

## 4 The micropolity sovereignty experience

### Decolonizing, but not disengaging

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On the tenth day of the tenth month of 2010, the Netherlands Antilles – consisting of four and a half islands – were formally dissolved; in their place, two territories, Curaçao and Sint Maartin, graduated to autonomy status, joining another, already autonomous territory (Aruba); while the remaining three – Bonaire, Saba, and St Eustatius – were realigned as ‘special municipalities’ of the Netherlands. None of the five erstwhile colonies opted for independence, although that option was manifestly available (see Oostindie, this volume). We should not be surprised.

The active and dogged pursuit of extended colonial relationships has been aptly described by Dutch scholars observing the Netherlands Antilles as ‘upside-down decolonization’: a situation in which the metropolis presses the former colony to accept independence, but to no avail (Hoeft and Oostindie 1989, 1991: 93). This is described as ‘an unusual situation’ (Allahar 2005: 132) whereby the mother country seemed willing, even anxious, to free itself from the responsibilities of empire, but the colonies in question would demur, not letting the mother country off the hook (Oostindie and Klinkers 2003: 116, 145). The persisting seven colonial powers – Australia, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the United Kingdom (UK), and the United States (US) – find themselves in an ‘*enforced* colonial condition’, while their wards ‘*opt* for dependency status’ (Skinner 2006: 185; italics added).

This behaviour is neither unusual nor paradoxical. The politics of ‘upside-down decolonization’ are the norm in today’s small, non-independent territories. With some exceptions – Bougainville, Scotland, Greenland and New Caledonia (Gad, and Brown, this volume) – sovereignty no longer appears to be the obviously desirable trajectory of peoples who see themselves as dispossessed political entities or at the losing end of federalist developments (e.g. Trompf 1993: xxv; Baldacchino and Milne 2006). In the contemporary world, there may be solid definitive advantages in *not* being independent. Yet the value-laden discourse of mainstream political science, along with the scrutiny of the United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization, belie an enduring obsession with the mantra of sovereignty as an intrinsically laudable, and almost historically unavoidable, evolutionary route. The flexing of domestic jurisdictional muscle for strategic gains and leverage is an important resource for small autonomous territories. But this need not be coterminous with independence and sovereignty.

Indeed, the main thrust of this chapter is that sovereignty, in the guise of independent statehood, is not necessarily an asset: many jurisdictions today deliberately refrain from becoming sovereign in order to better pursue their interests. This is important, at least for two main reasons: First, it flies in the face of conventional expectations that every polity would desire and aspire to become sovereign and independent if it could; moreover, it obliges us to take a closer and more nuanced look at some of the power dynamics in international political economy.

Mainly for these reasons, this chapter reviews the alternatives, origins, economic performance, behaviour, and overall 'experience' of small island developing states (SIDS) and non-independent, sub-national island jurisdictions (SNIJs) that have considerable degrees of autonomy and self-determination. The argument also critiques the concept of small as applied to both these clusters. While self-determination remains a valuable goal, a strong case remains to be made for non-independent territories to craft and nurture dynamically contoured, negotiated, constitutional arrangements with a larger, richer, and stronger metropolitan player rather than the nationalist and anti-colonialist-driven pursuit of full independence, as in the heyday of decolonization.

### **Customizing sovereignty – customizing alternatives**

Four decades of failed independence referenda have confirmed that various smaller – mainly island – jurisdictions have remained largely unperturbed by the grand wave of decolonization that has swept the world, creating over 100 new sovereign states in its wake. As colonization retreated after 1945, it left behind puddles of jurisdiction, with the largest territories obtaining sovereignty first, the smallest territories following last, and the *very* smallest units stubbornly refusing to budge.

That the smallest colonies took the longest to achieve independence was also due to the serious doubts of their colonial masters regarding their viability and stability as independent states (Diggines 1985; Pirota *et al.* 2001; Plischke 1977: 9–10). It has been argued, for example, that 'independence is an extravagant and improvident recipe for the remaining small territories' (Wainhouse 1964: 133); and that 'in the 1980s, Britain was left with a few colonies, mainly islands, too small by any standards to become independent nations' (Chamberlain 1985: 51). Indeed, the presumed non-viability of small countries was so ingrained that initial attempts at decolonizing small territories were geared towards federative solutions: the West Indies Federation, Malaysia–Singapore and, indeed, the Netherlands Antilles. All these experiments are now consigned to history.

For the most part, however, the very smallest territories have not sought or achieved independence at all. These have been 'decolonizing without disengaging' (Houbert 1986) over the past century, with the earliest examples possibly being the so-called 'insular cases' where, after 1899, Cuba, Guam, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico were 'territorially incorporated' into the United States (e.g. McKibben 1990). These were followed much later by the 'departmentalization' of four French overseas island territories in 1946, and dramatized by the secession of Anguilla, which refused independence as part of St Kitts and Nevis in 1979 and

remains a British Overseas Territory (BOT). The 2010 dissolution of the Netherlands Antilles continues this pattern. Historical practice and/or international provisions have secured over time the autonomy of such territories as Åland, the Channel Islands, and the Isle of Man. Military interventions and/or sectarian strife have led to *de facto* autonomous jurisdictions in Northern Cyprus, Southern Mindanao, and Taiwan (the latter remains somewhat unique in being recognized as a sovereignty country by some two dozen states). Constitutionally or legally entrenched provisions secure and frame the autonomy of island provinces like Hawai'i, Jeju, Mwali, Prince Edward Island, and Tasmania. 'First nations' enjoy self-determination in locations such as Nunavut and Haida Gwaii/Queen Charlotte Islands (both in Canada), Rotuma (in Fiji), and the Torres Strait Islands (in Australia). There are the various territories and former colonies, not interested in outright, full, or quick routes to independence (as stubbornly confirmed in various plebiscites), which are engaged in evolving relations with Amsterdam, Canberra, Copenhagen, London, Paris, Washington, or Wellington, as well as with such supranational entities as the European Union (EU). Specific sub-national arrangements treat the Azores, Corsica, Kish, Labuan, Madeira, Nevis, Sardinia, Sicily, Scotland, or Zanzibar differently from the rest of their respective state, often with respect to cultural differences and distinct histories, or as an outcome of a deliberate, central government strategy. There are also special island (or mainly island) regions which enjoy a specifically different autonomy portfolio, *de jure* or *de facto*: Hong Kong, Macao, Sakhalin, and Shetland – thanks to recognition of the prudent management of resources (investment finance, human capital, fossil fuels) that might be threatened by a loss of autonomy. The contemporary political map is strewn with cases of small (often island) jurisdictions, and the non-sovereign examples vastly exceed the sovereign ones.

