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LILLIPUTIANS AND THE AMORPHOUS GIANT: SMALL STATES' OPPORTUNITIES FACING THE HYBRID THREAT

by

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In the 21st century strategic environment, small states face new security challenges caused by emerging great powers. These new powers seek to achieve their political goals in small states by avoiding major military escalation and focusing on combinations of statecraft and non-military means. This "hybrid threat" has strong implications for small states' national security. This thesis explores small states' vulnerabilities and opportunities across the political, military, economic, social, and informational (PMESI) spectrum to outline a favorable posture toward a great power hybrid threat. The hybrid threat is characterized, and small states' opportunities and vulnerabilities are delineated. A systems-thinking approach is applied to assess how opportunities and vulnerabilities influence the relationship between large powers and small states, contributing to the small state's ability to manage and counter a great-power hybrid threat. Three historical cases are analyzed to assess favorable or unfavorable postures for a small state and the interactive dynamics of these opportunities and vulnerabilities. Ultimately, the study shows that the great-power hybrid threat can be significantly lessened by a small state's posture, namely by the interactions between its opportunities and vulnerabilities across the PMESI spectrum. By exploiting this systemic interaction, a small state can decisively influence a conflict with a great power and effectively limit the hybrid threat's effects.

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LILLIPUTIANS AND THE AMORPHOUS GIANT: SMALL STATES' OPPORTUNITIES FACING THE HYBRID THREAT

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ABSTRACT

In the 21st century strategic environment, small states face new security challenges caused by emerging great powers. These new powers seek to achieve their political goals in small states by avoiding major military escalation and focusing on combinations of statecraft and non-military means. This "hybrid threat" has strong implications for small states' national security. This thesis explores small states' vulnerabilities and opportunities across the political, military, economic, social, and informational (PMESI) spectrum to outline a favorable posture toward a great power hybrid threat. The hybrid threat is characterized, and small states' opportunities and vulnerabilities are delineated. A systems-thinking approach is applied to assess how opportunities and vulnerabilities influence the relationship between large powers and small states, contributing to the small state's ability to manage and counter a great-power hybrid threat. Three historical cases are analyzed to assess favorable or unfavorable postures for a small state and the interactive dynamics of these opportunities and vulnerabilities. Ultimately, the study shows that the great-power hybrid threat can be significantly lessened by a small state's posture, namely by the interactions between its opportunities and vulnerabilities across the PMESI spectrum. By exploiting this systemic interaction, a small state can decisively influence a conflict with a great power and effectively limit the hybrid threat's effects.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Association Agreement
ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States
AGA	Asociación General de Agricultura
ARA	American Republics Area
AS	Active Sum
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organization
CU	Customs Union
DCFTA	Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area
DPP	Democratic Progressive Party
DPR	Donetsk People's Republic
EEC	European Economic Community
EFP	Enhanced Forward Presence
EPA	Economic Partnership Agreement
EU	European Union
FSB	Federal'naya sluzhba bezopasnosti (Federal Security Service)
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HT	Hybrid Threat
IGO	Intergovernmental Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IRCA	International Railways of Central America
IT	Information Technology
KMT	Kuomintang
LPR	Luhansk People's Republic
MCDC	Multinational Capabilities Development Campaign
MNLF	Moro National Liberation Front
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NIE	National Intelligence Estimate
OAS	Organization of American States
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PD	Produced Delay
PeoPo	People's Post
PfP	Partnership for Peace
PGT	Partido Guatemalteco del Trabajo
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PMESI	Politic, Military, Economic, Societal, Informational
PRC	People's Republic of China
PS	Passive Sum
RD	Received Delay
RMA	Revolution in Military Affairs
ROC	Republic of China
SBU	Sluzhba Bezpeky Ukrayiny (Ukrainian Security Service)
SOF	Special Operations Forces
TECRO	Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Offices
TRA	Taiwan Relations Act
UFCO	United Fruits Company
UN	United Nations
UNIAN	Ukrainian Independent Information Agency of News
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
USIA	United States Information Agency
VOH	Voice of Han
VOS	Voice of the Strait
WTO	World Trade Organization

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A Celia.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. IDENTIFY THE PROBLEM

Emerging great powers increasingly use a wide range of statecraft tools beyond conventional military means to coerce small states into agreeing to their political goals. They do this in an integrated, adapted and convergent way all while adhering to the principle of plausible deniability. For small states, classic defense strategies based on deterrence or membership in an alliance may be losing some of their value, especially against a more powerful state that, choosing a more comprehensive approach, does not rely on military means alone to coerce the smaller state. This evolution has strong implications for small states' national security. In recent decades, small states like Georgia, Ukraine, and the Baltics were primary targets of this approach. Because this so-called "hybrid threat" may not create the conditions to justify armed intervention by the international community or allies, small states currently must confront the real possibility of facing this threat by relying primarily on their own means. This challenge led to discussions among scholars and military organizations about the character of hybrid warfare and its implications for small states. Unfortunately, the debates and measures developed so far lack a more comprehensive approach and are limited mainly to military means.

B. OBJECTIVE AND RESEARCH QUESTION

The research objective is to identify small states' favoring conditions across the political, military, economic, social, and informational (PMESI) spectrum in countering a hybrid threat posed by a more powerful state. Because more powerful states now tend to choose more comprehensive approaches rather than relying on military means alone, smaller states should also seek to use all possible resources. Accordingly, this thesis explores the following research question:

How can a small state establish favorable conditions across the political, military, economic, social, and informational spectrum to defend itself against the hybrid threat from a more powerful state?

The answer to this research question should allow small states to develop a favorable posture to face a more powerful state's hybrid threat because—as political scientist Robert Keohane describes—"if Lilliputians will tie up Gulliver, they must be studied as carefully as the giant."[1]

C. SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

The area of inquiry involves three main elements: the hybrid threat, the small state, and the relationship between the small state and a more powerful state. The thesis analyzes this puzzle by drawing on three primary areas of academic research: theories about present and future conflicts, the relationship between great powers and small states, and small-state theories. The characteristics of hybrid conflicts and their intersection with the characteristics of small states can shine new light on successful strategies in effectively countering hybrid threats from more powerful states.

In Chapter II, this thesis defines the small state and performs a qualitative analysis of the current strategic environment and the concept "hybrid threat" to define more fully the framework of its characteristics. In Chapter III, via analysis of small-state theories, this study identifies vulnerabilities of and opportunities for small states across the political, military, economic, social, and informational spectrum. The thesis then matches vulnerabilities and opportunities with characteristics of the hybrid threat. This heuristic approach results in an analytical framework that can be applied to the chosen case studies.[2] Through a systems-thinking approach, this thesis applies the framework in order to identify any causal mechanism and causal relations between great powers' hybrid threats and small states' vulnerabilities and opportunities, as well as their influence on the dyadic relationship. Consequently, the thesis also applies the framework to define plausible favorable conditions for small states to counter hybrid threats posed by more powerful states.

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[1] Robert O. Keohane, "Lilliputians' Dilemmas: Small States in International Politics," *International Organization* 23, no. 2 (Spring 1969): 291–310.

[2] For further explanation about the heuristic theory building research approach see Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in The Social Science* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 73–88.

The Chapters IV to VI of the thesis include a comparative analysis of three contemporary case studies to identify trends in small states' vulnerabilities and opportunities when facing a great power. In Chapter IV, the first historical case study analyzes the coercive involvement of the United States in Guatemala between 1952 and 1954. The author chose this case study for five reasons. First, it represents an excellent example of a small-state–great-power coercive interaction during the Cold War period. Second, it represents a short-term interaction (some years to a decade). Third, this covert U.S. approach shares some characteristics with modern hybrid warfare; hence, it allows to explore whether it is possible to observe characteristics of hybrid warfare during the Cold War period and, therefore, to deduce consequences about small-state vulnerabilities and opportunities.[3] Fourth, this interaction shows fewer characteristics of the Cold War's proxy conflicts such as Korea, Cuba, Vietnam, and Afghanistan, or other conflicts that involved the United States and the Soviet Union as the main actors or supporters of the involved small state. Fifth, it directly involves one of the current (and at that time) world great power, the United States.

In Chapter V, the second case study analyzes the Russo-Ukrainian conflict from the 1990s until now. The author chose this case study for four reasons. First, many scholars and military institutions consider this conflict as an exemplary case of Russian hybrid warfare.[4] Second, it represents an example of a small-state–great-power interaction after the Cold War. Third, it represents a middle-term interaction (one to two decades). Fourth, the analysis of a second case study may reveal specific patterns in the Russian hybrid approaches, that can be exploited in the future by small states. This will allow for the exploration of analogies in Russia's current behavior toward other European small states, helping to identify and analyze vulnerabilities and opportunities for the future.

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[3] Nick Cullather, *Secret History: The CIA's Classified Account of Its Operations in Guatemala, 1952–1954* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006); Susanne Jonas, The Battle for Guatemala: Rebels, Death Squads, and U.S. Power (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1991).

