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# SOCIAL COHESION, GOVERNANCE AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN SMALL STATES

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**Abstract.** Being small is often considered to be synonymous with being powerless and vulnerable. Indeed, small jurisdictions generally have no choice but to be exposed to the vagaries of globalisation. However, sound socio-economic and governance policies can offset what are often construed as structural and inherent handicaps. Thus, while small states are more economically vulnerable, they often adopt policies to compensate for this. This chapter will discuss the relationship between social cohesion, governance and social development. The focus is on social cohesion which, it is hypothesised, is a major contributing factor to economic resilience building.

## 1. Introduction

Small island states face significant challenges associated mainly with their small size, insularity and remoteness when trading and competing in the global market, including limited ability to reap the benefits of economies of scale and high transport costs (Winters and Martins, 2004). They also tend to be highly exposed to external shocks due to their high dependence on international trade (Briguglio et al., 2006). Despite these disadvantages, several small island states have managed to survive through trade, often by capitalising on preferential trading agreements, using their sovereignty, developing small transient market niches which create quasi-rents, and through support from remittances and aid (Prasad, 2004). In fact, some small states have excelled in small-scale, high-value products and have put to good use their island identity (Baldacchino, 1999; Connell, 2006; Prasad and Raj, 2006).

Briguglio (1995) and Briguglio et al. (2006) have identified the inherent weaknesses of small economies, notably exposure to external shocks. They argued that sound economic policies, aimed at promoting macroeconomic stability and microeconomic market efficiency, are likely to provide answers as to why some small states are able to withstand or bounce back from economic shocks and attain economic success.

However, apart from these economic factors, Briguglio et al. (2006) associate social development with the success of small states. Recently, the concept of “resourcefulness” of small economies has attracted attention from scholars (Baldacchino, 2005). It is important to keep in mind that economic development is the result of human activity and that therefore, social aspects should be given major importance in this regard.

In small states, one often finds closely-knit, integrated communities with highly personalised relationships, with a high degree of communal involvement and consensus in decision-making. Armstrong and Read (1998: 570) emphasise that small states generally are highly homogenous, have higher levels of cohesion and greater sense of identity, which leads to having higher levels of the social capital necessary for economic growth.

This chapter will discuss the relationship between social cohesion, governance and social development. The focus is on social cohesion, which, it is hypothesised, is a major contributing factor in this regard.

The chapter is organised in 4 sections. Section 2 discusses the relationship between social development and good governance. Section 3 focuses on social cohesion and examines whether small states are more socially cohesive than other groups of countries. Section 4 concludes the study with some policy implications.

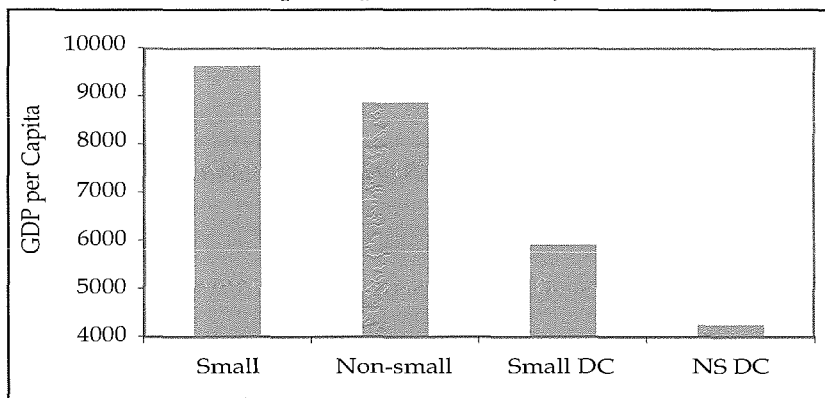
## **2. Small States, Governance and Social Development**

It has been shown in various studies that small developing states, as a group, tend to perform better economically than larger ones (for example Milner and Westaway, 1993; Armstrong and Read, 1998; Easterly and Kraay, 2000). They also tend to register higher per-capita income, as confirmed in Figure 1, which shows that GDP per capita of developing countries with a population of 1.5 million or less is, on average, higher than that of larger developing countries.