The legal and political creativity employed to facilitate non-sovereignty is considerable; Watts has identified five categories of 'forms of political relations which combine autonomy [read: self-rule] and partnership [read: shared rule] within federal political systems' (Watts 2000: 23–9, 2008: 33–8). Moreover, non-sovereignty does not equal powerlessness: Pitcairn is not a sovereign state; it is, however, the world's smallest recognized sub-national jurisdiction, the only remaining BOT in the Pacific, and whose citizens (some 47 of them) have been deemed fit to submit complex legal challenges to Britain's administration of the island in the context of widely reported child-sex abuse trials (e.g. Trenwith 2003; Middleton 2005).

On the other side of the fine line between sovereignty and non-sovereignty, the presumed smallness of states also creates ambiguity and flexibility in relation to what sovereignty means. The three most recently independent states in the Pacific, each of which is a member of the United Nations (UN) – the Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, and Palau – have been defined as 'hybrid jurisdictions' (Levine and Roberts 2005), since their status represents attempts at exploiting the advantages of *both* conventional sovereignty *and* an autonomy supported by a benign and affluent patron state (in this case, the US). When possible, it is far better to have your cake and eat it too (Palan 1998).

Such observations 'on the ground' inspire a robust challenge to conventional wisdom: sovereignty is often treated as indivisible; a country is either sovereign or it isn't, with absolutely no room for dithering in between. And yet this rule of thumb is increasingly found wanting in the twenty-first century (Mac Amhlaigh, this volume). Lake (2003: 310) suggests acknowledging a gradation or 'a continuum of increasing hierarchy in international relations'. He adds (2003: 314) that 'anomalies may be more commonplace than we often realize'. Likewise, Kerr (2005) postulates a pecking order of sovereignty, one including both non-sovereign jurisdictions with considerable powers of self-determination (e.g. the Cook Islands) as well as sovereign jurisdictions with limited room for manoeuvre (e.g. Cyprus). When Krasner (2001) speaks of 'problematic sovereignty', he attributes this to both a difficulty of classification – 'Is Somalia a state? Is Somaliland a state?' – as well as the nebulousity surrounding the workings of such jurisdictions in international relations (IR).<sup>1</sup>

### **Enter the 'small state' – risk or chance?**

But what exactly is a 'small state' or a 'micropolity'? How small does it have to be to qualify? Discourse is power: the labels used to define our subjects are themselves highly charged and instrumentalized, the consequences of clear power dynamics. Across disciplines and concerns, small states have been rendered synonymous to chronically vulnerable and problematic territories for which aid, assistance, and especially favourable deals are therefore quite legitimate. This strident 'deficit' discourse surrounding small states has found fertile ground, both in the vocabulary of small state policy makers (who tend to believe their own rhetoric), as well as some mainstream neo-classical economic advisors (Briguglio and Kisanga 2004; but see Easterly and Kraay 2000; Shaw and Cooper 2009).

References to 'small states' – and later 'microstates' and even 'ministates' (Harbert 1976; Srinivasan 1986; Lewis 2002) – become more systematic in the 1960s after US-based or trained political scientists in particular voiced concerns as to how these newly independent entities would (allegedly) be both unable to even minimally execute their international obligations, as well as being pesky and unreliable players in the context of strategic, big-stakes, Cold War superpower politics (Baker Fox 1959; Rothstein 1966, 1968; Vital 1967; Keohane 1969; East 1973; Plischke 1977). Their UN membership – which in itself has become a cherished signifier of sovereign status – was considered a 'problem' to the extent that a scientific status report was commissioned (Rapaport *et al.* 1971) and an appointed Committee of Experts sought (unsuccessfully, as it turned out) to develop language and protocol that would have treated small states to what amounted to second class status in the UN (Gunter 1977).

That a small or micro state is considered weak, vulnerable, and even an unreliable and stunted version of a larger, somewhat more appropriate state, is a paradigm that has gripped the imagination of many policy makers, even before the arrival of dozens of small states onto the world stage, but especially since the

final decades of the twentieth century, when many small states could look at their independence experience with some measure of disappointment. Susceptibility to natural disasters, remoteness, insularity, limited institutional capacity, limited commodity diversification, and a high degree of openness to price fluctuations, along with the whims of aid donors, tour operators, and foreign investors . . . these are the main component factors of economic vulnerability, factors which tend to be exogenous to small states and over which they have little, if any, influence or control (Alford 1984; Bray 1987; Bray and Packer 1993: 20; Commonwealth Consultative Group 1985; Commonwealth Secretariat/World Bank 2000; Diggines 1985; Harden 1985; Lyon 1985). The composite conditions of openness, a high trade-to-GDP ratio, and dependence on very few export commodities are claimed to render small states highly vulnerable to 'external shocks' (e.g. Briguglio 1995; Dolman 1985: 42; Dommen 1980: 936; Doumenge 1985: 86; Kaminarides *et al.* 1989; Wood 1967: 2). Championed by the Commonwealth Secretariat, adopted by the UN and the World Bank, leading to landmark international meetings like the SIDS conference in Barbados in 1994 and the follow-up in Mauritius in 2005, the rhetoric has become so pervasive and predictable that small states have possibly come to expect and believe it to be true. Diplomatic resources are deployed to (try and) convince the various powers that be that small states cannot survive without special measures, long transitional periods, exemptions, and fiscal and other bailouts.

