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Address:
Kazakhstan Institute
for Strategic Studies under the President
of the Republic of Kazakhstan
4, Beybitshilik St.
Astana, 010000,
Republic of Kazakhstan

Phone: (7172) 75 20 20
Fax: (7172) 75 20 21
E-mail: office@kisi.kz
www.kisi.kz

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Телефон: (7172) 75 20 20
Факс: (7172) 75 20 21
E-mail: office@kisi.kz
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Адрес:
Казахстанский институт стратегических
исследований при Президенте
Республики Казахстан
010000, Республика Казахстан,
Астана, ул. Бейбитшилик, 4
Телефон: (7172) 75 20 20
Факс: (7172) 75 20 21
E-mail: office@kisi.kz
www.kisi.kz

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UNDERSTANDING CRITERIA FOR DEFINING SMALL AND MIDDLE POWERS

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Aidar Kurmashev¹

Head of International Studies at Kazakhstan
Institute for Strategic Studies under the President
of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Ph.D.,
(Astana, Kazakhstan)

Houman Sadri

Associate Professor of Political Science at University
of Central Florida, Ph.D.,
(Orlando, USA)

Abstract. International Relations (IR) scholars generally categorize states into three groups of powers: small, middle, or great. The lack of clear criteria for determining the power status of states, however, often creates debate about how to appropriately categorize a particular country. This article focuses on gathering and organizing the major definitions of small and middle powers by various scholars. Moreover, the article places these definitions into different clear and usable categories. Therefore, we illustrate the appropriate range of the small and middle size power categories. This, in turn, will provide clearer guidelines for states that aim to move from one category to another.

Keywords: *stratification of states, small and middle powers, criteria for determining power of states, developmental approach.*

ШАҒЫН ЖӘНЕ ОРТА ДЕРЖАВАЛАРДЫ АНЫҚТАУДЫҢ КРИТЕРИЙЛЕРІН ТҮСІНУ

Айдар Құрмашев, Хуман Садри

¹kurmashev_a@kisi.kz

Аңдатпа. Халықаралық қатынастар (ХҚ) мамандары әдетте мемлекеттерді үш топқа бөліп жіктейді: шағын, орта және ұлы. Дегенмен, мемлекеттің мәртебесін анықтаудың нақты критерийлерінің болмауы көбінесе белгілі бір елді қалай дұрыс жіктеуге болатындығы туралы дауларды тудырады. Бұл мақала әртүрлі ғалымдардың шағын және орта державалардың негізгі анықтамаларын жинақтап, жүйелеуге арналған. Сонымен қатар, мақала бұл анықтамаларды нақты және қолданылатын санаттарға бөледі. Сондықтан біз шағын және орта мемлекеттер санаттарының сәйкес диапазондарын көрсетеміз. Бұл, өз кезегінде, бір санаттан екінші санатқа өтуге ұмтылатын мемлекеттерге нақтырақ нұсқау беретін болады.

Түйін сөздер: мемлекеттердің стратификациясы, шағын және орта державалар, мемлекеттердің күшін анықтау критерийлері, эволюциялық көзқарас.

ПОНИМАНИЕ КРИТЕРИЕВ ДЛЯ ОПРЕДЕЛЕНИЯ МАЛЫХ И СРЕДНИХ ДЕРЖАВ

Айдар Курмашев, Хуман Садри

Аннотация. Специалисты по международным отношениям (МО) обычно делят государства на три группы держав: малые, средние и великие. Однако отсутствие четких критериев для определения статуса государства часто вызывает споры о том, как правильно классифицировать конкретную страну. Эта статья посвящена сбору и систематизации основных определений малых и средних держав различными учеными. Более того, в статье данные определения распределены по четким и применимым категориям. Поэтому мы демонстрируем соответствующие диапазоны категорий малых и средних государств. Это, в свою очередь, дает более четкие ориентиры для государств, стремящихся перейти из одной категории в другую.

Ключевые слова: стратификация государств, малые и средние державы, критерии определения могущества государств, эволюционный подход.

Introduction

It is widely accepted that the notion of a status or role of a state in the world arena is of great importance. Yet, there is no clear understanding of the so-called 'smallness' or 'greatness' of a particular

state. Many scholars have sought to find a theoretical understanding of what constitutes 'smaller or greater power,' so that they could classify these features. The conventional wisdom in international relations suggests that

there should be certain characteristics that places states into one or another category. However, technological advancement and rapid development of certain specialized economies is making the matter of smallness and greatness increasingly relative. That makes some countries more important in some ways and less relevant in others. This is seen as an opportunity to develop new prisms for how states' relational power should be studied.

