

Rory Miller and Fahad Al-Marri (2022). *Overcoming smallness: Challenges and opportunities for small states in global affairs*. Qatar: Hamad Bin Khalifa University Press. Pbk. 175pp. ISBN: 978-9-9271-5598-7. 80 Qatari Riyals = €22.15c

How can small states transcend the dangers of the contemporary international system in order to remain influential and independent? *Overcoming smallness*, co-authored by Georgetown University in Qatar professors Rory Miller and Fahad Al-Marri, provides insights to this burning question. It begins with a Foreword by H.E. Sheikha Alya Ahmed bin Saif Al-Thani, Qatar's Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York, wherein she emphasizes "that small states are not only numerous but also key players in our complex and ever-changing world" (p. 14). This is a sound prelude to a book that offers three main contributions: a thorough review of international relations (IR) theories; global examples of small state agency; and a comprehensive assessment of Qatar's contemporary foreign policy.

Chapter 1 functions as the literature review. The authors survey the contested quantitative, qualitative and self-definitional approaches used to delineate a "small" state. They make two theoretical points that guide their work. First, "small and geographically vulnerable does not have to mean permanently weak" (p. 29). Second, citing Tom Long, they argue that small state power is multifaceted and includes the intrinsic, derivative, and collective ways by which they gain leverage in their bilateral and institutional interactions (p. 32).

Chapter 2 explores the economic development of small states, rooted in Lino Briguglio's work on vulnerability and resilience (pp. 43-7). Miller and Al-Marri note the diverse geographical precarities and resource dependencies that small states seek to counter via activism in regional and international organizations. Chapter 3 focuses on the myriad "tangible" and "concrete" versus "intangible" and "abstract" resources that imbue small states with power (p. 60). Drawing from Baldur Thorhallsson's theorization, the former category relates to territorial and population size and military capabilities, whilst the latter refers to perceptual and ideational elements (pp. 61-2). The rest of the chapter surveys the ways that realist, liberal, institutionalist, and constructivist IR theories explain small state resources as sources of power. The authors argue convincingly that "there are limitations to realism" in explaining how materially small states can deploy "their capabilities and abilities to influence the international system" (p. 68). Instead, they explore the societal, organizational and normative ways by which small states gain importance and leverage.

The authors devote two chapters to the strategies that small states undertake to ensure their security, which the authors define as "safety from threats to cherished values" (p. 98). These threats include traditional dangers like foreign incursions and newer threats to human security like climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic. Chapter 4 focuses on the first security-seeking strategy: "autonomy." This refers to the individuality of neutrality, wherein a small state relies on its own abilities "independent of potential or actual partners or allies" (p. 84). Chapter 5 addresses the other end of the security continuum: "alignment." Unlike autonomy, small states undertake this when they rely on the shelter of an ally's protection (p. 105). As with small state economic policies, the authors identify regional organizations as important aspects of their alliance politics.

The book culminates in two chapters that focus on Qatar, which experienced an economic and political blockade by Bahrain, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) from June 2017 to January 2021. Chapter 6 focuses on the diplomatic and security aspects of Qatar's

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resilience-building amid its period of vulnerability. On the one hand, to use Long's power terms, Qatar lacked the *collective* power of a Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) that became split during the blockade. Instead, Qatar leaned on its *intrinsic* power derived from "surplus energy revenues" to further its international outreach and engagement (p. 131). Qatar gained *derivative* power by forging enhanced security partnerships with Turkey and the United States (US), thereby "binding both countries to its security" (p. 137). Chapter 7 dwells on the strategic, economic and national resource components of Qatar's resilience; specifically, its wealth of liquified natural gas (p. 151).

A core strength of this book is its use of diverse illustrative examples. The best economic examples are Antigua and Barbuda's efforts in the World Trade Organization to gain compensation from protectionist US gambling policies (pp. 34-35) and Singapore's fiscal successes (pp. 146-147). From a security angle, the authors assess how Switzerland uses active neutrality to promote peace (p. 99); explain how Kuwait turned vulnerability from Iraq's August 1990 invasion (p. 26) into strength by courting and locking in broad international support (p. 73); and describe Armenia's transition from shelter by the Soviet Union to a more autonomous relationship with Russia via institutional engagement (p. 114).

Furthermore, three paired comparisons stand out. Economically, the authors cite the unique industrialization pursued by Mauritius versus Trinidad and Tobago in the 1960s (pp. 55-56). Socially, they show how Danish and Swiss concepts of national identity stem from distinct homogeneity and heterogeneity (p. 75). Finally, they note that Austria exhibited a less active foreign policy following its European Union membership, whilst Denmark became a more active state, especially in multilateral military endeavors (p. 121).

A central omission is the lack of a concluding chapter to tie important concepts together. First, small state status-seeking (pp. 76; 157) would have been a valuable topic to explore more fully in a conclusion, especially considering Qatar-UAE status competition. Second, "pragmatic leadership" was mentioned in the context of Singapore and Qatar (p. 147), but it would have been insightful to compare these with instances of small state leaders not acting optimally. Third, an assessment of the effects of systemic shifts on small states' autonomy-versus-alignment options would have been worthwhile, given the ongoing departure from a unipolar US-led international order to one that is decidedly more fractured and multipolar.

To conclude, *Overcoming smallness* represents a welcome addition to the bookshelf of every scholar of small state studies. Though Qatar and the Gulf sub-region are its main empirical focus, the work also explains how small states across Europe, Southeast Asia, and the Caribbean lean into their diverse resources and abilities to overcome challenges and seize opportunities.

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