[4] Artis Pabriks and Andis Kudors, *The War in Ukraine: Lessons for Europe* (Riga: University of Latvia Press, 2015); Guillaume Lasconjarias and Jeffrey Arthur Larsen, *NATO's Response to Hybrid Threats* (Rome: NATO Defense College, 2015).

In Chapter VI, the third case study analyzes the conflict between mainland China and Taiwan from the 1970s to the present day. The author chose this case for three reasons. First, in this case, the small state (Taiwan) can count on formal defensive support from another great power (the United States);[5] consequently, it is possible to observe the possible impact that this defensive alignment has on the opportunities and vulnerabilities of the small state. Second, it represents an example of a long-term small-state–great-power interaction beginning during the Cold War and lasting to this day. Third, this case affords the possibility of an analysis of whether the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Three Warfare strategy can be integrated into the general framework of hybrid threats.[6]

The author chose case studies covering a period, from the Cold War to the present day, for three reasons. First, it directly influences the current strategic environment. Second, since the concept of hybrid threats and warfare as well as other concepts from which it derives developed during this period, it is the period's primary strategic focus. Third, this period shows the development and impact of globalization, information technologies, and the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) on the strategic environment. Furthermore, to better highlight the severity and types of exploitation of great-power–small-state gaps and to include a diversity of great-power actors, this thesis purposely focuses on conflicts involving these three major powers: the United States, Russia, and China.

There are two reasons why the small states chosen for this study do not have nuclear weapons in their arsenal. First, the number of small states that have or are presumed to have nuclear weapons in their arsenal is, in relation to the number of small states in the world, not significant.[7] Consequently, any deduction from their vulnerabilities and

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[5] Government Publishing Office, "Public Law 96-8 – Apr. 10, 1979," accessed August 27, 2018, https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/STATUTE-93/pdf/STATUTE-93-Pg14.pdf

[6] Stefan Halper, *China: The Three Warfares* (Washington DC: Office of Net Assessment, U.S. Department of Defense, 2013); Sangkuk Lee, "China's 'Three Warfares': Origins, Applications, and Organizations," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 37, no. 2 (April 2014): 198–221.

[7] Israel, Pakistan and South Sudan have never signed the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and North Korea withdrew from the treaty later. Currently, Israel is alleged to possess some hundred warheads, Pakistan is a recognized nuclear power, both South Sudan and Taiwan do not officially possess nuclear weapons. For further information, see https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/npt/.

opportunities from owning nuclear weapons would most likely be too specific to the individual country to generate favorable conditions for small states in general. Second, the impact that the possession of a nuclear weapon has on the security policy of a small state has long divided scholarly opinion.[8] Accordingly, to keep a holistic approach and to avoid entering research fields that are tangential to this thesis, the small states chosen for case studies here do not include nuclear weapons in their arsenals.

The analysis of the three case studies will be based mainly on secondary sources. Due to the contemporaneity of the facts, it will be problematic to access de-classified confidential documents. Despite this, it will be possible to integrate primary sources such as decision-makers' statements and policies. This challenge leaves the way open for future researchers who may have more documentation available to conduct further analysis on these conflicts. These sources will allow the qualitative comparative analysis of the three case studies to formulate inductive theoretical assertions about favorable conditions for the small state's defense against a more powerful state's hybrid threat.

Finally, in the fifth chapter, the thesis will conclude by highlighting some implications for small-state national security strategy and formulate possible recommendations for small states on how to establish favorable conditions across the political, military, economic, social, and informational spectrum and defend sufficiently against hybrid threats from more powerful states.

D. LITERATURE REVIEW

To answer the research question, the thesis will draw on three primary areas of academic research: theories about present and future conflicts; the relationship between great and small powers; and small-state theories. The characteristics of the present conflicts and their intersection with the characteristics of small states, as well as their relationship with greater powers, may shed new light on the vulnerabilities and opportunities of small states, which may face a hybrid threat from more powerful states.

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[8] David Vital, *The Inequality of States: A Study of the Small Power in International Relations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967); Robert L. Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968); Keohane, "Lilliputians' Dilemmas."

To evaluate the applicability of non-military means of statecraft in conflicts, theories on soft power, political warfare and influence will be analyzed.[9] The thesis will compare and contrast theories about and concepts present in certain conflicts to define a framework that can be used to diagnose vulnerabilities of small states.

To understand the characteristics of modern and future conflict, it is necessary to analyze the seminal works of scholars John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, who recognized profound changes in the international system, noted the emergence of new technologies combined with the rise of malicious non-state actors as a main threat, and therefore announced the advent of new modes of war such as cyberwar and netwar.[10] The scholars Ivan Arreguín-Toft and Thaza Paul, who build on Andrew Mack's concept of "political vulnerability" and "interest asymmetry" regarding how weak states win asymmetric wars, analyze the characteristics of modern asymmetric conflicts and developed the concept of "strategic interaction."[11] The historian Thomas Huber advances a notional framework of compound warfare, arguing for the simultaneous use of asymmetrically-acting irregular forces and regular or conventional forces as one strategy for a weak actor to fight successfully against a more powerful one.[12] Other authors, such as Colonels James Callard, Peter Faber and Thomas Hammes, or the researcher William Lind who applies a holistic approach, developed the concept of warfare generations to explain the evolving character

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[9] Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008 [1966]); Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004); Basil Henry Liddell Hart, *The Strategy of Indirect Approach* (London: Faber, 1954); Alvin H. Bernstein, "Political Strategies for Coercive Diplomacy and Limited War," in *Political Warfare and Psychological Operations: Rethinking the U.S. Approach*, ed. Frank R. Barnett and Carnes Lord (Washington DC: National Defense University Press, 1989); Frank R. Barnett and Carnes Lord, *Political Warfare and Psychological Operations: Rethinking the U.S. Approach* (Washington DC: National Defense University Press, 1989); Thomas Wright, *All Measures Short of War: The Contest for the Twenty-First Century and the Future of American Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017); Robert D. Blackwill and Jennifer M. Harris, *War by Other Means* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).

[10] John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, *In Athena's Camp: Preparing for Conflict in the Information Age* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1997).

[11] Ivan Arreguin-Toft, *How the Weak Win Wars: A Theory of Asymmetric Conflict* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Thazha Varkey Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers*, vol. 33 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Andrew Mack, "Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars: The Politics of Asymmetric Conflict," *World Politics* 27, no. 2 (1975): 175–200.

[12] Thomas M. Huber, "Compound Warfare: A Conceptual Framework," in *Compound Warfare: That Fatal Knot*, ed. Thomas M. Huber (Honolulu, HI: University Press of the Pacific, 2002).

of modern conflicts.[13] The Chinese colonels Qiao and Wang propose in their study *Unrestricted Warfare* alternatives to direct military confrontation as a modern strategy for militarily and politically disadvantaged nations.[14] Dr. Frank G. Hoffman reconceptualizes the evolving characteristics of modern conflict into the concept of hybrid threats and warfare.[15] Despite the criticism of some representatives of the academic and military worlds, as well as of Hoffman himself, the "hybridity" concept is currently broadly applied to define present conflicts.[16] In part due to Russia's recent application of hybrid methods, many scholars and institutions have studied possible responses and approaches to this form

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[13] James Callard and Peter Faber, "An Emerging Synthesis for a New Way of War: Combination Warfare and Future Innovation," *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* (Winter/Spring 2002): 61–68; William S. Lind et al., "The Changing Face of War: into the Fourth Generation," *Marine Corps Gazette* (October 1989): 22–26; Thomas X. Hammes, *Insurgency: Modern Warfare Evolves into a Fourth Generation* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2005); Steven C. Williamson, "From Fourth Generation Warfare to Hybrid War" (research project, U.S. Army War College, 2009), https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a498391.pdf; Sergey G. Chekinov and Sergey A. Bogdanov, "The Nature and Content of a New-Generation War," *Military Thought* 4 (2013): 12–23.

[14] Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare* (Beijing: PLA Literature and Arts Publishing House Arts, 1999); Halper, *China: The Three Warfares*.

[15] Frank G. Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars* (Arlington: Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, 2007); Frank G. Hoffman, "Hybrid Warfare and Challenges," *Joint Force Quarterly* 52, (2009); Frank G. Hoffman, "Hybrid Threats: Reconceptualizing the Evolving Character of Modern Conflict," *Strategic Forum* 240, (April 2009).

