excellency that presently the Turkish army will follow the same course of behavior *vis-à-vis* the German armed forces if they don't oblige us to change our attitude"²².

Furthermore, leaders of small states need to win the test of nerves and resoluteness against heavy odds. Turkey as a relatively homogenous society (a domestic variable), had in abundance of what Raymond Aron called the "defensive power" of such small societies. Certainly, homogeneity alone cannot supply this "defensive power". Small states must have other attributes. A. Fox reached the conclusion that small powers' potential to resist Great Powers in times of crisis is in their diplomats' and leaders' abilities²³. David Vital had this conclusion to drive from the experiences of another small-power-Czechoslovakia: "The case of Benes's Czechoslovakia calls attention to the common truth that over and beyond the complex interplay between human and material resources available to a government and the nature of the internal and external opposition to it, the capacity to pursue an autonomous national policy with any measure of success is a function of the *will of the national leaders to do so*. For while the outcome of any conflict-and *a fortiori* of an armed conflict- obviously depends, in the first instance, on the balance of objective and intrinsic att-

21 Peter Calvocoressi, *World order and new states*, Preager, New York, 1962, p. 34.

22 T. C. Dışişleri Bakanlığı, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

23 A. Baker Fox, *op. cit.*,

tributes of the parties to the conflict, where the will to employ those attributes is lacking, or where it is paralysed by the apparent disproportion of relative strength, or for any other reason such as the private qualities and views of the leaders, there military and industrial strength and other objective attributes will avail nothing. They are, in any case, only a potential. *The management of a state so placed seems to require a special firmness and a blindness to all considerations* extraneous to the overriding consideration of survival.”²⁴

In this-what one may call the test of firmness, nerves, and vision-perhaps the Czech leaders have failed. It is worth remembering the fact that before the capitulation, Czechoslovakia had 35 divisions against Germany's 35 divisions in the eastern front. To the 5 to 6 German divisions in the western front their allies, the French, had 76 divisions assembled. And when later Germany fought with only 10 armoured divisions, four of them were equipped with the Czech tanks.²⁵ On the same subject one can reasonably say that the Turkish leaders at the time possessed those qualities that are absolutely needed in the management of foreign relations of small states. As a former Turkish diplomat has written in retrospect: “Turkey owes this miracle (of staying out of the war) first, to the wisdom and courage of her leaders who were able to keep their nerve under the most arduous pressures.”²⁶

Therefore, we can justifiably hypothesize that individual domestic variables in our context, that is for a small state which is a) relatively homogeneous and b) a relatively closed society, are especially potent variables and they have indeed proved to be so in the case of Turkish policy.

Certainly balance of forces (human and non-human, military and non-military) cannot be abstracted from the environment (structure and state of the international system) in which the units operate. Although all researchers of foreign policy

24 David Vital, *The Survival of Small States*, Oxford University Press, London, 1971, pp. 52-53 (Emphasis Added).

25 Peter Calvocoressi, and Guy Wint, *Total War*, The Penguin Press, London, 1972, pp. 92-93

26 Nuri Eren, “Turkey”, Black, Joseph and Thompson, Kenneth, (Ed.) *Foreign Policies in a world of change*, Harper and Row, New York, 1963 pp. 285-319 p. 301.

must establish relative potency of systemic variables, I believe this is even more important for the students of small power foreign policy. I assume existence of linkages and hope to measure their strength by the use of the small power concept—a small state in a particular point in the time and place with certain inner characteristics of its own. Apart from the geographical parameters and the socio-economic structure, the foreign policies of small states are directly conditioned by the type and state of the exterior world.

Finland's relations with the Soviet Union deteriorated (resulting in territorial loss for the small state) in a system of flux and crises. On the other hand, the potentialities of small states to engage in profitable relationships do differ, say, in hegemonial and alliance systems. "The problems, possibilities, and behavior of small states vary considerably according to the types of international systems in which they operate..."²⁷ Suffice it to mention here the consensus that systemic variables are more potent for small states than they are for greatpowers. Or to put it in an other way "the potency of a systemic variable, is considered to vary inversely with the size of a country".²⁸