The outcome of this international campaign remains mixed. The UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has developed a specific programme dedicated to SIDS since 1994 (Hein 2004). Most of the SIDS – the UN currently recognizes 38 – are remote, small in land area and population (less than 2 million), with a very narrow resource base, and fragile land and marine ecosystems that are highly vulnerable to natural disasters. Their economies are open and depend heavily on trade for national income. In contrast, the World Bank has only 'noted' the alleged vulnerability of small states; the World Trade Organization will not accept it, since it would open the floodgates for other requests for exemption; passionate arguments about the devastating impact of rising sea levels (especially on low-lying atoll archipelagos) have not led to policy changes (Baldacchino 2009). The most that can be realistically expected from international diplomatic efforts is support for 'capacity building' in order to nurture a domestic 'resilience' intended to combat or mitigate this inherent and chronic weakness (e.g. Briguglio *et al.* 2006). Titles of texts discussing the predicament of small states frequently feature ominous terms and phrases. Apart from 'vulnerability', these include: 'problems', 'dilemmas', 'small is dangerous', 'paradise lost' (Easterly and Kraay 2000: 2013), as well as 'sinking' or 'disappearing' (e.g. Markovich and Annandale 2000).

Small states have often been seen as synonymous to weak or failed states in political science literature, lumped in the same category as many larger developing countries. Even today, the definition of a 'small state' in politics and IR can include countries that are, or have felt, threatened by much larger neighbours such as Costa Rica, Cuba, Finland, Israel, Jamaica, Singapore, and Taiwan (e.g. Gayle 1986; Ingebritsen 2006). While the EU does not officially refer to small states, all EU member states

except the 'Big Six' (France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain and the UK) have been considered small in the political science literature (e.g. Thorhallsson 2000). The 53-member British Commonwealth, which can be credited with definitely putting the small state in the focus of international and regional policy, was galvanized into such action after the US military intervention in one of its members, the island state of Grenada, in 1983. Its concern with the vulnerability of a small but sovereign state to external intervention or invasion (Commonwealth Consultative Group 1985; Diggines 1985; Harden 1985; Lyon 1985; Bray 1987; Bune 1987; Charles 1997) has not really abated since, instead evolving to consider issues of economic and environmental sustainability (e.g. climate change and rising sea levels) as well as capacity building and good governance (e.g. Nath *et al.* 2011). Small, often island, states have also been increasingly seen as frontline zones in the struggle against arms trafficking, money, and drug laundering as well as illegal migration, requiring assistance to beef up their human, material, and technological infrastructure to adequately police their territorial lands and seas (e.g. Bartmann 2007; Sutton and Payne 1993).

Such widespread prejudice signals a tendency in the literature to consider 'large states' as 'normal', apart from preferable. And yet this is hardly the case in practice. Out of 266 jurisdictions listed in the 2011 edition of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) *World Factbook* (CIA 2011), only 11 have populations exceeding 100 million; while 160 have populations of less than 10 million (of which 41 have a resident population of under 100,000). Moreover, there is 'no widely accepted definition of a small state' (Crowards 2002: 143), nor is there any sharp or self-evident dichotomy or cut-off point between 'small' and 'large' states (Baehr 1975: 466). Indeed, cut-off points tend to shift and change on the basis of expediency in order to catch up with the population growth of outliers.<sup>2</sup>

Prejudiced nomenclature aside, there is a different, and much more optimistic, approach to the small polity. It is perhaps less self-evident and more subdued because it does not thrive on strident diplomacy. This is a pragmatic positioning which opines that smallness can provide a flexibility and adaptability that larger states cannot wield. The assumed logic of scale economies is questioned, especially where this is applied to political systems. The undercurrent leitmotifs here are self-reliance, authenticity, self-management, popular democratic participation, and a plausible reaction against mass anonymity and insignificant peripherality. This approach connects easily with ideas dating back to Plato and Rousseau that small is beautiful, practical, and 'possible' (Schumacher 1973: Chapter 5; Kohr 1973; Berreman 1978: 235; McRobie 1981; Max-Neef 1982). This suppleness can be deployed both strategically and opportunistically. Against a global context of dynamism and uncertainty, it is argued that small polities are more vibrant, smart, versatile, and flexible; they stand a better chance of coping and surviving rapid change than do larger, monolithic, more staid, and complex systems (Blazic-Metzner and Hughes 1982: 86; Srinivasan 1986: 211; Sutton 1987: 18; Chiew 1993). Smaller countries are also claimed to practise more benign politics and to enjoy higher degrees of social cohesiveness (Kuznets 1960: 28; Knox 1967: 44; Dommen 1980: 942; Srebrnik 2004; Baldacchino 2005; but see Baldacchino, 2012a).

## **Political status and economic scorecards**

Talking about economic strategy highlights the proactive qualities that a small polity, be it an SIDS or an SNIJ, has by virtue of being a polity, with a slate of jurisdictional and regulatory instruments at its disposal. Nevertheless, in a world where 'the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must' (Thucydides 1972[431bc]: 402), we must temper our analysis with the realization that small states cannot and do not always plan their future. Just as they are reluctant price takers in the open market of goods and services, they are also reluctant policy takers in the open world of international political economy. Indeed, small states typically spend more time and effort exploiting opportunities that may arise – and for which they may not have planned at all. While meant to be supple and flexible, since they are in principle expected to regularly accommodate to changes at any point in time, small states may appear fragile and threatened by exogenous change. They may suffer large swings and lurches in economic wealth, however measured (e.g. Cali *et al.* 2011).