[16] Frank G. Hoffman, "On Not-so-New Warfare: Political Warfare vs Hybrid Threats," *War on the Rocks* 28, (July 2014), https://warontherocks.com/2014/07/on-not-so-new-warfare-political-warfare-vs-hybrid-threats; Lasconjarias and Larsen, *NATO's Response to Hybrid Threats*; Daniel T. Lasica, "Strategic Implications of Hybrid War: A Theory of Victory" (monograph, Army Command and General Staff College School of Advanced Military Studies, 2009), https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a513663.pdf; John J. McCuen, "Hybrid Wars," *Military Review* 88, no. 2 (March/April 2008): 107; Timothy McCulloh and Richard Johnson, Hybrid Warfare, Report No. 13-4 (Tampa, FL: Joint Special Operations University, 2013); David L. Raugh, "Is the Hybrid Threat a True Threat?," *Journal of Strategic Security* 9, no. 2 (Summer 2016): 1–13; Williamson, "From Fourth Generation Warfare to Hybrid War;" Paul Brister, William H. Natter, and Robert R. Tomes, *Hybrid Warfare and Transnational Threats: Perspectives for an Era of Persistent Conflict* (New York: Council for Emerging National Security Affairs, 2011).

of warfare, however mainly from a military perspective.[17] Distinct from Hoffman's hybridity concept, Michael Mazarr defines present security challenges as "competitive interactions among and within the state and non-state actors that fall between the traditional war and peace duality," namely in a "gray zone."[18] Avoiding the limited explanatory power of labels, the chief of the Russian General Staff, General Valery Gerasimov, argues that present and future conflicts show a more significant proportion of non-military means than military ones.[19]

To define the small state, it is first necessary to analyze and understand its characteristics. There are two main theoretical approaches for this. The first, applied by scholars such David Vital, Maurice East and Franz von Däniken, favors characteristics based on two main categories of capabilities: quantitative (e.g., population, gross domestic product, military expenditure, and territorial size) and qualitative (e.g., the level of influence that a state has on its environment).[20] The second approach, supported by scholars such as Robert Rothstein and Robert Keohane, favors a perceptual approach based on the state's people and institutions, which perceive themselves as small.[21] Based on these

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[17] Michael Aaronson et al., "NATO Countering the Hybrid Threat," *Prism* 2, no. 4 (2012): 111–24; Aapo Cederberg and Pasi Eronen, "How Can Societies Be Defended against Hybrid Threats," *Strategic Security Analysis. Geneva Centre for Security*, no. 9 (2015); David Eugene Johnson, *Military Capabilities for Hybrid War: Insights from the Israel Defense Forces in Lebanon and Gaza* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2014); Michael Kofman and Matthew Rojansky, "A Closer Look at Russia's' Hybrid War'," *Kennan Cable*, no. 7 (April 2015): 8, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/7-KENNAN%20CABLE-ROJANSKY%20KOFMAN.pdf; Andrew Radin, *Hybrid Warfare in the Baltics: Threats and Potential Responses* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2017); Frank Steder, "Countering Hybrid Warfare: The Best Uses of SOF in a Pre–Article V Scenario," *Combating Terrorism Exchange (CTX)* 6, no. 4, (November 2016): 7–18; Martin Zapfe, "'Hybrid' Threats and NATO's Forward Presence," *Policy Perspectives* 4, no. 7 (September 2016): 1–4.

[18] Michael J. Mazarr, *Mastering the Gray Zone: Understanding a Changing Era of Conflict* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: United States Army War College Press, 2015); Philip Kapusta, "The Gray Zone," Special Warfare, (October-December 2015); Hal Brands, "Paradoxes of the Gray Zone," *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, (February 2016), https://www.fpri.org/docs/brands_-_grey_zone.pdf; Frank G Hoffman, "The Contemporary Spectrum of Conflict: Protracted, Gray Zone, Ambiguous, and Hybrid Modes of War," *The Heritage Foundation*, (2016), 25–36.

[19] Valery V. Gerasimov, "Tsennost' Nauki v Predvideniyi [Prevision is what science is valued for]," *Military Industrial Kurier*, no. 27 (February 2013).

[20] Vital, *The Inequality of States*; Maurice A. East, "Size and Foreign Policy Behavior: A Test of Two Models," *World Politics* 25, no. 4 (July 1973): 556–76; Franz Von Däniken, "Is the Notion of Small State Still Relevant?," in *Small States Inside and Outside the European Union*, ed. L. Goetschel (Dordrecht, NL: Kluwer Academic Publisher, 1998).

[21] Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers*; Keohane, "Lilliputians' Dilemmas."

two approaches, it is possible to develop a definition of small-state power that allows further analysis of a small state's characteristics.

The behavior of small states in international relations is typically studied from three main perspectives. The first one, based on (neo-)realist theory, studies behavior regarding capabilities.[22] The second, based on neoliberal institutionalism, analyzes small-state behavior as apparent through its institutions.[23] The third, sharing some likeness with theories about social constructivism, favors a relations-based approach to the field of inquiry.[24] Another approach to analyzing the interaction between small states and other state actors in the international system is related to their foreign policy behavior and diplomacy.[25] Based on political scientist James Rosenau's influential work, scholars such as Jeanne Hey apply a comparative foreign policy approach by developing a framework based on three levels of analysis (system, state, and individual leaders) to identify small state foreign policy behavior.[26] Yet other scholars, such as the international relations specialist Ronald Barston, Robert Steinmetz, and Anders Wivel, focus on goals, challenges, and opportunities related to the smallness of these states.[27]

A further field of inquiry to characterize small states is related to their economy and their response to economic change. The scholar Peter Katzenstein refers to democratic

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[22] Annette Baker Fox, *The Power of Small States: Diplomacy in World War II* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959); David Vital, *The Survival of Small States: Studies in Small Power/Great Power Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971).

[23] Peter J. Katzenstein, *Small States in World Markets: Industrial Policy in Europe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985); Michael I. Handel, *Weak States in the International System* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

[24] Neal G. Jesse and John R. Dreyer, *Small States in the International System: At Peace and at War* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2016).

[25] Fox, *The Power of Small States*.

[26] James N. Rosenau, "Pre-Theories and Theories of Foreign Policy," in *Approaches to Comparative and International Politics*, ed. R. Barry Farrell (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University, 1966): 27–93; Jeanne A. K. Hey, *Small States in World Politics: Explaining Foreign Policy Behavior* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003).

[27] Hey, *Small States in World Politics*; Ronald P. Barston, *The Other Powers: Studies in the Foreign Policies of Small States* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1973); Robert Steinmetz and Anders Wivel, *Small States in Europe: Challenges and Opportunities* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

corporatism as distinguishing elements of European small-state economies.[28] The political scientist Baldur Thorallsson, although agreeing with the importance of corporatism expressed by Katzenstein, suggests considering more heavily the size and the particular characteristics of small administrations.[29] Other scholars such as Lino Briguglio, who applies an inductive approach, develop specific frameworks to diagnose and operationalize the economic resilience of small states.[30]

Another critical small-state characteristic has to do with their strategies regarding security. In an attempt to ensure their security, states develop different approaches. One theoretical approach, supported by scholars such as Rothstein and British diplomat and political scientist Alyson Bailes, analyzes the advantages and disadvantages of alliances from a small-state perspective.[31] Conversely, other scholars such as the historian Efraim Karsh and political scientists Christine Agius and Karen Devine analyze how neutrality is a useful instrument for small-state security policy.[32] Other security studies researchers such as Bernard Loo, Håkan Wiberg, and Martin Hurt explore a third approach to this field of inquiry that is more focused on military affairs and those challenges from a small state's standpoint.[33]

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[28] Katzenstein, *Small States in World Markets*.

[29] Baldur Thorhallsson, "The Size of States in the European Union: Theoretical and Conceptual Perspectives," *European Integration* 28, no. 1 (2006): 7–31.

[30] Lino Briguglio, Gordon Cordina, and Eliawony J Kisanga, *Building the Economic Resilience of Small States* (London: Formatek Publishing for the Islands and Small States Institute of the University of Malta and the Commonwealth Secretariat, 2006).

[31] Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers*; Alyson J. K. Bailes, Bradley A. Thayer, and Baldur Thorhallsson, "Alliance Theory and Alliance 'Shelter': The Complexities of Small State Alliance Behaviour," *Third World Thematics: A TWQ Journal* 1, no. 1 (August 2016): 9–26; Insu Choi, "Small States and The Balance of Power" (master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 1995), http://hdl.handle.net/10945/31415; Olav F. Knudsen, "Of Lambs and Lions: Relations Between Great Powers and Their Smaller Neighbors," *Cooperation and Conflict* 23, no. 3 (1988): 111–22.

[32] Efraim Karsh, *Neutrality and Small States* (London: Routledge, 1988); Christine Agius and Karen Devine, "'Neutrality: A Really Dead Concept?' A Reprise," *Cooperation and Conflict* 46, no. 3 (2011): 265–84.

[33] Bernard Loo, *Military Transformation and Strategy: Revolutions in Military Affairs and Small States* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009); Håkan Wiberg, "The Security of Small Nations: Challenges and Defences," *Journal of Peace Research* 24, no. 4 (1987): 339–63; Martin Hurt, *Lessons Identified in Crimea: Does Estonia's National Defence Model Meet Our Needs* (Tallinn: International Centre for Defence Studies, 2014).