According to traditional ideas, states present themselves in the international arena with their foreign policy, which can take place in two main forms: diplomacy and military strategy. The main goals of states are to satisfy their national interests, preserve their territorial integrity, and protect their security and sovereignty. Today, however, such understanding of foreign policy and international relations indicates limitations, because one can no longer ignore the implications of scientific and technological progress, the economy and the media, as well as communication and cultural values for foreign policy of any state. Most importantly, it is clear that the traditional problems of international relations are undergoing significant change due to the influence of these new factors. It has struggled to indicate the actual role and true place of middle powers, small states and even non-state international actors.

For instance, Robert Keohane [1] categorizes the states into 4 groups: system-determining, system-influencing, system-affecting and system-ineffectual. A 'system-determining' state is one that plays a critical role in shaping the system: the 'imperial power' in a unipolar system and the two superpowers in a bipolar

system can serve as examples. As Tsygankov [2] states, the superpowers are distinguished by the following features: a) the ability for massive destruction at a global scale, supported by possession of nuclear weapons; b) the ability to influence the living conditions of all mankind, and; c) the impossibility of being defeated by any other state or their coalition, unless another superpower is included in such a coalition.

'System-influencing' states are those which cannot individually dominate a system but could significantly influence their nature through unilateral or multilateral actions. Examples are great powers at the time of the Concert of Europe, including Great Britain, France, Prussia, Austro-Hungary and Russia. Great powers significantly impact world events but do not totally dominate international relations. They often seek to play a global role; however, their real abilities limit their role to either a specific geographic region or a separate sphere of intergovernmental relations at the regional level.

'System affecting' states are those that cannot affect the system by themselves but could exert significant impact on the system by working through small groups or alliances or through universal or regional international organizations. The middle powers have a strong influence in their immediate environment. This distinguishes them from small states whose influence is weak. These states have sufficient means to maintain their independence and territorial integrity.

Meanwhile, 'system-ineffectual' states are those that can do little to influence the system-wide forces that affect them.

The exception is when they are in large groups of states that each has some minimal influence. These small countries may themselves be dominated by larger powers. The latter group is usually labeled as small and/or microstates and whose ideas and roles are typically neglected and are unable to protect their sovereignty on their own.

Traditionally, theories of international politics have explored relations among large states focusing on security matters. The development of an effective military force and the threat of its use have been key factors in the evolution of world politics. Consequently, the main subject of many IR studies has been the great powers or superpowers. Of course, there are still debates regarding the discrepancies between great powers and superpower, so this topic has been well-researched. In comparison to the great powers, however, small and middle powers have attracted much less of scholars' attention. With technological revolution and fast economic development, some small and middle powers are getting more scholarly attention because of their increasing importance in both regional and global contexts. Before immersing into the question of how small states could turn into middle powers, we shall explore what features a state should have to be considered 'small' or 'middle.'

Methodology

The topic of what makes states small or middle is discussed in two sections. The study collects major existing definitions of small and middle powers and organizes them into categories based on clear criteria. This is done through

a dialectical method to systematize empirical indicators and criteria claimed to be typical for small and middle powers. As a result, the article argues on the extent to which any state may pursue the transformation from one category to another by engaging in increasing political and economic capacity as well as foreign behavior. To make such classifications, this work shall touch on a variety of factors, including: the orientation of public policy, institutional and organizational capacity, external forces, economic concerns, security issues, and perception of adversaries beyond the immediate neighborhood.

Discussion

The challenge of *defining small states* is related to the lack of consensus on how smallness and greatness of states are measurable. Moreover, what factors should be used as measures? In doing so, the authors are typically grouped into: (1) those who believe that there are certain parameters with the help of which states' status can be directly measured; (2) those who suppose it is a state's own international behavior as well as the perception of the world community that regards one state as smaller or greater.

The *first group of researchers* is inclined to take territory, population and economic data as measures. In this regard, the most referenced work in the contemporary research of small states is "The Economic Consequences of the Size of Nations" reported by the International Economics Association [3]. Economic Growth of Small Nations is a report by Kuznets that recognized small states to be those with a population of less than

10 million. To support this, Demas [4] and Jalan [5] respectively recognized small states as those with a population of 5 million or less, useable land zone of 10,000–20,000 square miles and less than 25,000 square kilometers. A subcategory of small states was also proposed to have a population of 400,000 or less, usable land of 2,500 square kilometers or less, and GNP under US\$500m.