The economic development trajectory of many small polities is, after all, not typically an outcome of a well-laid out plan. It may look so in retrospect; it may be presented so by the media and government spin doctors who may see, and hence establish, a method to the madness. It also looks good on microstate governments and their leadership who are, after all, meant to govern and thus exercise some control over their economic destiny. Instead, when the development trajectories of small economies are profiled from the vantage point of the strategic flexibility used by small states (at multiple levels as individuals, household units, corporate entities, and complete jurisdictions), one sees these actors seeking to exploit opportunities and maximize economic gains in a turbulent and dynamic external environment with which they must engage. These actors keep alive and nurture a portfolio of skills and revenue streams which enables them to migrate inter-sectorally and trans-nationally (Baldacchino and Bertram 2009; Baldacchino 2011). It is in relation to these opportunities that one should plausibly rationally and critically address the benefits or otherwise of full independence versus sub-national autonomy for the world's smallest polities.

Meanwhile, we are confronted with two clusters of small, mainly island territories that provide living experiments of not just the pliability of sovereignty but also of the manner in which independence can or cannot translate into citizen affluence and economic development. Indeed, it is somewhat ironic that while the analysis of one of these clusters – the SIDS – still remains driven by vulnerability considerations, an analysis of the second cluster – of the SNIJs – suggests a markedly different set of endowments. When McElroy and Sandborn (2005) compare socio-economic and demographic data from 19 SIDS with that of 16 SNIJs, both sets hailing from the Caribbean and the Pacific, the difference in the results is statistically significant (to 0.025 or 0.001 levels) for no less than 17 of 25 distinct variables. This warrants the authors to claim, somewhat daringly, that 'the dependents . . . have come to represent a new, successful, insular development case' (*ibid.*: 11). This empirical realization is supported by the political economy

of small jurisdictions, which is patterned in such a way as to suggest two broad 'economic developmental' routes. Both models apply to SIDS and SNIJs alike.

(a) *MIRAB*

The MIRAB model (Bertram and Watters 1985, 1986) remains the most popular for explaining the predicament of most SIDS. The key hypothesis states that a class of economies and societies now exists in which the combined effect of Migration, Remittances, Aid and Bureaucracy (hence MIRAB) '*determines* [rather than supports] the evolution of the [economic] system' (Bertram and Watters 1985: 497; emphasis in original). The notion of 'autonomous economic growth' in specific contexts is simply 'false' (Watters 1987: 33). The MIRAB concept remains appealing (Bertram 2006) and may have even assumed the stature of a self-fulfilling prophecy, especially in the South Pacific.

The MIRAB route reveals itself as a standard 'regional development' tactic for peripheral regions and territories the world over. In cases with metropolitan cores and stagnant peripheries – and where aren't there? – the MIRAB cluster of features constitutes the classic response to assuage the ailments of those on the edge, particularly if accompanied by a dominant ideology of professed redistribution and equalization; that is, unless the central power 'is prepared to see living standards slide' (Bertram and Watters 1985: 513). After all, the standard measures used by the core to support the periphery include an element of workfare (bureaucracy within MIRAB) and transfer payments (aid within MIRAB). Meanwhile, migration, internal this time, is also likely from the periphery to the centre, as people – particularly the young, the skilled, the educated, the ambitious – search for work and an even better education, occasionally visiting relatives back home or sending them gifts in cash/kind (migration in MIRAB). The novelty of MIRAB, other than the fancy yet meaningless acronym, lies in identifying uncannily similar patterns operating *between* states as well as *within* them.

MIRAB comes across as a pragmatic, welfare-maximizing strategy in line with the theory of competitive advantage (Poirine 1998: 91); it now may, or may be seen to, legitimize, justify, and lock into place such an 'economic-development strategy' in the long term (Treadgold 1999). As long as sources of revenue (a combination of remittances and/or aid) remain secure and as long as the shifting fortunes of any such 'external' source are adequately compensated for by similar 'external' alternative sources, then that is all that really matters. This is an unorthodox, parasitic, perhaps perverse manner of earning one's keep in the world; but nevertheless effective and in its own way sustainable (Bertram and Watters 1985: 512; Bertram 1993: 257; Poirine 1998). The basis of acute dependency can change; but not dependency itself. The art of politics becomes the securing and locking in of such a dependency mechanism. Politicians secure domestic support on the basis of how strongly and effectively they are seen in procuring aid and other rentier income from external sources.

The SNIJs that are most exemplary of locked-in dependency are the current nine 'outermost regions' of the EU (of which only one is not an island)



whose predicament is enshrined in Article 349 of the Treaty on the EU. Such language assures the permanence of the development constraints and stifles initiatives towards escaping or reducing dependency. It simply cannot get better than this:

Taking account of the structural social and economic situation of Guadeloupe, French Guiana, Martinique, Réunion, Saint-Barthélemy, Saint-Martin, the Azores, Madeira and the Canary Islands, which is compounded by their remoteness, insularity, small size, difficult topography and climate, economic dependence on a few products, the permanence and combination of which severely restrain their development, the Council . . . shall adopt specific measures . . . [These measures concern such areas] as customs and trade policies, fiscal policy, free zones, agriculture and fisheries policies, conditions for supply of raw materials and essential consumer goods, State aids and conditions of access to structural funds and to horizontal Union programmes. [They are] aimed, in particular, at laying down the conditions of application of the Treaties to those regions, including common policies.<sup>3</sup>