The impact of social structures also characterizes small states. Social segmentation within small states can have far more devastating effects than in larger states. For this reason, scholars such as Stephanie Neuman and Val Lorwin have studied the implication of both successful and failing national political integrations, arguing that internal cohesion and division may be directly related to pressure from the international environment rather than to existing ethnocultural or political divisions within the society itself.[34]

In the information age, media has a decisive impact on states at different levels. This impact is even more significant on small states. Accordingly, media and communication specialists Josef Trappel, Jean-Claude Burgelman and Caroline Pauwels argue that small states show specific characteristics in the way that they regulate the media environment, being inclined to an interventionist approach to media regulation.[35]

Analyzing modern conflict as well as small states' characteristics and their relationship with greater powers enables the comparison of hybrid conflicts' characteristics with those of small states at the system and state levels of analysis. This assessment allows for the outlining of vulnerabilities and opportunities of state "smallness" and accordingly, suggests favorable conditions for a small state to defend itself against a hybrid threat posed by a major state.

Before exploring small-state characteristics more deeply, it is necessary to clarify the two central terms of "small state" and "hybrid" within the context of threat or warfare.

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[34] Stephanie G. Neuman, *Small States and Segmented Societies: National Political Integration in a Global Environment* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1976); Val R. Lorwin, "Segmented Pluralism: Ideological Cleavages and Political Cohesion in the Smaller European Democracies," *Comparative Politics* 3, no. 2 (1971): 141–75.

[35] Josef Trappel, "Born Losers or Flexible Adjustment? The Media Policy Dilemma of Small States," *European Journal of Communication* 6, no. 3 (1991): 355–71; Jean-Claude Burgelman and Caroline Pauwels, "Audiovisual Policy and Cultural Identity in Small European States: The Challenge of a Unified Market," *Media, Culture & Society* 14, no. 2 (1992): 169–83; Daniel Biltereyst, "Language and Culture as Ultimate Barriers? An Analysis of the Circulation, Consumption and Popularity of Fiction in Small European Countries," *European Journal of Communication* 7, no. 4 (1992): 517–40; Manuel Puppis, "Media Regulation in Small States," *The International Communication Gazette* 71, no. 1–2 (2009): 7–17; Matthias Künzler, Manuel Puppis, and Thomas A. Bauer, "Public Value in Kleinstaaten [Public value in small states]," in *Public Value*, ed. M. Karmasin, D. Süssenbacher, N. Gonser (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2011), 99–111; Nicole Gonser and Markus Beiler, *Public Value in Europa und Herausforderungen für Österreich* [Public value in Europe and challenges for Austria], 6-2016 (Wien:Julius Raab Stiftung, 2016).

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II. DEFINITIONS AND CONCEPTS

Due to a lack of clarity of the terms "hybrid threat" and "small state," a definition of these terms is a natural first step in the analysis of small states' vulnerabilities and opportunities when facing a hybrid threat from a great power. This chapter will first explore the meaning of small state and then move on to the analysis of the concept of hybrid threat, assessing its validity and defining its characteristics. This chapter will show that the term "small state" is a combination of various characteristics related to quantitative and qualitative aspects that are fundamentally influenced by the asymmetric relationship between the involved state actors. Furthermore, it will demonstrate that the term "hybrid" has consistent explanatory power in describing modern threats. Moreover, the explored discussions about hybrid threats suggest that the concept is not revolutionary per se, but is instead an evolution and integration of previous concepts. Finally, the chapter proposes a characterization of the term "hybrid threat" based on features of the modern strategic environment and creates an analytical framework.

A. DEFINING SMALL STATE

Since the seminal work of the international relations scholar Annette Baker Fox, *The Power of Small States*,[36] the struggle for a definition is often central to the study of small states. Scholars and state practitioners have studied small states for over 60 years. However, an academically agreed-upon small state's definition remains absent.[37] The main reason is that significant disagreement exists over the type of criteria that should be applied to characterize the small state.[38] The most evident sign of the dispute over the definition is the numerous pages or whole sections dedicated to that definition in academic works that have a small state as the object of analysis.

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[36] Fox, *The Power of Small States*.

[37] Alan K. Henrikson, "A Coming 'Magnesian' Age? Small States, the Global System, and the International Community," *Geopolitics* 6, no. 3 (2001): 49–86.

[38] Matthias Maass, "The Elusive Definition of the Small State," *International Politics* 46, no. 1 (2009): 65–83.

Many of those definitions are based on quantitative values—an appealingly simplistic approach—and demonstrate essential limitations. Definitions based on absolute or relative quantitative values focus on such indicators as population, size of territory, gross domestic product (GDP) or military expenditure.[39] These definitions typically derive from a traditional (neo)realist school of international relations, which links resources with power capability.[40] The quantitative approach, therefore, allows an operationalizable and straightforward definition of the small state. Furthermore, because the quantitative definition is rooted in material power capabilities, it allows the scholar to draw on the broad literature on power and security in international relations.[41] Despite the virtues that, at first glance, this approach can provide, it has essential shortcomings. First, as argued by Rothstein and Keohane, categorizations based on purely objective criteria can only be divided arbitrarily.[42] Second, the absolute measurement of objective values is necessarily linked to a temporal evolution that allows reflection at the global level; however, global trends do not take into account regional geopolitical specificities.[43] Third, an exclusive focus on quantitative values disregards the distinction between absolute and relative power.[44] Accordingly, the objective values that characterize a small state's behavior in a specific geopolitical environment do not lead necessarily to the same behavior of another small state, showing the same indicator's value but existing in another environment. Thus, the quantitative approach neglects relative measures based on qualitative characteristics.

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[39] See Vital, *The Inequality of States*; East, "Size and Foreign Policy Behavior"; Thorhallsson, "The Size of States in the European Union"; Paul Sutton, "The Concept of Small States in the International Political Economy," *The Round Table* 100, no. 413 (2011): 141-53.

[40] Clive Archer, Alyson J.K. Bailes, and Anders Wivel, *Small States and International Security: Europe and Beyond* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

[41] Anders Wivel, Alyson J.K. Bailes and Clive Archer, "Setting the Scene," in *Small States and International Security*, ed. Archer et al., (New York: Routledge, 2014), 3-25.

[42] Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers*; Keohane, "Lilliputians' Dilemmas."

[43] Jesse and Dreyer, *Small States in the International System*.

[44] For further discussion on relative and absolute power see Robert Powell, "Absolute and Relative Gains in International Relations Theory," *American Political Science Review* 85, no. 4 (December 1991): 1303–20; John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2014).

While a qualitative approach avoids the "cutting-off point" trap, it raises some methodological doubts about the absolute idea of "small state." Avoiding arbitrary processes, qualitative approaches to the definition of small states focus on their behavior; in other words, they look at group-specific behavior patterns.[45] Scholars studying small states have recognized numerous characteristics that small states are expected to exhibit.[46] The qualitative perspective reflects policy actions and tends to focus more on the overall context. Nonetheless, the qualitative approach tends to generalize the definition of small states. The list of behaviors that should characterize small states is too long and the commonality of those behaviors among small states too weak, and so, the definitions are less useful.[47] Accordingly, as argued by numerous scholars, the qualitative approach should be combined with a relational one.[48] The relational approach assists in avoiding subjective partitions based on quantifiable measures and highlights commonalities in a dyadic relationship.[49] Moreover, the relational approach also introduces the power aspect, namely the power that actors within the dyadic relationship exert upon each other.

To be comprehensive, the small state definition requires focus on the weaker actor in an asymmetric power relationship. Smallness is a relative and not an absolute idea, shifting "the focus from the power that states *possess* to the power that they *exercise*."[50] Concurrently, states interact in various power dispositions with unique sets of actors and across multiple domains of statecraft; accordingly, the fact that an actor might be powerful

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[45] East, "Size and Foreign Policy Behavior."

[46] Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers*; Vital, *The Survival of Small States*; Laurent Goetschel, "The Foreign and Security Policy Interests of Small States in Today's Europe," in *Small States inside and Outside the European Union*, ed. Laurent Goetschel (Dordrecht, NL: Kluwer Academic Publisher, 1998), 13–31; Briguglio, Cordina, and Kisanga, *Building the Economic Resilience of Small States*.

[47] Tom Long, "It's Not the Size, It's the Relationship: From 'Small States' to Asymmetry," *International Politics* 54, no. 2 (2017): 144–60.

[48] Thomas J. Volgy and Alison Bailin, *International Politics & State Strength* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003), 40–42; Anders Wivel and Hans Mouritzen, *The Geopolitics of Euro-Atlantic Integration* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 15–42; Wivel et al., "Setting the Scene," 8–9.

[49] Godfrey Baldacchino, "Thucydides or Kissinger? A Critical Review of Smaller State Diplomacy," in *The Diplomacies of Small States*, ed. A. F. Cooper and T. M. Shaw (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 21–40.