Small developing countries, on average, also tend to have higher scores on the Human Development Index (HDI) compared to larger developing countries (Gatt, 2005). If we remove the income component of the HDI, leaving the education and health indices, the overall better performance of small states remains, as shown in Figure 2.

A possible explanation for these findings is that small states adopt better social policies, which translate into better social and economic outcomes. There is a long list of studies that discuss this link (Baldacci et al., 2004).

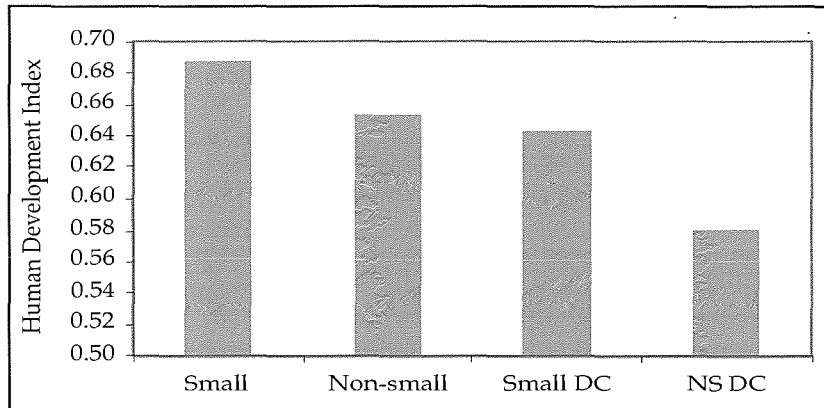
**Figure 1**  
**GDP per Capita and Country Size**



Source: *World Development Indicators* (2006)

Legend: Small = Countries with a population of 1.5 million or less  
 Non-Small = Countries with a population of more than 1.5 million  
 DC = Developing countries, i.e., low-income or middle-income countries based on the World Bank definition.

**Figure 2**  
**The Human Development Index (HDI) and Country Size (2000-2004)**



Source: United Nations Development Programme (2006)

Legend: Same as Figure 1

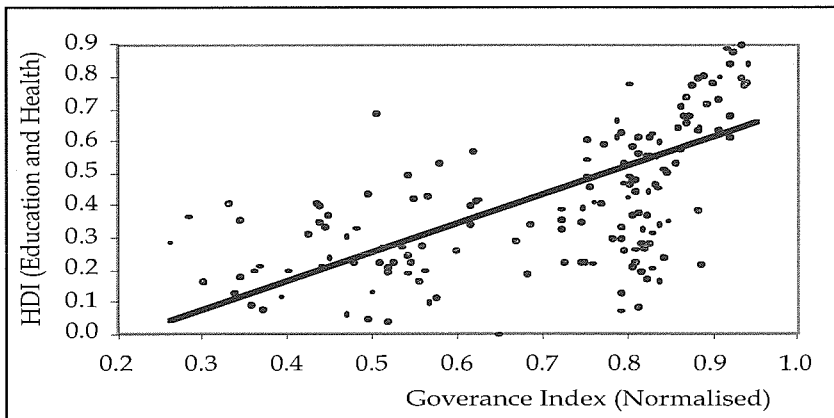
### *Democracy and Social Policies*

Most small states are governed democratically (Anckar, 2002; 2004). One may expect that democracies (countries having competitive elections) tend to spend more on social services compared to autocratic regimes, as democratic governments who strive to be re-elected tend to give priority to those services that are demanded by the majority of the

population such as education and health. Many empirical studies show that democracy has a positive impact on spending social services, especially on education (Brown and Hunter, 1999; Plümper and Martin, 2003; Avelino et al., 2005; Grauwe and Magdalena, 2005; Rudra and Stephan, 2005; Stasavage, 2005).

For this reason, it can also be hypothesised that better governed countries also tend to have higher social development indicators such as HDI. Figure 3 shows this relationship, and indicates that there is positive correlation between the HDI and governance (sourced from Kaufman et al., 2006).