Taylor [6] proposes a statistical technique to identify micro-states, and sets a limit of 2,928,000 on population and 142,888 square kilometers on territory. Russet and Starr [7] suggest also taking into account military potential, life expectancy of the population, infant mortality rates, the number of doctors and beds in medical institutions per capita, its racial composition, the proportion of urban and rural residents, etc. Ross [8] scales small states' population to between 1 and 5 million, while between 100,000 and one million are 'mini-states' and those having below 100,000 people are reported to be 'micro-states'. However, in this case, there is a risk of losing conclusive criteria. This, however, runs the risk of drowning the problem in a huge mass, and still not having key signs.

International organizations take a closer look at the state economy, although population and land area remain the main distinctive features. To be precise, the British Commonwealth defines small states as sovereign countries with a population of 1.5 million or fewer. However, it also includes Botswana, Jamaica, Lesotho, Namibia and Papua New Guinea because of their small state features such as: (1) vulnerability to natural disasters and external

economic shocks; (2) limited market diversification; (3) limited human and institutional capacity; (4) limited access to external capital [9].

These features are important, because small states are vulnerable to global economic crises. It takes a long time for them to recover from external economic shocks, which causes them to fail to meet developmental goals and creates higher foreign debt, further leading to dependency for most strategic products such as food and energy resources. On top of that, most small states are prone to weather-related disasters. A single natural disaster could cause major damage that puts development in a country in reverse for several years. In fact, industries such as fishing, tourism, and agriculture, are often extremely sensitive to climate change. In small states after a disaster, problems are exacerbated by the limited institutional capacity of the state to respond effectively to challenges [10].

The World Bank Group [11] defines small states as countries that have a population of 1.5 million or less or are members of the Small States Forum. This includes 50 countries that relatively differ in land area, location, GDP (Gross Domestic Product), and economic structure. Several of these states are landlocked, and some are island countries. Only a few of such states are high-income countries, while many have middle or low income. Moreover, some of these counties are conflict-affected. The economies of a few are oriented in exporting commodity, while others rely on service and tourism.

Despite all heterogeneity, they have certain features which puts them into the

small states' category: a small population, limited human capital, inability to use economies of scale, a constrained domestic market, and vulnerability to both climate change and market shocks. Small states often have small land areas, and their population is generally under 1.5 million. There are also 8 micro-states, with populations of less than 200,000.

The population size and land area are considered primary criteria because that is what sets the path for developmental constraints. For example, a small territory provides almost no safe zones where a population could escape during or in the aftermath of a natural disaster. This feature creates competition for land use for either transportation, infrastructure, agriculture, or urban areas. Some countries have the opportunity of using the natural resources of the ocean, however, they have limited land area for economic activity. Small population limits the economy of scale in terms of low competition in the economy and politics, lack of customers, and high costs for basic services and products.

Among other features that characterize small states are mostly common economic constraints including: Constraints in labor market and capacity, emigration of skilled labor due to few employment opportunities, difficulty of private-sector-led growth because of the lack of economies of scale, difficulty of diversifying its economy due to limitations in the productive base, few sources of revenue, endemic debt challenges, remoteness adding to economic cost, poor connectivity affecting the service sector, high cost of providing public services to small

scattered populations, exposure to climate change and natural disasters, recurrent financial, climate, and disaster shocks reducing the fiscal space, high fiscal costs of managing economic shocks leading to reliance on international finance, human development challenges, high infant mortality, low child immunization rates, disease, few in-country educational facilities mean a shortage of adequate specialization.

Despite all these systemic economic challenges, countries such as Estonia, Malta, Bahrain, Brunei, and Qatar serve as examples of economic success. They have not only achieved high income, but they have also diversified their economies involving fossil fuel and trade. They have attracted highly skilled workers, and created both strong legal and thriving financial systems. Therefore, it should be noted that not all small states are poor, and not all poor states are small.

To find an answer to the question: what makes a state small? Sutton [12] proposed to consider if the subject of the research is an island country or a small economy because those make a significant difference. He also suggested that the developmental approach should be added as it may cause confusion when considering economic characteristics. In other words, a developed small state may seem superior to a typical developing country.