[50] Steinmetz and Wivel, *Small States in Europe*, 7.

in one relationship but weak in another fits a distinct relational spatio-temporal context.[51] For this reason, in general terms, a small state is not per se a weak state; it is the actor(s) with which it relates and the context of the relationship that makes the small state the weaker element in the relationship. Consequently, this work utilizes the small state definition provided by the political scientist Anders Wivel, who characterizes a small state "as the weaker party in an asymmetric relationship, which is unable to change the nature or functioning of the relationship *as a whole* on its own."[52]

This characterization allows some powerful deductions. First, the relationship is not necessarily just dyadic (two actors) but can be multivalent (many actors); furthermore, it can be viewed at the systems level. For instance, a state can be small at the global level but not necessarily at the regional level. Second, it allows for domain differentiation. For example, if compared to B, A is a small state in a specific domain of the relationship, but A may still not be small in all relationships with B. This fact would allow A to influence the nature of the first relationship by leveraging another relationship with B (in which A *is* and *does not behave* as a small state) in order to change the balance of the first one. Finally, it suggests that the more powerful state persists or shifts the nature or functioning of the relationship according to the behavior of both the small state and the strategic environment to maintain the asymmetric relationship.

The question that arises from the aforementioned deductions is: Why should a great power—given that the great power has an asymmetrical advantage in a relationship with a small state—adapt this relationship? Moreover, how? The next section explores the character of the modern strategic environment and the related hybrid threat. showing that some of the environment's characteristics encourage great powers to threaten small states in a hybrid way.

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[51] Steinmetz and Wivel *Small States in Europe*, 7.

[52] Wivel et al., "Setting the Scene," 9. *Italic* added by the author. The small state may be able to influence part of the relationship's constitutive elements but has not the power to change it as a whole.

B. ON CONFLICT AND HYBRID THREATS IN THE 21st CENTURY

The modern strategic environment drives assertive great powers to foster a hybrid approach in achieving their political goals. This section explores the characteristics of the contemporary strategic environment, illustrating the reasons that lead a great power to act in a hybrid way and assessing the appropriateness of the term "hybrid." After demonstrating the suitability of the term, this section proposes a characterization of "hybrid threat."

1. The Modern Strategic Environment

Competitiveness, volatility, complexity, and interdependencies characterize the modern strategic environment. State actors are closely linked with each other economically and technologically. Contrary to prevailing opinion in the past,[53] this interdependence is no longer perceived by political scientists as promoting collaboration but as a source of vulnerability and competition, whether it involves sanctions, cyber warfare, or other means of coercion.[54] Robert Blackwill and Jennifer Harris emphasize how today's geo-economic instruments—trade and investment policy, economic sanctions and assistance, cyber activities, as well as financial, monetary, energy and commodities policies—are exploited jointly as means of statecraft in order to achieve national goals.[55] In recent decades, this trend has led to a shift in methods of conflict toward the broad use of all means of statecraft, including informational, humanitarian and other non-military measures, applied in coordination with potential social unrest.[56] The modern strategic environment is not a binary world characterized by peace and war but is an arena of constant competition in which the various actors adapt their ways and means to avoid repercussions.[57] The increased complexity and volatility of these relationships, the actors' interdependence, as

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[53] Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1989).

[54] Wright, *All Measures Short of War*.

[55] Blackwill and Harris, *War by Other Means*.

[56] Gerasimov, "Tsennost' Nauki v Predvideniyi [Prevision is what science is valued for]."

[57] Donald J. Trump, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, December 2017, https://www.whitehouse.gov/articles/new-national-security-strategy-new-era/.

well as the competition for resources have blurred the distinction between the various forms of conflict and competition between states as well as between states and non-state actors, exposing small states to the interests of assertive, more powerful states, and, accordingly, to their malicious actions.

Contesting established international norms and seeking to avoid major military escalation, malicious state and non-state actors use—in an integrated, adaptive and convergent way—a wide range of means. They try to reshape regional order according to their national interests and challenge the international system's stability and security to achieve political advantages.[58] To achieve these goals, such actors apply and combine "a wide range of means, both violent and non-violent, military and civilian, in a carefully planned way."[59] These actors, avoiding compromise, prefer to act within the complex and dynamic arena of constant competition, blurring the lines between their actions and thereby avoiding any triggering of sanctions or even a plausible conventional military response.[60] Furthermore, based on their needs and abilities, these actors can make use of proxies. These proxies, acting according to a principal-agent relationship, encapsulate the interests of their principal actor, exploit their characteristics in achieving the desired effect, and if necessary, receive the tailored support of the principal. In today's strategic environment, assertive state actors adapt to the environment itself to optimize the probability of success in achieving their goals.

U.S. military power and the American penchant for interventionism, has prompted possible adversaries to take measures alternative to direct military confrontation in achieving their goals. From the end of the Cold War until today, the United States of America has remained a potent world power.[61] Since 9/11, the United States has made the preemptive and preventive use of force one of its principal tenets in countering possible

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[58] Wright, *All Measures Short of War*, 158-161.

[59] Cederberg and Eronen, "How Can Societies Be Defended against Hybrid Threats," 4.

[60] Matthias Fiala, "Die Psychologischen Fallen Der Hybriden Bedrohung [The hybrid threat's psychological traps]," *Allgemeine Schweizerische Militärzeitschrift*, 184, no. 5 (May 2018): 7-9.

[61] Robert D. Kaplan, *The Return of Marco Polo's World* (New York: Random House, 2018).

challenging actors, regardless if they are state or non-state actors.[62] This strategy has pushed assertive great powers, among others, to adapt and combine several ways and means, developing other, more indirect methods to achieve their goals in attempts to avoid coercion by the U.S. military's overwhelming apparatus and the related risks to their integrity.

In recent decades, several scholars, military analysts, and senior leaders use the term "hybrid" to describe the threats and modes of war that combine several ways and means, including the indirect approach mentioned previously. Nonetheless, the lack of understanding of the term and its varied applications has led to discussions on its definition and explanatory power, which in turn has prompted subsequent changes to its meaning over the years.

2. Hybrid: Just a Fancy Word?

In the last decade within military and security environments, the use of the term hybrid has become common. Many critics of the application of the concept of hybridity in the security studies field have discredited its meaning by classifying it as one of the many "fancy words" used to describe an alleged new kind of warfare. To judge whether the term hybrid is appropriate to describe a threat or a form of conflict, an examination of its meaning in other fields provides criteria to judge its explanatory power in the field of security studies.

A word has two interrelated orders of meaning. The first, denotation, states "what the object of the description is," while the second, connotation, functions conceptually and ideologically, introducing a figurative sense related to the term.[63] According to the philosopher John Stuart Mill, a word should be considered as connotative if it indicates, in addition to an object, also its properties.[64] The explanatory power of a word, therefore, lies

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[62] Karl P. Mueller et al., *Striking First: Preemptive and Preventive Attack in U.S. National Security Policy* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2006).

[63] Oxford Reference, s.v. "denotation and connotation," accessed August 20, 2018 http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095710580.

[64] John Lyons, *Semantics* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

in its denotation and connotation. Consequently, to understand whether there may be denotations and/or connotations common to the term hybrid, it is necessary to start examining its meaning in fields in which this word is commonly used.

According to the general term that can be found in dictionaries, the term hybrid characterizes the combination of two or more different elements. The *Cambridge Dictionary* describes the application of the term hybrid to "something that is a combination of two different things, so it has qualities relating to both of them."[65] The *Online Etymology Dictionary* describes its origins: from Latin *hybrida* (a variant of hybrid), related to hubris as a back-formation from hubristic or else from Greek *hybris* meaning "wanton violence, insolence, outrage."[66] Hence, hybrid denotes something generated by the combination or a mixture of at least two different things, revealing a possible negative connotation related to a change in the natural order of things.

In different domains, the term hybrid is used to indicate the combination, melting or mixing of elements with different characteristics, resulting in a new element that many times exploits the advantages of its original constituents. In marketing and advertising, hybrid marketing channels describe "two or more marketing channels set up by a single firm to reach one or more customer segments, hence, in this form of multichannel distribution a variety of direct and indirect approaches are used to deliver the firm's goods to its customer."[67] In biogeography, a hybrid zone represents an area where two divergent species or subspecies meet, cross-fertilize so that their offspring becomes prevalent; it can also develop from an area where a new lineage evolves.[68] In genetics, the term hybrid means the offspring of parents that vary in genetically determined traits; the process of hybridization is significant biologically because it increases the genetic variety within

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65 Cambridge Dictionary Online, s.v. "hybrid," accessed August 20, 2018, https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/hybrid

66 Etymology Dictionary Online, s.v. "hybrid," accessed August 20, 2018, https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=hybrid

67 Oxford Reference, s.v. "hybrid marketing channels," accessed August 20, 2018, http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095952529

68 John A. Endler, *Geographic Variation, Speciation, and Clines* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977).

species, which is essential for evolution to occur.[69] In electronics, a hybrid computer is one that exhibits features of analog and digital computers, combining the advantages of the analog part for computing (solver) with the digital part for logical operations (controller).[70] In organization science, as argued by Greenwood et al., hybrid organizations are likely to appear and succeed in a complex and dynamic environment because they combine elements prescribed by various logics and therefore probably develop at least partial suitability to a broader set of institutional referents.[71] Hence, the term hybrid denotes the combination of at least two different elements from separate subsystems that are part of a common supersystem. Moreover, the term can take on a pejorative connotation, as something not natural, which modifies the natural course observed up to that moment. Likewise, hybrid connotes the recombination of components as an adaptation to a dynamic environment (e.g., nature, market, institutions, laws) to create a new item that combines and exploits the advantages derived from its original components and better fits the new environment.