**Figure 3**  
**The Relationship between Governance and HDI**



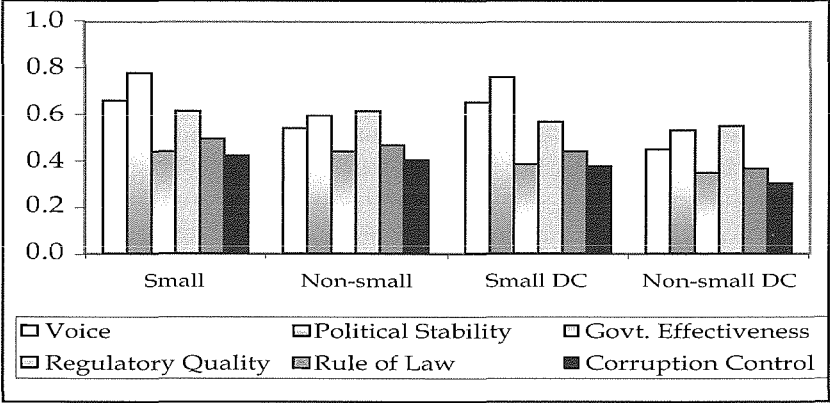
Source: Kaufmann et al. (2006) and UNDP (2006).

One can therefore presume that small states, which were shown to register relatively high HDI scores, also register high governance scores. This is confirmed in Figure 4, which shows that small countries tend to have on average better governance indicators when compared to larger countries. In particular, the figure shows that voice and accountability and government effectiveness are directly relevant to social spending and social indicators.

### 3. Social Cohesion and Small States

Social cohesion can mean different things to different people. For some, social cohesion implies social inclusion, for others it is social capital, and yet others associate social cohesion with institutional factors (Easterly et al., 2006; Jenson, 2007). Indicators of social cohesion therefore depend on the definition adopted.

Figure 4  
The Relationship between Governance and Size of Countries



Source: Kaufmann, Kraay et al. 2006

There is an association between social cohesion and social capital. Baldacchino (2005: 32) defines social capital as “resourcefulness of a people to respond positively, collectively and responsibly to an identified political, economic, labour-related or social challenge.” Social capital is built through social and civic institutions, binding people in a network to facilitate in enforcing norms, behaviour, reciprocity, trust, and exercising sanctions. It is also built through frequent interaction between decision-makers and the citizens. All this leads to greater social cohesion.

To examine whether social cohesion in small states tends to be higher than in larger states, we construct a social cohesion (SC) index, which combines data on five variables, namely prison population rates (PR), suicide rates (SR), life (dis)satisfaction index (LF), ethnic fractionalisation (EF), and the Gini Coefficient for income distribution (GC). These variables were normalised and then summed and averaged, so that the Social Cohesion Index ranges from 0 to 1.

The Social Cohesion Index is therefore constructed as follows:

$$SC_i = (PR_i + SR_i + LF_i + EF_i + GC_i) / 5$$

We then inversed the scores, so that the higher the score on the Social Cohesion Index, the more cohesive the country.

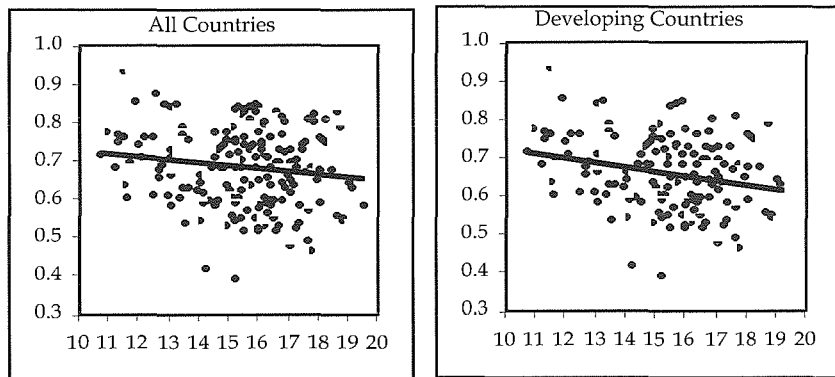
The data for the components of the Index are presented in Appendix 1, which also gives the data sources. There are 77 countries that have all the five variables of the SC, including 14 small states. For countries that have less than two variables missing, we calculated the Social Cohesion

Index using the existing three or four variables. The full sample includes 175 countries (40 are small states).