There are examples of MIRAB economies amongst both SIDS and SNIJs. When conceived in 1985, Bertram and Watters applied the label to just five Pacific island micro-territories, two of which were recently independent states (Kiribati, Tuvalu), with the other three being semi-autonomous, subnational jurisdictions (Cook Islands, Niue, Tokelau). Twelve years later (Bertram 1999), Western Samoa (now Samoa), Tonga, French Polynesia, Federated States of Micronesia, other small US-associated Pacific Territories, and Rapa Nui – as well as the outlying islands of so-called ‘non-MIRAB’ island states, such as Fiji, Papua New Guinea, and the Solomon Islands – were added to the pioneering five or noted to have been added by other researchers. By 1998, the US Virgin Islands, Saint Helena, St-Pierre et Miquelon, and Mayotte had been added to the list from beyond the Pacific basin (Poirine 1998). McElroy and Morris (2002) identify and confirm four African island polities as MIRABs: Cape Verde, Comoros, and São Tomé e Príncipe (all SIDS), and Mayotte (an SNIJ). We have been told that ‘all SPINs [South Pacific Island Nations] match to a greater or lesser degree the model of rent-dependent MIRAB’ (Fleming 2002: 6). Connell (1991: 252, 270) had argued that the model is applicable, to a greater or lesser degree, to most SIDS, since most of them have moved ‘from subsistence to subsidy’ (*ibid.*). It is not merely the economic system described, but the model itself, which appears to be durable and persistent.

#### *(b) PROFIT*

The MIRAB approach is well aligned to the vulnerability thesis: small states and territories would have no other way to survive were it not for regular financial transfers from other countries. But one can conceptualize economic and political strategies for small states and territories that are *not* driven by the siphoning of

aid (by governments) and remittances (by households). These strategies are more proactive and depend much more on the nurturing of specific, local, jurisdictional capacities, or powers. They comprise the management of external relations but, unlike in the MIRAB case, this is done 'by means of domestic policies and governing institutions' (Warrington 1998: 101). There is evidence that a few policy areas have been especially targeted by small states and territories for the flexing of their jurisdictional powers as an economic resource: 'people considerations' affecting citizenship, residence, and employment rights (P); resource management (R); overseas engagement and ultra-national recognition (O); finance (FI); and transportation (T). The resulting acronym is PROFIT. PROFIT economies therefore differ from their MIRAB counterparts by being more interested in a shrewd immigration and cyclical migration policy; engaging in tough external negotiations concerning the use of local mineral, natural, political, environmental, and other 'imaginative' resources; securing and controlling viable (possibly subsidized) means of transportation; and luring foreign direct investment via low tax and other attractive finance regimes. They flex their jurisdictional powers to affect the international flows of financial and human capital, cargo, and tourism (Baldacchino 2006, 2010b).

Both the MIRAB and PROFIT models constitute approaches towards tapping externally generated wealth that goes beyond agricultural, manufacturing, industrialization, and commodity production strategies. Both are as likely to exhibit 'bureaucratic dominance' (Watters 1987: 50), given structural diseconomies of scale. And both are likely to depend substantially on 'rent income' which accrues by virtue of identity and location (Bertram and Watters 1985: 510). The one key difference between MIRAB and PROFIT lies in the priority given to substantive as against procedural interests. The first – when successful – is an end in itself; the second is a means to a further end. The first relegates the MIRAB territory to a regime of subsidy, of 'aid with dignity' (Connell 1998), of consumer-led growth without development, of seeking the responsibility for economic benefits in exogenous, extraterritorial policy fora. The second – when successful – is a jurisdictional or constitutional tool, an endogenous instrument for public policy which local 'governing wits' (Warrington 1998: 105) can usually transform into economic prosperity. Attitude matters. Likely island candidates to be lauded for the (thus far) successful use of the PROFIT approach would include both small island states (which have graduated beyond SIDS) and SNIJs: Åland, Aruba, Bermuda, Barbados, Cyprus, Malta, Mauritius, and the Seychelles.<sup>4</sup>

### **Dyadic, mainland–island relations: what's in it for the island?**

Whether dealing with SIDS or small, non-independent polities that have considerable degrees of autonomy and self-determination (SNIJs), what I hold to be crucial is the flexing of sovereignty, understood as domestic jurisdictional power, for strategic gain and leverage.

This is a 'game' that can be played with very different intentions in mind. Each set of actors would have its dynamics nested in a particular configuration of

geography, history, culture, and politics. Moreover, the contested jurisdictional terrain would appear differently, depending on the perspective of either party. Nevertheless, one can hypothesize that each set of such actors is likely to consist of two unequal players: a smaller, less powerful, less populated entity and a larger, stronger, more populated entity. The stage is set for the deployment of some 'imaginative geographies' (Saïd 1979).

For the smaller player, the purpose of extra-territorial deals would mainly be to secure, for example, pecuniary gain, military protection, currency stability, and welfare supports via the drawing of rent and other surpluses from other jurisdictions directly, or from the citizens thereof (Fabri and Baldacchino 1999: 48; Palan 1998: 630; 2002: 154; 2003: 59; Poirine, this volume). Also important is access to diplomatic channels via direct international representation (Gad, this volume) and access to the labour markets and citizenship rights of larger richer states (particularly Oostindie, and Muller, this volume). For those considering or boasting an offshore finance or electronic gam(bl)ing industry, extra-territorial links allow (at least a semblance of) international oversight and regulatory supervision (Maurer, this volume). Autonomous governments 'choose' to use some of their sovereignty-derived regulatory powers in order to encourage non-local transnational actors – be they individuals, corporations, or other governments – to make use of, invest in, or simply to transfer funds to their own regulatory environment (Baldacchino 2012b; Hudson 2000: 270; Maurer, and Vlcek, this volume). The smaller faction, of course, never completely relinquishes the potential resort to the metropole, if and when dire straits (e.g. budgetary shortfalls, economic recessions, environmental disasters, over-population, labour surpluses, or labour shortages) so determine or suggest. No wonder, therefore, that few of these smaller territories have struggled *for* independence; most have waged intense diplomatic struggles to maintain or extend benign colonial links with their overseas *patron*, at times going so far – as demonstrated by Mayotte in a 2009 referendum – as to press for integration, the very antithesis of sovereignty (France 2011; Muller, this volume). Various small states and territories today may not have just deployed but actually traded in their sovereignty, or part thereof, in exchange for economic largesse by exploiting this limbo granted by peripherality. Palan (2002: 172) argues that such polities have gone so far as to have prostituted their sovereign rights.