The shift in the balance of forces in the exterior world, first in favour of Germany, resulted in severe repression of the left in Turkey and later, after the turn of the tide in Stalingrad in favour of the Soviet Union, the Turkish government with great convenience exposed a "fascist conspiracy" to overthrow the regime.²⁹ In 1944, Britain and the United States reacted strongly to the Turkish sales of chromium to Germany and to the use of German warships of the straits. After a strong speech by Eden in the parliament, and strong pressures, Turkey ceased to supply Germany and declared it publicly with measures taken to prevent the passage of German warships. The declaration was accompanied by the resignation of the foreign Minister Menemencioğlu. This change in government was a sym-

27 Erling Bjørl, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

28 James Rosenau, *op. cit.*, p. 112, f. n. 45.

29 See Baskin Oran "Political life and Ideological Currents in Turkey During the Second World War: An Essay on the Relations of the Foreign and Domestic Politics", *Review of the Faculty of Political Sciences*, Vol. XXIV, No. 3, Sep. 1969, pp. 227-275.

bol, as a concrete foreign policy action, of a reaction to an external stimulus, a systemic input.

Obviously, small states are also very vulnerable economically, especially at developing stages. This increases the potency of systemic variable even more. Its vulnerability is a direct function of its physical and non-physical attributes. "Smallness" creates the very conditions which make the state susceptible and highly responsive to economic pressures—pressures which might have direct influence on its foreign policy behavior and thus increase the potency of systemic variable. In 1930's Germany was the principal supplier of Turkey. At the time Germany and Italy together accounted for at least 50 % of the Turkish trade with the outside world. The shares of Axis in general and of Germany in particular trade is self-revealing. Naturally, the Turkish leaders were very much aware of this particular, and not very healthy, situation. Consequently, they have tried to lessen the impact of German 'inputs' on their policies by attempting at diversifying the country's economic relations. Referring to the Turkish Prime Minister's interview with Jules Sauerwein of *Paris Soir*, an unsigned memorandum of the German Economic Policy Department said, in November 1939, that "Saraçoğlu stated quite frankly that Turkey wanted to turn away from the German economy and intended to intensify economic relations with England and France instead, in order rid herself of the clearing system and return to what he called normal trade relations"³⁰ This, of course is a long process and Turkey did remain, throughout the war, dependent on German economy, and hence especially vulnerable to German pressures. So much so that one of the conditions of the Turks to enter the war was that Britain should take measures, in advance, to absorb surplus Turkish produce (esp. tobacco, nuts etc.) when and if the German Market was closed as a result of Turkish belligerency. British inability to do this was undoubtedly a very important factor on shaping Turkish foreign policy and her determination to remain neutral.

The Soviet resentment of Turkish acceptance of credits from Germany, resulted in a policy shift, with the Soviet Union

30 German Foreign Policy Documents, Series D, vol. VIII, Document number 391, p. 454.

participating in the construction of textile factories (in Nazilli and Kayseri) and an increase of Soviet exports to Turkey from 5,348,000 rubles in 1934 to 33,809,000 rubles in 1937. And finally, Turkish foreign minister informed German Ambassador von Papen of the following foreign policy action necessitated by economic vulnerability: "Turkey would confine herself to making a few ports with coaling facilities on the Aegean coast available to allied warships in return for financial aid and arms deliveries received..."³¹

In short, The Turkish foreign policy during the war was shaped and conditioned by real or imaginary limitations, vulnerabilities, fears, suspicions, etc. imposed upon its leaders by the objective attributes of the country as perceived by them. Its neutrality has been a policy of a small state to avoid armed confrontation with great powers, to save its existence as an independent entity, and to accomodate the realities of its position in a world torn by strife. It continued until she declared war on the already defeated Germany on February 23, 1945, to be able to take her place in the new order of the post-war world.

The above undertaking is not meant to be an exhaustive analysis of Turkish foreign policy during the Second World War. Nor a thorough theoretical study of small state behavior is intended. Only the preliminary steps of a research design are outlined. It is written solely using the small state concept in selecting and organizing the data on the subject. The research tool employed has in no way hindered the author's understanding of the subject. If anything, it was of great help. The sole aim of this essay is to show that the small state concept may facilitate understanding and explaining foreign policy behavior. The shortcomings should not be attributed to the small state concept, as is sometimes done by the concept's opponents.³²

31 DGFP, Series volume IX Doc. No. 200, p. 288.

32 See for example Beahr, *op. cit.*, p. 466.