Figure 5 shows the relationship between the Social Cohesion Index and size of countries, in terms of population. It can be seen that there is a negative relationship between the two variables with, however, a weak correlation coefficient. If, however, only developing countries are considered, the relationship becomes more pronounced. Figure 6 again shows that, in general, small states, most of which are islands, attain relatively high social cohesion scores. If developing countries are considered separately, the difference is even more marked.

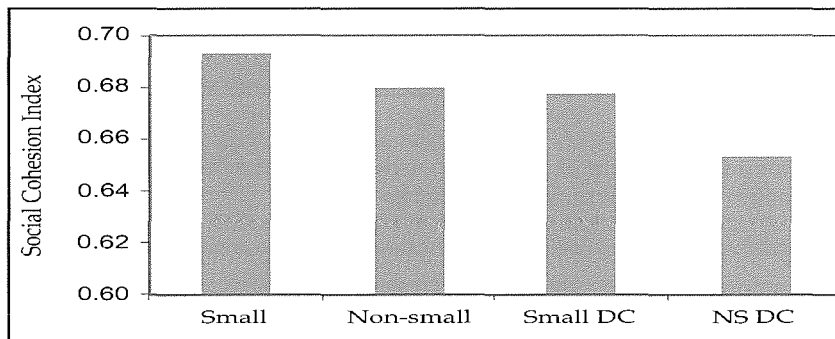
These findings would seem to suggest that in developing countries the attributes of smallness, and possibly islandness, are associated with cohesion amongst the population of a country. When considered

**Figure 5**  
**The Relationship between Social Cohesion and Size of Countries**



Source of Social Cohesion Index: Calculation by author (See Appendix 1)

**Figure 6**  
**Social Cohesion and Size of Countries**



Legend: Same as Figure 1

together, the results presented in this chapter would seem to suggest that small states tend to have a relatively high per-capita income and HDI scores, as well as relatively high social cohesion scores, when compared to larger countries.

#### *Some Caveats*

There are however some caveats to this finding especially relating to the ethnic diversity indicator. Firstly, not all small states are economically and socially successful. There are small states in the Pacific, Indian Ocean, Atlantic and Caribbean regions that register relatively low GDP per capita and are relatively underdeveloped economies. Secondly, not all small states are well governed. Again, there are small states, located in all regions, that are experiencing ethnic or political conflicts. Thirdly, some small states are characterised by relatively low levels of social cohesion. A number of small islands are multicultural and multi-ethnic, and therefore tend to have higher levels of “ethnic diversity” which may contribute to lower levels of social cohesion. This is partly linked to the history of these states. Colonial powers moved people across regions and continents mainly for economic reasons, particularly to create pools of labour in countries where this resource was required. This is the case for the Caribbean countries. Slaves were brought from Africa to work on plantations in the Caribbean. Later, when slavery was abolished, indentured labourers were taken from India to work on sugarcane plantations. These populations stayed on the islands and became part of the multicultural country. Smallness (or islandness) is no guarantee against ethnic, cultural or religious cleavages. This has been demonstrated in various Pacific and Caribbean small island states.

#### **4. Conclusion**

There are many reasons why a country succeeds in achieving higher levels of economic and social development. As mentioned earlier, economic and political factors are important contributors in this regard. However, there may be social forces at work also. This chapter has shown that social cohesion may be the channel through which small states tend to have better governance institutions, which leads to better outcomes in social and economic development.