Non-sovereign, sub-national units may exercise their own right and ability to make laws – which, granted, *may* have been devolved or bestowed formally or constitutionally by sovereign states – in order to perform this task. Many 'dependencies' of sovereign states have resorted to their own 'actorness' (e.g. Vlcek 2008: 3) to develop strategy games precisely because they *can* do so given that they have the right to make their own laws within their territories: a crucial attribute of sovereignty that can also be claimed by, or accorded to, such subnational non-independent units (Palan 2003: 21). These candidates may have actually perfected the skill to a higher level, since their own, often fuzzy and ambiguous, political status allows them to exploit more nimbly, selectively, and securely the spaces afforded by going after rents, or 'jurisdictional shopping', for

other purposes. Many of these places embody the broad personalities of federal or confederal cultures: a combination of self-rule and shared rule; of 'leave us alone' along with 'let us in' on major decisions affecting the national or collective whole (Duchacek 1986: 296).

Small sub-national jurisdictions have managed to extract concessions, either *within* the ambit of a larger, sovereign state and/or (typically in alliance with their patron state) within the ambit of a confederate super-state such as the EU. Key areas where such unequal arrangements have been secured to date include citizenship rights (with associated rights of residency, property purchase, and work permit – Oostindie, and Poirine, this volume); indigenous self-government (Brown, and Gad, this volume); paradiplomacy (Maurer, Vlcek, Brown, Poirine, and Gad, this volume); and economic sovereignty. All four areas question the strict definition of sovereignty and its imputed exclusive powers and obligations: regarding single citizenship; equal rights for all citizens; the rights of international representation; and local government transactions, respectively.

The view from the larger, richer, patron is markedly different. From there, small sovereign states or autonomous sub-units within the purview of the state could simply be seen as troublesome upstarts, to be suffered (Oostindie, this volume) and perhaps occasionally appeased (Gad, this volume). They could also be seen as objects of design, however; regulatory spaces that can be crafted and deliberately engineered by central governments (or their elites), eager to exploit these spaces as distinctly (and preferably discreetly) 'managed' zones for economic, commercial, military, or security-related activities in a globalized economy (Palan, and Muller, this volume) – perhaps to the chagrin or despair of any local inhabitants. Small jurisdictions, often islands surrounded by large swathes of ocean territory which they can hardly patrol or exploit, also make ripe and willing targets for soft and 'politically correct' imperialism.

Thus, from the perspective of small island territories, there are very plausible reasons to aspire to an 'arms' length' relationship with a larger, benevolent 'mainland' patron. McElroy and Mahoney (2000) explain how the smaller players in these unequal dyads derive substantial economic advantages from the arrangement. These include free trade with, and export preference from, the parent country; social welfare assistance; ready access to external capital through special tax concessions; access to external labour markets through migration; aid-financed infrastructure and communications; higher quality health and educational systems; natural disaster relief; and provision of costly external defence. Autonomy without sovereignty may also facilitate tourism development because of easier terms of access and security.

Meanwhile, the rationale for these metropole-island arrangements is scarcely one-sided. The logic for 'mainland-island relations' becomes clearer when seen in the context of states requiring unique offshore spaces outside the straitjacket of the increasingly restrictive, 'level-playing field' rules of international law, human rights, and free trade among sovereign states in the contemporary neo-liberal age. Islands provide bounded spaces for the emergence of ingenious new species of asymmetrical economics and governance practices. The pattern repeats itself

over and over again, where typically large states make creative use of their small, far-flung, and remote island jurisdictions to facilitate activities that would be simply anathema on home ground. Being entrepreneurial about sovereignty is a task not restricted to the world's small and micro polities (Baldacchino 2010).

## Sovereignty in flux

The relationships among most mainland–island dyads are far from smooth or settled. Asymmetrical federalism is by definition perpetually subject to negotiation. In 2005, Jeju Island became a ‘special administrative province’ of South Korea, enjoying even more autonomous powers (Chosun Ilbo 2005), while the Bermuda Independence Commission visited London for high-level talks (Sanders 2005). In 2006, Tokelau rejected a move to independence in free association with New Zealand following a referendum (Scoop Independent News 2006). A non-binding referendum on Greenland's extended autonomy was held in 2008 and was approved by 75 per cent of voters. And Mayotte, the French overseas territory, became the 101st *département* of France (and its 5th *département d'outre-mer*) on 29 March 2011 following a 2009 referendum approved by over 95 per cent of voters (Muller, this volume).

The fluidity of the mainland–island arrangement is enhanced precisely because it is both federal (and thus involves multilevel governance, which presents competing claims for legitimacy and policy competence) and asymmetrical (where the striking of idiosyncratic or special deals and outcomes is often preferred). The relationship is liable to perpetual shifts, nuances, and changes; and ‘full sovereignty’ (whatever that phrase may imply in the twenty-first century) remains a viable option and vision, should it be impossible to work out decent terms for a subnational solution. Suitable examples of this critically fluid nature of governance would include Bougainville (Ghai and Regan 2009), with the recent changing nature of that island's status towards autonomy either within, or possibly independent from, Papua New Guinea. In such and similar cases, the issue of renegotiation may be fractious: the terms of the relationship may be the subject of civil strife, guerrilla movements, or other forms of internal warfare, diplomatic tension and independence leaning political parties (Baldacchino and Hepburn 2012). These may take the guise of ‘infra-nationalism’, which is a political and institutional structure beyond the constitution, a *de facto* island (or sub-island) state apparatus existing in a taunting defiance of the main state, with which relations are not harmonious. This has also occurred in recent decades in such diverse places as Aceh, Corsica, Cyprus, Irian Jaya, Mindanao, New Caledonia, and Sri Lanka (Weiler 1991).