Territory and population are undoubtedly significant composing parts of a state. Nevertheless, these measures in investigating the smallness or greatness of states are sometimes ignored since some small countries may have a great significance in unique ways associated

with their territory and population.

The *second group of researchers* consider that foreign policy behavior is the decisive factor for classification. This means the international role that a small state may pursue is the main factor that associates them to their status.

Fox [13] argues that a small state's foreign policy is often concentrated on regional matters, as they lack the power to successfully apply power or resist the effective application of power on them by other states. Such states are also unable to pursue an agenda vis-a-vis other states. That is because they lack enough capability to do so. Rothstein [14] supports the idea that the small states cannot resolve a security dilemma on their own by using their internal actions. Therefore, they rely on external sources of security which, he calls alliance-seeking behavior.

East [15] bases his definition of small states on patterns of exhibiting or following foreign policy behavior: (a) low levels of overall involvement in international relations; (b) high levels of activity in intergovernmental organizations; (c) high levels of support for international law, treaties; (d) avoidance to utilize force or any kind of behavior that could alienate stronger powers; (e) narrowing down foreign policy vectors in terms of functional and geographic scope; (f) seeking the use of moral and normative positions in global issues. Some small states tend to have limited interactions with other states, make more use of verbal statements, rather than non-verbal, and take fewer risks because of their limited capabilities.

Handel [16] attempts to shed light on

five perspectives: definitions and features of weak states; internal and external sources of weakness and strength; how weak states act within different international systems, and their economic position in the world. It is found that (a) weak states are mostly passive and their foreign policy is mainly reactive; (b) they always opt to minimize risk whenever it concerns stronger powers; (c) they are easily invaded or penetrated in other ways; (d) they seek support from international organizations and external actors.

Some small states are guarded by a larger guardian state. In some cases, there is a client-metropolitan power relation between the larger and smaller state. In some cases, the smaller state gained its independence from the larger state. This is known as a 'cliency relationship', an example of such a relationship can be seen historically between Kuwait and the UK [17]. After 1971 when the UK left the Persian Gulf, then the US took charge of protecting Kuwait.

Small states tend to focus exclusively on their survival. For this reason, the diplomatic machine of a small state tends to manipulate the will of powerful states as much as possible to support its own survival. To offset its natural weakness, small states seek association with other powers, as there is security in numbers. At some time or for a period, a small state might have to sacrifice its autonomy surrounding the control of its own national resources, the loss of political maneuverability, and its policy choices [18].

In addition, since small states cannot obtain security primarily by use of

their own capabilities, they must rely fundamentally on the assistance of international institutions, processes, or developments. In recent years, there is a clear tendency for small states to attempt to ensure their own security based on international law and by supporting the negotiation of legally binding instruments under the auspices of international or multilateral organizations and institutions. Many of them have advocated and participated in regional co-operation organizations and/or become members of multilateral organizations and alliances. Experience has shown that small states can successfully strengthen their positions by pursuing their specific interests. An example is Iceland, which participated actively in the formulation of the Law of the Sea, while at the same time extending its fisheries jurisdiction. Membership in organizations and institutions has given smaller states security and more political influence than their size might warrant on the basis of the principle of non-discrimination, unity and solidarity. The European Union (EU) and North Atlantic Treaty Organizations (NATO) are prime examples of this.

The small states' advantageous position is that they are often seen to have more international credibility, being understood as having fewer hidden agendas and less ambitious national interests than more powerful states [19]. International trust and respect are desirable because they facilitate the protection of interests which is at the core of all foreign policy. Of course, all states want to be trusted and respected, but it is particularly important for smaller

states that want to be serious participants in international affairs. Fundamental interests, such as peace and security and their derivative benefits, such as a sound economy, high employment, a healthy environment, and sustainable use of natural resources, cannot be defended except through international co-operation with most of the states in the world.

Maass [20] combines both quantitative and qualitative criteria together to compare all existing definitions. He discovers that although small states foreign policy behavior may be quite ambiguous beyond their geographical, demographic, economic and political circumstances, their common characteristic is that they tend to rely on international organizations, multilateral diplomacy and International Law. He also confirms that there is a correlation between foreign policy behavior and the size of a state. However, it is implied that they both can serve as independent variables, which means that size could be affecting small state's behavior and vice versa.