The characteristics of the modern strategic environment favor actors that have a high degree of adaptability and agility. Some descriptions of the modern strategic environment's dynamics and of actors' newly generated threats indicate that the term hybrid may be applicable. The combination of state and non-state actors in a principal-agent relationship fits the idea of the mixture of at least two different elements from separate subsystems that are part of a common supersystem encapsulating some qualities relating to both.

Assuming that international order and the rule of law are the natural order of the international system, then the fact that great powers can try to distort that natural order makes the term hybrid appropriate for labeling their threats to small states. Likewise, the described combination and recombination of different means as an adaptation to the

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69 Encyclopedia Britannica, s.v. "hybrid," accessed August 20, 2018, https://www.britannica.com/science/hybrid

70 A. Burdett and D. Bowen, *BCS Glossary of Computing*, 14th ed. (Swindon, UK: BCS, 2016).

71 Royston Greenwood et al., "Institutional Complexity and Organizational Responses," *Academy of Management Annals* 5, no. 1 (June 2011): 317–71.

dynamic strategic environment reflect the use of this term in other domains. Having demonstrated the explanatory power of the term "hybrid," this thesis explores the term in its applicability to defining threats in the next section.

3. The Hybrid Threat and Its Framework

In the last three decades, numerous concepts describing modes of warfare have followed one another, usually based on a simple description of the respective observed reality, or otherwise situated in the development of a theoretical framework, and many have not escaped the "definition trap." Trying to define the phenomenon that they aspire to describe, the proposed concepts rise to criticism from other scholars and security analysts. Despite the different characteristics between the various concepts, it is possible to notice that it is above all Western thinkers who favor a deterministic approach, while Russian and Chinese thinkers prefer a more stochastic approach linked to a characterization of the threats and the possible warfare mode linked to them.[72]

Despite the variation, many of these concepts underline the increasing difficulty in clearly laying down the thin line that divides a conflict from a war. The dynamism and complexity of the modern world, combined with increasingly advanced technologies available to all, allow state and non-state actors to blend numerous ways and means of war or conflict. This mixture also blurs the strategic environment. The resulting obfuscation makes it increasingly difficult—particularly for those who still cling to a definition—to judge when an alleged conflict type turns into another one. In most cases, the research remains incongruous; in some critical cases, the finding is too late.

These observations naturally leave doubts about the fact that the hybrid concept will not fall into the same trap as its predecessors or contenders. If the original term hybrid warfare coined by Nemeth refers to forms of warfare conducted by specific (hybrid)

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[72] For an overview about the most important Western concepts see: Arquilla and Ronfeldt, *In Athena's Camp*; Arreguín-Toft, *How the Weak Win Wars*; Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts*; Huber, "Compound Warfare"; Lind et al., "The Changing Face of War"; Hammes, "Insurgency"; Mazarr, "Mastering the Gray Zone"; Kapusta, *The Gray Zone*; Chekinov and Bogdanov, "The Nature and Content of a New-Generation War"; Gerasimov, "Tsennost' Nauki v Predvideniyi"; Liang and Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare*; Halper, "China: The Three Warfares."

societies, then Hoffman changed the referent to focus on non-state actors. This eventually evolved into the present-day inclusion of all state and non-state actors. In his seminal work *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*, Hoffman defines hybrid wars as those which "incorporate a range of different modes of warfare, including conventional capabilities, irregular tactics and formations, terrorists' acts including indiscriminate violence and coercion, and criminal disorder."[73] He emphasizes the multimodality of this new type of warfare characterized by the convergence and combination of many modes of warfare and actors, whose activities are directed and coordinated to obtain synergetic effects across the battlespace, at both tactical and operational levels. This form of conflict blurs the categories and features of warfare not by just applying tactics of the weak but by exploiting continuous engagements in time and space of an ample array of state and non-state actors.[74] The hybrid character of the threat, therefore, resides in the mixture of state and non-state actors and their ability to fuse numerous means and ways. Furthermore, time and space are blended, so actions that take place in a specific space and time can have an effect in the same space and time but may also purposely achieve the effect in another space and time; accordingly, the actions take place along a continuum. Moreover, through the synchronized convergence of multiple actors and the simultaneous use of all forms of war, the threat becomes amorphous, increasing the challenge of defining precisely which actor one is encountering, and consequently, the most suitable means of countering it. Little is left of the original idea of hybridity. Nevertheless, other scholars, military analysts, and institutions have sensed the astuteness of this concept and developed it further.

The concept of hybridity should not assume a general value, but rather characterize specific conflicts or threats. Russel Glenn expands Hoffman's definition of a hybrid threat to address all the tools of statecraft and possible modes, defining it as "an adversary that simultaneously and adaptively employs some combination of political, military, economic, social, and information means, and conventional, irregular, catastrophic, terrorism, and disruptive/criminal warfare methods. It may include a combination of state and non-state

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[73] Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century*, 28

[74] Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century*, 28.

actors."[75] Glenn's observations—integrating the tools of state power—bring the essential strategical level into the concept of hybridity. While Russel's theoretical extension captures some strategical elements of the modern environment, it still misses a fundamental element, namely the cognitive aspect.

To comprehensively address threats in the strategic environment, it is necessary to capture the cognitive motivation that drives an adversary to mix these many ways and means.[76] Any actor's approach to warfare is a mix of physical and cognitive capabilities, so the hybrid concept needs also to describe why adversaries choose the ways and means that they do.[77] A useful approach is to consider the contextual side, seeing hybrid warfare as an "optimized form of warfare that allows a combatant to attempt to utilize all available resources—both conventional and unconventional—in a unique cultural context to produce specific effects against the opponent."[78] Although incorporating the strategic and contextual aspects of hybrid warfare, many definitions remain nonetheless material and kinetic-centric. To overcome this deficiency, NATO has reformulated the characterization of hybrid warfare to better address its characteristics by defining it as "the broad, complex, and adaptive combination of conventional and non-conventional means, overt and covert military, paramilitary, and civilian measures, employed in an integrated design by state and non-state actors to achieve their objectives."[79] Despite its more comprehensive approach, this characterization remains structured mainly on a binary system of opposing characteristics, which limits consideration of the strategic environment, and in particular the asymmetric relationship between small states and great powers.

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[75] Russell W. Glenn, "Thoughts on Hybrid Conflict," *Small Wars Journal* 2 (2009): 2, https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/thoughts-on-hybrid-conflict

[76] In this context, ways describe the guidance and concepts for how the adversary operationalizes the threat, while the means describe the resources, tangible or intangible used to operationalize the threat.

[77] David Sadowski and Jeff Becker, "Beyond the 'Hybrid' Threat: Asserting the Essential Unity of Warfare," *Small Wars Journal* 7 (2010): 2–3, https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/beyond-the-hybrid-threat-asserting-the-essential-unity-of-warfare.

[78] McCulloh and Johnson, "Hybrid Warfare."

[79] NATO, "Warsaw Summit Communiqué—Jul. 09, 2016," accessed May 3, 2019, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_133169.htm.

Russia is increasingly asserting itself in relations with the small states on its periphery, pushing the European Union to examine hybridity in the modern strategic environment. In its "Joint Communication to the European Parliament and Council," the European Commission defines a hybrid threat as a "mixture of coercive and subversive activity, conventional and unconventional methods, which can be used in a coordinated manner by state or non-state actors to achieve specific objectives while remaining below the threshold of formally declared warfare."[80] To better shape this definition, the European Commission characterizes hybridity as "an emphasis on exploiting the vulnerabilities of the target and on generating ambiguity to hinder the decision-making process; massive disinformation campaigns, using social media to control the political narrative or to radicalize; and recruited and direct proxy actors can be vehicles for hybrid threats."[81] Indeed, it is possible to recognize a particular strategic approach through ends, ways, and means within this definition of a hybrid threat. In contrast to NATO, the European Union did not adopt a binary approach and—acknowledging the cognitive aspect suggested by previous definitions—it highlights the ambiguous approach as aimed to deceive the adversary. However, even this definition emphasizes specific elements (e.g., social media), while remaining vague on others (conventional and unconventional methods).

Ultimately, a holistic approach to characterizing this type of threat allows for overcoming the "definition trap." According to the Countering Hybrid Warfare project group of the Multinational Capabilities Development Campaign (MCDC)[82] hybrid warfare is not a prerogative of state actors; indeed, non-state actors can also engage in hybrid warfare. Both actors may have the capability to target specific vulnerabilities across the spectrum of societal functions with multiple instruments of power achieving linear and

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[80] European Commission, "Joint Communication to the European Parliament and Council. Joint Framework on Countering Hybrid Threats a European Union Response —Apr. 4, 2016," accessed May 2, 2019, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52016JC0018&from=EN, 2. As methods the document cite diplomatic, military, economic, technological methods.