This state of variability is often represented in an expression of an ambivalent, ‘love–hate’ nationalism. The smaller (island) player is often demonstrably proud of its own (sub?-)national identity, captured also by explicitly showcased cultural differences (in language, religion, history, ethnic composition, political ideology, and other identity symbols such as flags, anthems, currency, monuments, and emblems) from its larger player. Yet it may refer to a benign, special relationship with the larger player for the purpose of defending its prized autonomy and self-determination (from the threat of international piracy, general insecurity, or

irredentist neighbouring states; Muller, this volume). If the relationship lies in discord, local political movements and the public at large are likely to see, and play upon, the image of the larger player in a colonial or imperialist light, whether as blissfully ignoring its legitimate appeals; or (worse), unfairly and insensitively pushing its weight around, swamping their fundamental rights to self-determination. The larger player, in contrast, would tend to react (if at all) by invoking obligations towards order, national equity and fairness, social cohesion, and regional stability as well as against renegade, destabilizing, and quirky politics. The situation 'on the ground' is usually far more complex, with different political parties, social classes, and other social groupings on the island, on the mainland, elsewhere (as in interested regional and international powers), and in between (the influential island diaspora and the expatriate island community), championing and expressing their preference for one or more of what could be a bewildering range of relational solutions (e.g. Ramos and Rivera 2001: 1–21).

### **Agitating for full sovereign status**

What becomes evident from these dynamics is that sub-national units can target specific functions and powers which they then seek to secure: *de facto*, *de jure*, or any which way in between. While always dependent on context, all of the functions and powers typically associated with sovereignty can present themselves for negotiation. But this is not to neglect the drive and achievement of full independence from the equation. Admittedly, the drive by former colonies pressing for, and achieving, full sovereignty has stalled somewhat since Brunei Darussalam achieved its independence in 1984. Were it not for Kosovo, Montenegro, and East Timor, along with the three special cases of the Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands, and Palau, the latest decades would have seen no examples of newly independent small states. And yet there is no shortage of potential candidates: the UN Special Committee on Decolonization still monitors 16 'non self-governing territories' (of which 14 are islands). Meanwhile, various other territories have decided that they would rather retain or enhance some aspects of autonomy while remaining or seeking integration with their colonial power rather than seek to secede from it, at times after holding independence referenda.

It may sound ironic that such an autonomy arrangement is also more likely to be gained and secured where there are movements or political parties agitating for full independence in these sub-national territories. Quebec has had two dramatic 'independence referenda' (in 1980 and 1995) and is now (November 2012) again run by a sovereigntist (albeit minority) government. In some cases, territories are bracing for eventual independence referenda (Bougainville, New Caledonia, Scotland) or may entertain fresh referenda for the same purpose (Tokelau, Nevis). There are independence-leaning parties or movements in places like Åland, Bermuda, Bougainville, Corsica, the Balearics/Catalonia and the Basque Country (Spain), Faroes, French Polynesia, Greenland, Guam, Hawai'i, Nevis, New Caledonia, Okinawa/Ryukyu, Padania (Northern Italy), Puerto Rico, Québec, Rodrigues (Mauritius), Sardinia, Scotland, Sicily, Taiwan, Tobago, Wales, and Zanzibar.

Such initiatives may appear surprising at a time when there are clear economic and security advantages in being associated with a larger, richer, metropolitan patron. For all its benefits, sovereignty may prove powerless in stemming fiscal collapse: recent fiscal crises in Iceland, Ireland and Greece offer cases in point. Strong arguments – cultural, fiscal, economic, and political – in favour of full independence remain. Many can arise out of sheer frustration with existing autonomy arrangements. The presence and activities of independence-leaning political parties and movements can also contribute significantly to the successful negotiation and securing of even more generous measures of autonomy from (sometimes hesitant, sometimes accommodating, otherwise indifferent) metropolitan powers. Peoples with a distinct history and culture, often a distinct language – and often psychologically facilitated by islandness – can claim an equally distinct ethnic/national identity, which then develops into what are seen as rightful claims towards self-government or decolonization, as supported by the international community. This awareness and mobilization can be facilitated by the existence of autonomy arrangements which enable the territory to flex its capacity and potential for even more self-government.

Yet for the very same reasons, identifiable ethnic, cultural, or linguistic minorities *within* sub-national units can become concerned with and militate against movements towards secession. The aboriginal peoples of Northern Québec (primarily the Cree and Inuit) vehemently resisted the possibility of having the province break away from Canada, organizing their own referenda on independence (and heavily rejecting the independence option). The Shetland Islands are not supportive of an independent Scotland; the Marquesas are not keen on an independent French Polynesia; and the citizens of the island of Suduoy are the least keen on an independent Faroes (Baldacchino and Hepburn 2012). The presumed divisibility of potential new states can become a major political issue in itself, liable to be exploited by the federalist camp. Unlike small and single island territories, sprawling archipelagos and large continental masses are more likely to harbour diverging sentiments and views on full independence. Such episodes have been played out in places like Anguilla (see above), Mayotte (Muller, this volume), and Tuvalu (which refused independence as part of larger Kiribati and secured its own independence) (McIntyre 2012).

## **A wealth of diversity**

The assorted and dynamic examples of federal ‘self-rule’ and ‘shared-rule’ arrangements between SNIJs and their metropolises, as described above, are a continuing testament to the rich governance systems, with all their anomalies and asymmetry, remaining after the retraction of the Western empires. Moreover, these delicate arrangements between metropolises and their maritime dependencies have in turn been absorbed and ‘grandfathered’ at the supranational level within the EU. In their vast majority, then, these examples from the world’s sub-national (mainly island) jurisdictions show a remarkable pattern of mutual accommodation and convenience between large (often metropolitan) states and their offshore

islands. It is usually not in the interests of either party to push these islands into straightforward sovereignty, as was so often the case in the decades immediately following the Second World War, even if such a path was realistically feasible. Now, both seem to prefer a negotiated bilateral partnership that can take its place within the highly variegated 'federal' landscape of governance within the modern world. 'Sovereignty association' appears to be a more savoury and palatable moniker than stark sovereignty (e.g. Béland and Lecours 2006; Lecours 2011). Of course, the metropolitan state may also harbour an evident embarrassment over these remnants of empire and the continuing burden that they may present.