De Carvalho and Neumann [21] hypothesize that because there is no way for small powers to grow territorially, they seek status from higher moral involvement in international relations. When they engage in seeking status, they know their power limitations. Instead, small powers compete for the status of a good power and reliable partner. Retrieving results using the combination of quantitative and qualitative (relational) criteria appears to be a plausible solution [22]. They classify states into small sub-regional groups (such as Central Asia, Near East, Arabian Peninsula

etc.) to make a comparative analysis of each state's foreign policy behavior and achievements within the group. Their research finds that classification of small states requires accentuation of various regionally determined features and the use of relational criteria because of the high number and variety of data in quantitative characteristics to consider.

On the other hand, *middle powers* are described as relatively wealthy, have medium-sized territory and have no nuclear weapons or permanent membership in the UN Security Council [23]. However, attempts to define middle powers vary significantly when considering measures of national capability as well as foreign behavior. There are different approaches for such studies: (1) hierarchical, (2) behavioral, and (3) functional. The hierarchical approach explores capabilities, self-positioning and the recognized status of a state. The behavioral approach takes an 'agential' view and looks at how middle powers act and what instruments they use to achieve their goals. The functional approach asserts that middle powers exercise their peculiar influence in certain areas of interest, serving a particular role in the international arena. For instance, they serve a particular function in the world.

The *hierarchical approach* ranks states according to their position in the world. Organski [24] identified population, political development, and economic development as the most important determinants of national power. Compiling all of these, Wood and Holbraad adopt gross national product (GNP) as the main indicator while

Holbraad combines GNP, population, and regional considerations.

To be precise, to achieve a more balanced result, Holbraad divides all countries in the world by regions: Africa, Asia, Europe, North and Central America, South America, and Oceania and Indonesia. He ranks states in order of their GNP, (based on 1975 data) each region separately first, then he draws a line of division looking the biggest gap in GNP and/or population size, and then he compares the results. It is interesting to note that this approach involves a high level of subjectivity making "middle powerness" highly tied to regional development. As a result of this research, Turkey was not a part of the middle power club, because its GNP was only the 15th in Europe. However, if it were included in the Asian league, Ankara would have ranked 5th, which would allow it to be in the middle power club.

In a similar manner, Wood, [25] attempting to find the easiest way to differentiate small, middle and great powers, used GNP as the determining factor. He includes the countries ranging from the 6th to 36th in GNP ranking, as middle powers. As the result, his ranking contains the countries that have between 40 and 400 billion USD as their GNP: this creates quite a promiscuous group. Moreover, his analysis does not provide any explanatory power for why certain countries engage in middle power behavior and other countries do not.

In her analysis of middle power behavior, Laura Neack [26] uses a cluster technique considering five national attributes: GNP per capita, military expenditures per capita,

population, infant mortality rate, and adult literacy rate. Cluster's analysis is a statistical procedure which allows her to group political entities into relatively homogeneous groups. By using this procedure, it not necessary to set critical values for group parameters. Thus, it avoids the need to predetermine the state group membership criteria. It is known as Ward's Method which attempts to optimize variances within the groups. She employs the cluster technique for the years of 1960, 1965, 1972, and 1980. Then, the results are combined to compose a final "membership" list for three groups of states: great, middle, and small states.

Despite its limited value, such unsatisfactory results of just 'listing' states according to certain attributes in addition to the lack of explanatory power of middle power concept have urged scholars to use other techniques and approaches for studying the concept. To some degree, it can be said that the concept of middle power has been promoted by Canadian scholars who attempted to clarify Canada's position during the Cold War [27]. For this reason, some scholars have thought beyond the 'positional' terms of states and focused on the role or 'function' that middle powers play in the world.

This above discussion leads us to the second view or *the functional approach*, which concerns a state's foreign policy activism and the role of middle powers in the international system. According to this view, middle powers are those who occupy the position of mediators or 'like-minded' states that work to ease international tensions between conflicting

parties. Middle powers can be featured by the strength they have, and the power they project. If we consider "power" as the ability to impose one's will on another, and the ability to reject the will imposed on oneself, then "power" is defined by the means states use to implement their will. It could contain military, moral, as well as economic tools.

Holbraat [28] cites an unpublished address of R.G. Riddell titled "the Role of the Middle Powers in the United Nations" on June 22, 1948. The latter claimed that the middle powers are those which are close to being great powers because of their size, material resources, willingness and ability to accept responsibility, and their influence and stability. Also, he added that 'in a predatory world, the middle powers are more vulnerable than their smaller neighbors, and less able to protect themselves than their larger ones.'