[81] European Commission, "Joint Communication to the European Parliament and Council," 2.

[82] The MCDC is a U.S. J7 led program U.S. JS J-7 led program consisting of 23 partners focused on developing non-materiel solutions to address capability gaps for Joint, Multinational and Coalition operations.

non-linear synergetic effects.[83] Additional elements of this characterization encompass the definition of vulnerabilities in the political, military, economic, societal, informational and infrastructure domains as well.[84] Linearity and non-linearity are expressed by the asymmetry and escalation in intensity as well in the applied instruments of power.[85] This approach allowed the MCDC to build an analytical framework based on three key categories: critical functions and vulnerabilities being exploited (political, military, economic, social, information, infrastructure); the means' synchronism; and the non-linear action's effects.[86] The MCDC approach—relying partially on characterization and categorization instead of definitions—seems to be promising, especially considering the endless discussions that mark these decades, which prevented moving past the "definition trap."

It is prudent to characterize the term hybrid threat rather than to strive to define it. For a term to generate explanatory power, it is necessary to associate it with characteristics. As stated earlier, attempts to create definitions of the term "hybrid threat" or "hybrid warfare" show limitations. Although a definition allows for a certain elegance and clarity, such a definition-oriented approach is limiting. The following characterization lies in the author's analysis of modern threats in the strategic environment, other certain concepts developed in recent decades, and the evolution of the concept of hybridity. Accordingly, a hybrid threat shows the following characteristics:

- To attain linear (first order) and non-linear (second and third order) synergetic effects in achieving specific objectives, it shows an integrated design of simultaneous, synchronized and adaptive uses of multiple instruments of power along the political, military, economical, societal, and informational (PMESI) continuum;

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[83] Patrick J. Cullen and Erik Reichborn-Kjennerud, *Understanding Hybrid Warfare*, (MCDC, 2017).

[84] Patrick J. Cullen and Erik Reichborn-Kjennerud, *Countering Hybrid Warfare (CHW) Baseline Assessment*, (MCDC, 2016).

[85] Cullen and Reichborn-Kjennerud, *Understanding Hybrid Warfare*.

[86] Cullen and Reichborn-Kjennerud, *Countering Hybrid Warfare (CHW) Baseline Assessment*.

- To exploit the characteristics of the adversary society, it targets specific physical and psychological vulnerabilities across the full spectrum of societal functions, generating ambiguity, compulsion, coercion or a combination of these;

- To maintain the initiative, hinder the adversary's decision-making process, and avoid counterproductive consequences, it applies strategic gradualism of escalation and de-escalation through a combination of salami-slicing approach and *fait accompli*;[87]

- To avoid military confrontation and to blur the continuum between peace and war, it is mostly non-military in nature, applying military means only in the case where the strategic environment allows it;

- To bypass the international or national norm system, overcome the lack of capabilities and reduce the socio-economic costs, it mixes or combines—in a networked principal-agent relationship—endogenous and exogenous state or non-state entities.

The appearance of this kind of threat does not *ipso facto* mean the disappearance of other types of threats. A threat posed by a great power is not hybrid *per se*. If a state acts in a malicious way these actions are not necessarily hybrid in nature. Even if carried out in a covered manner these malevolent activities do not represent by themselves hybrid threats. Accordingly, to judge if an opponent is applying a hybrid approach and consequently to implement effective countermeasures, it is vital to have the appropriate awareness systems, the appropriate active and reactive strategies, as well as the related tools and mechanisms. The concept of hybridity combines different ways and means already known from the past. Exploiting characteristics of the complex strategic environment gives rise to new and more sophisticated features that the assertive great power can apply to shape the asymmetrical

[87] The concept of "Salami tactics" was introduced by Thomas Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (1966). The term salami-slicing describes a subsequent series of actions; the resulting accumulation of actions allows the perpetrator to achieve a much larger result that otherwise would be arduous or blatantly unlawful to execute at once. On the concept of *fait accompli* see Daniel W. Altman, "Red Lines and Faits Accomplis in Interstate Coercion and Crisis" (PhD dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2015), https://dspace.mit.edu/bitstream/handle/1721.1/99775/927329080-MIT.pdf?sequence=1

relationship with a small state, mitigating the risks and minimizing the costs of this interaction as it relates to environment and the possible reactions of other major powers.

4. Hybrid Warfare or Just Political Warfare

Since one of the prominent characteristics of the hybrid threat is that it is not predominantly military in nature and instead encompasses different means of national power, many scholars and analysts tend to compare it to or even assimilate it within the concept of political warfare. George Kennan, the attributed father of the concept of political warfare, defines its measures as "short of war."[88] Accordingly, his concept of political warfare does not consider military and lethal military methods as main efforts.[89] Conversely, it directly and solely targets governance systems and institutions, where a state's ability to govern is challenged.[90] Countering Kennan's understanding of political warfare, hybrid warfare is not limited to "activities short of war" and instead encompasses many other necessary military means along the peace-war continuum. Accordingly, the concept of hybridity differs from political warfare and goes beyond the formal distinction between peace and war by encompassing "all the means at a nation's command" along the peace-war continuum and not, as Kennan suggests, only "in time [s] of Peace."[91] (See Figure 1.)

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[88] George F. Kennan, *On Organizing Political Warfare. Memorandum for the NSC*, (Washington DC: State Department, 1948), https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114320, 1.

[89] Sarah-Jane Corke, "George Kennan and the Inauguration of Political Warfare," *Journal of Conflict Studies* 26, no. 1 (Summer 2006): 101–20.

[90] Christopher S. Chivvis, "Hybrid War: Russian Contemporary Political Warfare," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 73, no. 5 (2017): 316–21., https://doi.org/10.1080/00963402.2017.1362903.

[91] Kennan, *On Organizing Political Warfare*, 1.

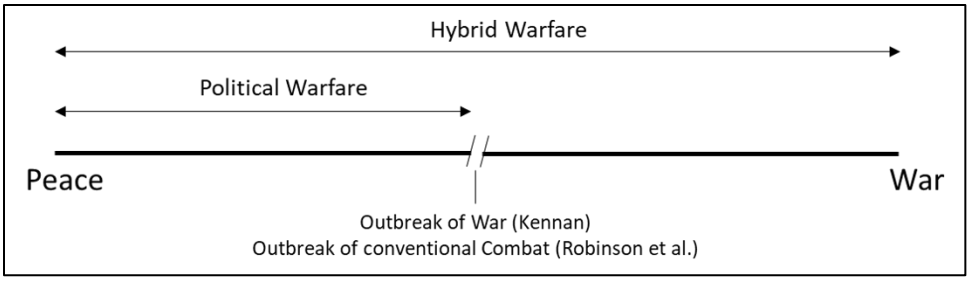

Figure 1. Political versus Hybrid Warfare along the Peace-War Continuum

Both historical and more current formulations of political warfare show that military means can be part of it; nevertheless, the concept does not avoid the trap of starkly, artificially dividing war and peace. In *Modern Political Warfare*, Robinson et al. argue that applying diplomatic, informational, military and economic methods is exerting power "short of conventional combat."[92] This approach, however, like the one described by Kennan, is limiting and differs from the concept of hybridity for two reasons. First, although the suggested diplomatic, information, military and economic measures in this modern concept of political warfare "must be carried out outside the context of traditional war,"[93] past and recent conflicts show that these measures are not limited to this alleged period antecedent to a conventional war, and they do not end when a conventional war begins.[94] The modern concept of political warfare is bound up in this *ante* and *poste* trap of the "conventional war outbreak" definition, describing just a piece of the conflict puzzle and not its comprehensive framework. Second, conventional military forces play a role in the field of political warfare; however, theirs is primarily a function of deterrence, of diplomatic coercion in Schelling's sense of the term, and not as an effective kinetic force.[95] The ability to mix military resources with other instruments of power assures strategic gradualism, preparing and applying military force at the most appropriate time and space even though it is not the only nor the main component. In a hybrid approach, the use of

[92] Linda Robinson et al., *Modern Political Warfare* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2018), 246.

[93] Robinson et al., *Modern Political Warfare*, 7.

[94] Hoffman, "On Not-so-New Warfare."

[95] Bernstein, "Political Strategies for Coercive Diplomacy and Limited War;" Schelling, *Arms and Influence*.

military means serves as an option for a possible resolutive act, building a continuum along the escalation of conflict and not creating a break or abrupt change in strategy as the modern political warfare concept suggests.