There is the issue as to the direction of causality, that is, does economic and social development lead to improved social cohesion or is social cohesion the explanatory variable? This question is not likely to be settled conclusively through empirical testing, but it is suggested here that the promotion of social cohesion is an underlying condition for social and

economic success, in that social cohesion is likely to be an enabling factor in this regard. Social cohesion should provide answers as to why smaller countries tend to attain relatively high levels of development.

An important policy implication that can be derived from this study is that social policy that seeks to enhance social cohesion is also likely to enhance the chances of economic success. Another implication is that attempts to strengthen the economic resilience of small states, in order to enable them to better withstand or bounce back from external shocks, should also assign due regard to social considerations.

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### Appendix 1

#### Data Utilised to Construct the Cohesion Index

	PP	SR	GC	LD	EF	AS	SC
Albania	0.136	0.040	0.281	0.540	0.220	0.243	0.757
Algeria	0.127	--	--	0.480	0.339	0.315	0.685
Angola	0.044	--	--	0.520	0.787	0.450	0.550
Antigua and Barbuda	0.284	0.000	0.530	0.260	0.164	0.248	0.752
Argentina	0.163	0.088	0.523	0.320	0.255	0.270	0.730
Armenia	0.104	0.019	--	0.630	0.127	0.220	0.780
Australia	0.125	0.109	0.310	0.270	0.093	0.181	0.819
Austria	0.108	0.172	0.237	0.220	0.107	0.169	0.831
Azerbaijan	0.202	0.012	0.505	0.510	0.205	0.287	0.713
Bahamas	0.462	0.037	0.460	0.230	0.423	0.322	0.678
Bahrain	0.095	0.027		0.280	0.502	0.226	0.774
Bangladesh	0.059	--	0.317	0.430	0.045	0.213	0.787
Barbados	0.384	0.007	0.390	0.270	0.142	0.239	0.761
Belarus	0.426	0.368	0.341	0.600	0.322	0.411	0.589
Belize	0.461	0.075	0.400	0.310	0.702	0.390	0.611
Belgium	0.091	0.213	0.295	0.270	0.555	0.285	0.715
Benin	0.075	--	0.461	0.460	0.787	0.446	0.554
Bhutan	--	--	0.340	0.240	0.605	0.395	0.605
Bolivia	0.082		0.633	0.450	0.740	0.476	0.524
Botswana	0.329		--	0.460	0.410	0.400	0.600
Brazil	0.219	0.044	0.612	0.370	0.541	0.357	0.643
Brunei Darussalam	0.137	--	--	0.240	0.542	0.306	0.694
Bulgaria	0.148	0.132	0.345	0.570	0.402	0.319	0.681
Burkina Faso	0.023	--	--	0.260	0.738	0.340	0.660
Burundi	0.088	--	--	0.700	0.295	0.361	0.639
Cambodia	0.058	--	--	0.440	0.211	0.236	0.764
Cameroon	0.125	--	0.442	0.490	0.864	0.480	0.520
Canada	0.107	0.117	0.301	0.240	0.712	0.295	0.705
Cape Verde	0.178	--	--	0.420	0.417	0.338	0.662
Central African Rep.	0.024	--	--	0.510	0.830	0.455	0.546
Chad	0.035	--	--	0.550	0.862	0.482	0.518
Chile	0.262	0.105	0.595	0.350	0.186	0.300	0.700
China	0.119	0.139	0.332	0.370	0.154	0.223	0.777
Colombia	0.128	0.053	0.574	0.280	0.601	0.327	0.673
Comoros	0.030	--	--	0.410	0.000	0.147	0.853
Congo	0.022	--	--	0.430	0.875	0.442	0.558
Congo, DR	0.057	--	--	0.670	0.875	0.534	0.466

Legend and sources:

PP: Prison Population Rate: Source: International Center for Prison Studies, available at: <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/depsta/rel/icps/home.html/>.

SR: Suicide Rate (suicides per 100,000). Source World Health Organisation, available at [http://www.who.int/mental\\_health/prevention/suicide/suiciderates/en/](http://www.who.int/mental_health/prevention/suicide/suiciderates/en/).