Another factor that should be highlighted is "recognition." Holbraat states that it is impossible to use the same measurements used to identify great powers to build a concept of middle powers. Military strength and economic resources of great powers and superpowers make them belong to a special class of states. This grouping of states is also acknowledged by international law, international organizations, conferences, and so on. For example, great powers and superpowers use the privileges of being a permanent member of Security Council, while middle powers are deprived of such opportunities. Nevertheless, great powers have both rights and responsibilities. During major international conflicts, great powers meet

to arrange for peace settlements in order to prevent such conflicts from occurring again as well as maintaining stability and a balance of powers.

In this respect, Mares [29] draws a line between capabilities of small and middle powers. In his view, middle powers possess sufficient resources to affect a limited number of states. Thus, they are not mere ‘price takers,’ in his own words. Meanwhile, small states feel pressured to ally themselves with a group of states, otherwise they lose the ability to influence others. He also assumes that states often attempt to extend their influence over other states when it concerns maintaining their sovereignty and position in the international system.

In this case, the central idea of functionalism in defining middle powers is how certain skills or resources in certain areas make some countries take on responsibility in these areas [30]. Thus, middle powers focus on particular ‘niches’ in which they may make a maximum use of their special abilities [31]. They can even conduct “a leading position” in managing issues within their functional responsibilities [32].

Following such thoughts, Nossal [33] identifies that one of the functions that middle powers are often committed to is ‘internationalism.’ The latter has the following features: (a) responsibility, (b) multilateralism, (c) participation in international organizations, (d) willingness to implement prior commitments. In regards to this, it is fair to note that under these conditions, it is up to states themselves if they want to choose a middle power role.

In this regard, Gecelovsky [34]

considers the middle power concept to be taken as determinant of state behavior, not a form of state behavior. He argues that functionalism and internationalism should be considered as causes of states’ actions rather than the results of actions. In such cases, the consistency argument can be avoided, allowing scholars to compare middle powers in terms of conceiving ideas for change.

The third view is the *behavioral approach*, which encompasses the shift towards an agent-based feature. The latter has inspired some scholars to focus on individual characteristics of states, how they behave [35] in a regional or global environment, what goals they pursue, and what means are used.

One of the main features that distinguish middle powers from others is that they focus on keeping international peace and stability by participating in various international efforts. Moreover, it is argued that psychological, behavioral, and dimensional features should also be fulfilled, so that states can be considered as a ‘middle power.’ In this model, states are defined by their middle-sized capacity, commitment to implement international treaties, initiative in a multilateral environment, focus on areas where their power is effective, and being perceived to have the necessary qualifications.

For defining middle powers, Ravenhill [36] argues that factors such as capacity, concentration, creativity, building coalition, and credibility should be considered. More specifically in terms of ‘capacity,’ Ravenhill claims that middle powers have foreign services with higher level of analytical skills, which along with effective intelligence

gathering and communication networks allows them to benefit from international cooperation more than small power counterparts. As opposed to their great powers, middle powers use their [in] ability of ‘Concentration’ to apply high level power across numerous different areas of the international political agenda. In other words, middle powers have a limited number of objectives. ‘Creativity’ is understood as the ability to compensate for the lack of power with the force of ideas. That is not to say, it is only or necessarily middle powers that use creativity but to note that it can be employed. In this regard, Behringer [37] agrees that middle powers are catalysts of innovation in international norms, mediation, multilateral diplomacy, and similar avenues. ‘Coalition-building’ is the enterprise utilized by the middle powers to impose their will, while lacking enough power to do so on their own. It is also worth mentioning that middle powers engage in *building* coalitions, unlike small powers which merely *join* them. ‘Credibility’ is understood in two dimensions: first, as trust gained through relative weakness and having the virtue of initiative, unless they are promoting ideas for another powerful actor. Second as consistency of advocated policies, or ‘reputation,’ both domestically and internationally.

This idea of including psychological and intentional dimension is further developed by Connors [38] who analyzed foreign behavior of Australia. He argued that middle powers seeking multilateral solutions to international problems set a precedent for building international order through cooperative

institution building. In this regard, it is fair to mention Evans [39] who claimed that GDP, population, and territorial size as well as military capability serve as no more than a starting point.

Seeking to understand such behavior, Nye [40] finds that middle powers tend to rely on ‘soft power’ because they lack coercive power instruments. In his view, they use persuasion and attraction instead of coercion and force. Furthermore, middle-sized powers show interest in development and implementation of international law which should be a tool for encouraging great powers to behave in international arenas.