The patterns and motivations on each side for current non-sovereign constitutional arrangements are messy and do not always move in the same direction or remain constant from one case to the next. In any event, the contemporary global political and legal geometry is more complex than it has ever been and obliges the rethinking of older notions of sovereignty and the international state system. Upholding and distinguishing strict 'sovereign' from 'non-sovereign' entities in international practice was never consistently followed in the past and is even less tenable today, as power is increasingly pooled among and across states and reconfigured and redistributed from and within national territories. This practical spirit increasingly animates the arrangements of many offshore islands with their metropolitan partners, where small sovereign states would seek special deals that allow transfers of sufficient rentier income from richer nations; while non-sovereign island jurisdictions would wish to preserve, or even enhance, their asymmetrical status and autonomous powers rather than take the risk of joining the ranks of sovereign states themselves. The latter position, of course, appears somewhat timid and self-defeating from the perspective of those who grew up in the heady days of colonial emancipation following the Second World War; but it is no longer so. Opting for non-sovereign jurisdictional status is a highly rational, strategic choice that can result in substantial net material and security gains for the smaller jurisdiction. Such judgements should not be lightly or ideologically dismissed, particularly at a time when security concerns are real and when sovereignty for most islands has largely failed to deliver relatively high levels of economic prosperity (McElroy and Parry 2012). Being a sub-national island jurisdiction typically bestows a solid safety net supported by a metropolitan patron while granting enough discretion to safeguard national identity, local culture, and the general exercise of local power. McElroy and Pearce (2006) refer to a 'superior level of performance' by sub-national island jurisdictions. Meanwhile, the metropolitan player can exercise 'soft imperialism' (which does not typically raise eyebrows among the members of the UN Committee on Decolonization), keep a watchful eye for potentially lucrative geostrategic military or economic rents, and lavish its munificence upon its small island beneficiaries.

### **Conclusion: ignoring the siren call**

Contemporary island territories would therefore appear wise to ignore the siren call of sovereignty *à la vingtième siècle* and cut their arrangements more pragmatically and creatively. Such pragmatism manifests itself clearly, for example, in the



muddy but lucrative waters of paradiplomacy, no longer the exclusive preserve of sovereign states (Bartmann 2009; Kelman *et al.* 2009). There are obviously many circumstances where sovereignty will prove itself to be the most logical or compelling course of action: such would explain the independence of East Timor, Montenegro, and Kosovo (e.g. Bahcheli *et al.* 2004) and Southern Sudan in 2011. And there are many examples of (often small) island sovereign states succeeding beyond all expectations and where the tools of sovereignty have been a vital element in this success. A good case study would be Iceland; but even here, as Kristinsson (2000) argues, the continued utility of undiminished sovereignty together with non-membership of the EU will depend on circumstances. Surely this is the point: the appropriate political architecture and jurisdictional status for any small island polity can preferably only be known after careful review of all its options – current and likely in the foreseeable future – undertaken in a clear-sighted and level-headed spirit (e.g. Le Rendu 2004). For our purposes, there certainly appears to be every reason to expect small islands making this kind of review to continue to opt for contoured, negotiated, constitutional arrangements in the future (e.g. Dodds 2002), and weighing carefully how and what kind of sovereignty would benefit or hinder such a quest. In the context of Europe, potential EU membership – a possibility which only exists for overseas territories via a European metropole state – would be an important consideration in this context.

I started this chapter with a reference to the Dutch Antilles; it appears fitting to end with another episode drawn from the same region. When the Dutch colony of Suriname was making preparations to achieve full independence in 1975, the Surinamese premier, Henck Arron, contacted his counterpart in the Dutch Antilles, Juancho Evertsz, and asked him whether he would lead his islanders to join Suriname into full sovereignty. The blunt answer: 'If you allow yourself to be hung, it does not mean that I will do the same' (quoted in Hoeftje and Oostindie 1991: 75). So far, at least, history has proved Evertsz right.

## Notes

- 1 Somalia, a widely recognized sovereign state, independent since 1960, with a population of over 9 million and a seat in the UN, has very much been a failed state since its 1991 implosion. Meanwhile, Somaliland (population 3.5 million), an as yet undeclared independent state, effectively broken away from Somalia in 1991 and has been administering itself and democratizing since (Srebrnik 2003; The Economist 2005). It 'actually feels like a proper country' (The Economist 2010).
- 2 For many years, the cut-off point for 'small states' was a population of 1 million; this was raised to 1.5 million and later to 2 million due to the growing populations in small African states such as Botswana, Lesotho, Mauritius, Namibia, and Swaziland.
- 3 Consolidated versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2010:083:FULL:EN:PDF>.
- 4 A third cluster of variables that may explain small state economic strategy posits tourism as the key industry. Tourism comes with 'genuine comparative advantages' for many small, and especially island, states (Connell 1991: 265). Tourism may help graduate jurisdictions out of a MIRAB mould; however, tourism is in itself a rent-accruing activity bearing its own 'geo-strategic' (that is sun, sea, sand – and sex?) services,

which hardly vest jurisdictional muscle in the provider; the industry remains fickle and vulnerable, mainly to economic uncertainty and local and regional political instability. Small island tourism economies (SITES) were originally proposed as a distinct, small state development syndrome (McElroy 2006), but have been re-labelled more recently as a subspecies of the PROFIT syndrome (Oberst and McElroy 2007; Parry and McElroy 2009).

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