GC: Gini Coefficient for Income Distribution. Source: World Development Indicators and various IMF reports.

LD: Life (Dis)satisfaction index: Source: Marks et al. (2006).

EF: Ethnic Fractionalisation. Source: Alesina et al. (2003).

AS: Average score of the 5 components.

SC: Social Cohesion Index (1- AS).

**Appendix 1 (continued)**  
**Data Utilised to Construct the Cohesion Index**

	PP	SR	GC	LD	EF	AS	SC
Costa Rica	0.187	0.069	0.501	0.250	0.237	0.249	0.751
Croatia	0.093	0.200	0.310	0.410	0.369	0.276	0.724
Cuba	0.531	0.135	--	0.370	0.591	0.407	0.593
Cyprus	0.083	--	0.340	0.310	0.094	0.207	0.793
Czech Republic	0.186	0.158	0.234	0.360	0.322	0.252	0.748
Denmark	0.067	0.137	0.391	0.180	0.082	0.171	0.829
Djibouti	0.061	--	--	0.520	0.796	0.459	0.541
Dominica	0.437	--	0.350	0.270	0.200	0.314	0.686
Dominican Republic	0.143	0.018	--	0.300	0.429	0.222	0.778
Ecuador	0.094	0.062	0.560	0.440	0.655	0.362	0.638
Egypt	0.087	0.001	0.378	0.520	0.184	0.234	0.766
El Salvador	0.174	0.082	0.538	0.340	0.198	0.266	0.734
Equatorial Guinea	--	--	--	0.480	0.347	0.413	0.587
Eritrea	--	--	--	0.560	0.652	0.606	0.394
Estonia	0.333	0.214	0.374	0.490	0.506	0.383	0.617
Ethiopia	0.092	--	0.297	0.530	0.724	0.411	0.589
Fiji	0.112	--	0.490	0.330	0.548	0.370	0.630
Finland	0.068	0.206	0.250	0.230	0.132	0.177	0.823
France	0.085	0.183	0.276	0.340	0.103	0.197	0.803
Gabon	0.196	--	0.480	0.380	0.769	0.456	0.544
Gambia	0.032	--	0.400	0.430	0.786	0.412	0.588
Georgia	0.401	0.023	0.456	0.590	0.492	0.392	0.608
Germany	0.093	0.132	0.266	0.280	0.168	0.188	0.812
Ghana	0.055	--	--	0.380	0.673	0.369	0.631
Greece	0.091	0.032	0.323	0.370	0.158	0.195	0.805
Grenada	0.372	--	0.450	0.350	0.266	0.360	0.640
Guatemala	0.057	0.022	0.558	0.300	0.512	0.290	0.710
Guinea-Bissau	--	--	0.470	0.460	0.808	0.579	0.421
Guyana	0.260	0.273	0.430	0.280	0.620	0.373	0.628
Haiti	0.052	--	--	0.450	0.095	0.149	0.851
Honduras	0.161	--	--	0.280	0.187	0.157	0.843
Hong Kong	0.156	0.188	--	0.340	0.062	0.187	0.814
Hungary	0.156	0.285	0.266	0.430	0.152	0.258	0.742
Iceland	0.036	0.120	--	0.220	--	0.125	0.875
India	0.030	0.107	--	0.460	0.418	0.254	0.746
Indonesia	0.052	--	0.341	0.340	0.735	0.367	0.633
Iran, Islamic Rep.	0.212	0.002	--	0.400	0.668	0.321	0.679
Ireland	0.072	0.098	0.295	0.240	0.121	0.165	0.835
Israel	0.209	0.063	0.372	0.330	0.344	0.263	0.737
Italy	0.067	0.073	0.320	0.310	0.115	0.177	0.823
Jamaica	0.182	0.002	0.386	0.300	0.413	0.256	0.744
Japan	0.061	0.242	--	0.380	0.012	0.174	0.826
Jordan	0.104	--	--	0.490	0.593	0.297	0.703
Kazakhstan	0.348	0.300	0.313	0.420	0.617	0.400	0.600
Kenya	0.130	--	--	0.440	0.859	0.476	0.524
Korea Republic of	0.096	0.238	--	0.420	0.002	0.189	0.811
Kuwait	0.130	0.020	--	0.280	0.660	0.272	0.728
Kyrgyzstan	0.285	0.090	0.491	0.340	0.675	0.376	0.624
Lao PDR	0.069	--	--	0.460	0.514	0.348	0.652