In addition, Matthew [41] and Rappert [42] claim that middle powers have now exceeded their ‘role of lieutenants of great powers.’ This allows them to look for their own ways to peace building and justice. To do so, they engage in powerful partnerships with non-state actors which are having tremendous effect on the security architecture of the world nowadays.

Middle powers and some peaceful non-state actors have common goals in international politics such as developing international law, strengthening global justice, respecting human rights, protecting the environment, finding avenues for economic growth and so on. This ‘like-mindedness’ allows them to use any tools at their disposal. Governments operate through state-centric diplomatic channels, while non-state actors’ works engage various civil society networks. Thus, NGOs push the idea of norm-based global politics [43]. It is also important to mention that middle powers and such non-state actors widely use media

campaigns and political mobilization. To influence people, states and institutions, middle powers use NGOs to expand their power base.

Bolton and Nash [44] explore the partnership between middle powers and NGOs deeper, giving as a particular example of its success the Ottawa Convention of 1997, which managed to ban antipersonnel landmines. Also, they pointed out the achievements of other international agreements in humanizing, stabilizing and pacifying international relations, such as the Rome Statute of 1998, Kimberley Process of 2003, and Disabilities Convention of 2006. As Lee & Park [45] observed when it concerns providing security to assert their influence in the regional context, the middle powers use both their economic and/or military capacities.

In summarizing all three approaches, it is fair to agree with Coopers' [46] criticism of definition of middle states as those which are not great powers but still have a consequential role in their own region and exert some degree of influence in global affairs far beyond that of small states. In this regard, national attributes such as: geography, population, military, economic, technology and capacity, along with qualitative features as national reputation, should be specified. In order to achieve the best results, it is also suggested that we take into account an individual country's features. In fact, it is more helpful to take n-groupings of states which should reflect certain aspects of 'middle powerness.'

Moreover, Saxer [47] suggests that middle power status should be explored from 2 dimensions. The first dimension

includes population, military capabilities, and economic standing. The second dimension is intention; which involves political leadership seeking to play a larger role in the world arena, thus requiring certain types of foreign policy behavior. Indeed, with the global shift from security to economic issues, contemporary middle powers find themselves in a profoundly different environment than that of 'traditional' middle powers in the past [48]. Globalization, the rise of Asia as an economic core, and a technological revolution are diminishing the importance of international structure in explaining international relations. For this reason, the study of defining middle powers should incorporate both material attributes the states possess and structural context, as well as the aspirations that political leadership pursue.

Conclusion

The study allows us to draw the following results:

(1) Beyond their formal legal equality, states cannot ignore the fact that they differ in their territory, population, natural resources, economic potential, social stability, political authority, arms, and so on. These differences are often summarized on the inequality list of states in terms of their national power. There is an international stratification, based on their characteristics, which represents states in a hierarchy within the international arena. Moreover, every state is forced, in one way or another, to follow certain foreign policy strategies depending on their power, role, and place in such a hierarchy. In this regard, it is implied that mainstream IR theories

admit the possibility of the transformation of states from one category to another, such as from small state to middle power.

(2) Defining whether a state is a small, middle, or great power depends not only on its political, economic, and social development, but also on its foreign policy behavior. This study illustrated the debates on defining small or middle states. This involved those who believe that there are certain parameters in economic and social development which help states' status and can be directly measured. There are also those who suppose it is state's own international behavior as well as perception that leads the world community to regard one state as small and another as great. There are approaches such as hierarchical, behavioral, and functional. The hierarchical approach explores capabilities, self-positioning, and the recognized status of a state. The behavioral approach takes an 'agential' view and looks at how states act and what instruments they use to achieve

their goals. The functional approach asserts that states exercise their peculiar influence in certain areas of interest, serving particular roles in the international arena, such as a peace mediator or a governmental accountability model.

(3) Transformation of small states into middle powers may go through enhancement of economic indicators, security matters, as well as the state's foreign policy scope of operation and internationalization. That is, to complete the transformation, states need to go through quantitative changes as well as engage in qualitative changes. This study suggests that the prospective middle powers should undertake actions to improve in the following areas: demographic trends, economic performance, governmental effectiveness, educational achievement, healthcare quality, security apparatus, intelligence abilities, military policy, and last but not least foreign policy.

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