**Appendix 1 (continued)**  
**Data Utilised to Construct the Cohesion Index**

	PP	SR	GC	LD	EF	AS	SC
Latvia	0.292	0.257	0.336	0.530	0.587	0.400	0.600
Lebanon	0.168	--	--	0.440	0.131	0.246	0.754
Lesotho	0.127	--	--	0.570	0.255	0.317	0.683
Libyan Arab Jam.	0.217	--	--	0.430	0.792	0.480	0.520
Lithuania	0.235	0.421	0.355	0.530	0.322	0.373	0.627
Luxembourg	0.160	0.147	0.264	0.240	0.530	0.268	0.732
Macedonia	0.099	0.068	0.282	0.510	0.502	0.292	0.708
Madagascar	0.091	--	0.474	0.420	0.879	0.466	0.534
Malawi	0.083	--	--	0.540	0.674	0.432	0.568
Malaysia	0.164	--	--	0.260	0.588	0.337	0.663
Mali	0.033	--	--	0.470	0.691	0.398	0.602
Malta	0.086	0.060	0.300	0.250	0.041	0.147	0.853
Marshall Islands	0.073	--	0.540	--	0.060	0.224	0.776
Mauritania	0.026	0.082	0.390	0.470	0.615	0.317	0.684
Mauritius	0.153	--	0.370	0.350	0.463	0.334	0.666
Mexico	0.198	0.040	0.523	0.310	0.542	0.323	0.677
Micronesia, F. S.	0.079	--	0.410	--	0.701	0.397	0.604
Moldova	0.247	0.173	0.436	0.650	0.554	0.412	0.588
Mongolia	0.244	--	--	0.330	0.368	0.314	0.686
Morocco	0.161	--	--	0.440	0.484	0.362	0.638
Mozambique	0.051	--	--	0.460	0.693	0.401	0.599
Namibia	0.267	--	--	0.350	0.633	0.417	0.583
Nepal	0.026	--	--	0.450	0.663	0.380	0.620
Netherlands	0.128	0.094	0.257	0.250	0.105	0.167	0.833
New Zealand	0.183	0.120	--	0.260	0.397	0.240	0.760
Nicaragua	0.114	0.074	0.542	0.370	0.484	0.317	0.683
Niger	0.046	--	--	0.550	0.652	0.416	0.584
Nigeria	0.029	--	--	0.450	0.851	0.443	0.557
Norway	0.075	0.116	0.282	0.260	0.059	0.158	0.842
Oman	0.081	--	--	0.270	0.437	0.263	0.737
Pakistan	0.057	--	--	0.570	0.710	0.446	0.554
Panama	0.337	0.063	0.578	0.280	0.553	0.362	0.638
Papua New Guinea	0.069	--	--	0.370	0.272	0.237	0.763
Paraguay	0.098	0.031	--	0.350	0.169	0.162	0.838
Peru	0.139	0.009	0.493	0.440	0.657	0.347	0.653
Philippines	0.108	0.021	0.495	0.360	0.239	0.245	0.756
Poland	0.236	0.163	0.346	0.410	0.118	0.255	0.745
Portugal	0.120	0.112	0.359	0.390	0.047	0.206	0.794
Qatar	0.055	--	0.380	0.300	0.746	0.370	0.630
Romania	0.150	0.128	0.318	0.480	0.307	0.276	0.724
Russian Federation	0.628	0.362	0.455	0.570	0.245	0.452	0.548
Rwanda	0.170	--	--	0.560	0.324	0.351	0.649
Samoa	0.123	--	0.440	0.310	--	0.291	0.709
São Tomé and Príncipe	0.083	0.009	--	0.330	--	0.141	0.859
Saudi Arabia	0.132	--	--	0.270	0.180	0.194	0.806
Senegal	0.053	--	--	0.440	0.694	0.396	0.604
Serbia	0.117	0.196	0.376	--	0.574	0.316	0.684
Seychelles	0.174	0.046	0.470	0.260	0.203	0.230	0.770
Sierra Leone	0.028	--	--	0.500	0.819	0.449	0.551

**Appendix 1 (continued)**  
**Data Utilised to Construct the Cohesion Index**

	PP	SR	GC	LD	EF	AS	SC
Singapore	0.309	0.101	0.481	0.310	0.386	0.317	0.683
Slovak Republic	0.155	0.136	0.265	0.460	0.254	0.254	0.746
Slovenia	0.065	0.259	0.236	0.340	0.222	0.224	0.776
Solomon Islands	0.042	--	--	0.310	0.111	0.154	0.846
South Africa	0.335	--	--	0.430	0.752	0.506	0.494
Spain	0.147	0.083	0.313	0.300	0.417	0.252	0.748
Sri Lanka	0.114	0.307	0.540	0.390	0.415	0.353	0.647
St Kitts and Nevis	0.604	--	0.370	0.260	0.184	0.284	0.716
St Lucia	0.303	0.077	0.430	0.300	0.177	0.257	0.743
St Vincent /Grenadines	0.312	0.034	0.560	0.280	0.307	0.299	0.701
Sudan	0.036	--	--	0.640	0.715	0.464	0.536
Suriname	0.356	0.121	0.460	0.270	0.733	0.388	0.612
Swaziland	0.247	--	0.610	0.580	0.058	0.374	0.626
Sweden	0.079	0.133	0.263	0.230	0.060	0.153	0.847
Switzerland	0.079	0.175	0.306	0.180	0.531	0.254	0.746
Syrian Arab Republic	0.058	0.001	--	0.490	0.540	0.272	0.728
Tajikistan	0.149	0.026	--	0.390	0.511	0.269	0.731
Tanzania	0.113	--	0.367	0.450	0.735	0.416	0.584
Thailand	0.249	0.079	0.438	0.350	0.634	0.350	0.650
Timor-Leste	0.041		0.350	0.340	--	0.244	0.756
Togo	0.065	--	--	0.510	0.710	0.428	0.572
Tonga	0.089		0.420	0.340	0.087	0.234	0.766
Trinidad and Tobago	0.288	0.129	0.400	0.310	0.648	0.355	0.645
Tunisia	0.263	--	0.406	0.360	0.039	0.267	0.733
Turkey	0.112	--	0.398	0.470	0.320	0.325	0.675
Turkmenistan	0.489	0.087	--	0.600	0.392	0.392	0.608
Uganda	0.088	--	0.546	0.530	0.930	0.524	0.476
Ukraine	0.345	0.252	0.444	0.640	0.474	0.431	0.569
United Arab Emirates	0.288	--	--	0.260	0.625	0.391	0.609
United Kingdom	0.148	0.071	0.346	0.290	0.121	0.195	0.805
United States of Am.	0.750	0.111	0.462	0.260	0.490	0.414	0.586
Uruguay	0.193	0.155	0.445	0.370	0.250	0.283	0.717
Uzbekistan	0.184	0.056	0.481	0.360	0.413	0.299	0.701
Vanuatu	0.053	--	0.580	0.260	0.041	0.234	0.766
Venezuela	0.074	0.051	0.458	0.260	0.497	0.268	0.732
Vietnam	0.116	--	--	0.390	0.238	0.248	0.752
Yemen	0.083	--	--	0.380	--	0.232	0.769
Zambia	0.122	--	--	0.510	0.781	0.471	0.529
Zimbabwe	0.136	0.079	--	0.670	0.387	0.318	0.682