A further fundamental difference between the two terms lies in the evolution and acceptance by scholars of their definitions. There is an inherent tautological combination of the term "political" with the term "warfare"; in fact, in Clausewitzian terms, the first is a constituent element and *raison d'être* of the second one, accordingly, all wars are political.[96] Hence, "political warfare," as synecdoche, has weak explanatory power. For this reason, the intrinsically explanatory impotence of the term led several scholars, analysts and senior military leaders in the past to interchange and even equate the term political warfare with other disparate modes of warfare.[97] Even in its most modern formulation, the term "political warfare" is questioned and deemed inappropriate.[98] Even though the term "hybrid warfare" has evolved, today it is implemented and accepted in various doctrines at different levels.[99] The same cannot be said of the term political warfare, which, today as in the past, is considered an unsuitable term as a description of the activities it seeks to characterize. Although there are many similarities, the two terms political and hybrid warfare are not the same. The tools in the former are basically non-kinetic in nature, while the second mixes kinetic and non-kinetic tools. The former concept focuses on an alleged period "short of war," while the second embraces the continuum between peace and war. The concept of political warfare emphasizes *what* means should

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[96] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Michael Howard and Peter Paret, ed. and trans., (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984).

[97] See Galula David, *Contre-Insurrection. Théorie et Pratique* [Counterinsurgency. Theory and practice] (Paris, FR: Economica, 2008); Roger Trinquier, *La Guerre Moderne* [Modern warfare] (Paris, FR: Éditions de la Table Ronde, 1961); Joanne Omang and Aryeh Neier, *Psychological Operations in Guerrilla Warfare: The CIA's Nicaragua Manual* (New York: Vintage Books, 1985); Carnes Lord, "The Psychological Dimension in National Strategy," in *Political Warfare and Psychological Operations: Rethinking the U.S. Approach*, ed. Frank R. Barnett and Carnes Lord (Washington DC: National Defense University Press, 1989): 22–23.

[98] A RAND research team interviewed in 2016 and 2017 more than 40 experts and found that the term was not considered appropriate for a wide variety of reasons. See Robinson et al., *Modern Political Warfare*, p. xix.

[99] Jens Stoltenberg, "Key Note Speech at the Opening of the NATO Transformation Seminar," March 25, 2015, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/opinions_118435.htm; European Commission, "Joint Communication to the European Parliament and Council."

be employed, while the hybrid one also encompasses *why* and *how* the means should be employed.

Having defined *why* a great power would choose a hybrid approach in a conflictual relationship with a small state and how the hybrid threat can affect this relationship, the next chapter will explore small state vulnerabilities and opportunities, suggesting which variables—across the political, military, economic, social and informational spectrum—may prove most significant for a small state.

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III. SMALL STATES' CHARACTERISTICS

Discourse over the vulnerability of small states as their most striking characteristic as compared against more powerful states crosses both millennial history and different schools of international relations. The realist approach, focused on the intrinsic vulnerability of the small, is probably best summarized by Thucydides in *The Peloponnesian Wars* when the Athenians remind the Melians that "the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must."[100] A neorealist approach based on structural power suggests that the system structures shaped by great powers' competition and the resulting hegemonic institutions mostly influence small states' constraints in achievement of their goals.[101] Yet, liberal international relations theories of interdependence suggest some opportunities for small states; as argued by the political scientist David Baldwin, "[S]o-called 'weak powers' influence so-called 'strong powers' because of the power analyst's failure to account for the possibility that a country may be weak in one situation but strong in another."[102] In the same vein, the constructivist approach emphasizes the small state's opportunities to act as norm entrepreneurs in various fields, able to advance norms without the support or influence of great powers.[103] Regardless of the school of thought, all these approaches have one common denominator, namely that small states—in their asymmetrical relationship with a more powerful state—are confronted with vulnerabilities but also with opportunities. Accordingly, this chapter explores small states' vulnerabilities and opportunities along the PMESI spectrum to define in each of these domains' salient small-state characteristics that the great power (*G*) can exploit in a hybrid way, but also that the small state (*S*) can leverage to oppose its more powerful challenger.

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100 Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, translated by Rex Warner (London: Penguin Classic, 1972), 402.

101 Robert W. Cox, "Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory," *Millennium* 10, no. 2 (1981): 126–55.

102 David A. Baldwin, "Power Analysis and World Politics: New Trends versus Old Tendencies," *World Politics* 31, no. 2 (January 1979): 164.

103 Adam Bower, "Norms without the Great Powers: International Law, Nested Social Structures, and the Ban on Antipersonnel Mines," *International Studies Review* 17, no. 3 (2015). https://dx.doi.org/10.1111/misr.12225

Some of the explored vulnerabilities and opportunities are not a small state's prerogative, and not all small states will show them to the same degree, or perhaps will not show them at all. Nonetheless, the asymmetrical relationship and the resulting limitations for the small state force it to rely on its opportunities to a greater extent. Furthermore, this catalog of analyzed characteristics does not intend to be complete. Conversely, the chosen holistic approach should encourage questions and future explorations of additional small state vulnerabilities and opportunities.

A. POLICY

Domestic and foreign policy are interdependent, influencing each other and each being a source of vulnerabilities and opportunities for the other. Foreign and domestic concerns shape what Dr. Robert Putnam calls a "two-level game," in which the government and the populace interact in permanent tension between group interests in domestic policy and strategic rationality in foreign policy.[104] Accordingly, vulnerabilities and opportunities at both levels can influence each other positively or negatively.

1. Vulnerabilities

S has fewer diplomatic resources than *G* to maintain diplomatic ties; consequently, it is not able to cover the same wide-ranging network of foreign relations. *S* has less power as a single actor to pursue an independent political agenda; this evidence leads *S* to have a proportionally greater level of interest and participation in intergovernmental organizations (IGO), which can act as a force multiplier and supplement its sparse diplomatic resources for representation, negotiation, and information gathering.[105] For example, Singapore is now a pivotal player in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations; similarly, Qatar increased its international visibility through the Gulf Cooperation Council.[106] This higher

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[104] Robert D. Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games," *International Organization* 42, no. 3 (Summer 1988): 427–60.

[105] East, "Size and Foreign Policy Behavior: A Test of Two Models"; Andrew F. Cooper and Timothy M. Shaw, *The Diplomacies of Small States* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

[106] Alan Chong, "Singapore and the Soft Power Experience," in *The Diplomacies of Small States*, ed. Andrew F. Cooper and Timothy M. Shaw (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 65–80; Mehran Kamrava, *Qatar: Small State, Big Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015).

dependence on IGOs compels *S* to be more open to negotiation and bargaining, with an added importance on being able to create ad hoc groups of interest with other states to shape its political environment and counter-balance the individual political weight of *G*. An example of this dynamic are the "Cotton Four" (or C-4) countries, Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, and Mali; this IGO allows its members to shape the trade of cotton from their countries above and beyond their capability as single actors. Furthermore, due to *S*'s relatively smaller diplomatic capability, *S* is more geographically and politically constrained in its goal achievement, leaving *G* with the advantage of a more extensive diplomatic network that allows it greater influence over the dyadic relationship with *S* through third parties (e.g., states or IGOs) acting as a proxy.

Domestic political interests and structure influence *S*'s policy in more considerable measure than for *G*; changes related to the domestic political environment therefore can seriously affect *S*'s policy. The worsening of the relationship between *S* and *G* may have a more significant impact on the former than on the latter.[107] As argued by political scientists Neal Jesse and John Dreyer, when *G* threatens *S, S* tends to behave according to social constructivist theory and partially on domestic/liberal theory, basing actions more on norms and identity, and being influenced to a greater extent by domestic institutional changes.[108] The domestic governance of *S* is more exposed to the influence of its elite across the political, economic, and societal sectors. The Icelandic example, linked to the 2008 financial crisis, demonstrates that too much consensus and mutual trust between political leadership and the economic elite can degenerate into complacency, leading a country to the brink of bankruptcy in the resulting political and social crisis.[109] In line with this, political scientists Andrew Cooper and Timothy Shaw argue that the closeness "of the ruled with their rulers" blurs the distinction between state and non-state, or political and

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[107] Brantly Womack, *Asymmetry and International Relationships* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

[108] Jesse and Dreyer, *Small States in the International System*.

[109] Baldur Thorhallsson and Peadar Kirby, "Financial Crises in Iceland and Ireland: Does European Union and Euro Membership Matter?" *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 50, no. 5 (2012): 801–18.

economic.[110] This relationship's closeness and its possible consequences expose a critical vulnerability of *S* policy, namely the balance of trust between *S* political leadership and the state elite.

2. Opportunities

The small state can define clear policy priorities by focusing its attention on specific problems in the relationship with *G*. In an asymmetrical relationship, the weaker actor *S* has more at stake than the stronger actor *G*; accordingly, the former has more incentive to prioritize its policy in achieving its goals.[111] The asymmetric relationship that *S* faces can be relatively common for other states. Hence, it will be easier for *S* to link up with other small states. The creation of interest groups can take place at multiple levels. International organizations are an effective platform for enhancing the influence of *S* on specific functional and geographic issues that are recognized by other peer members. Some examples of these initiatives in international organizations are the Forum of Small States at the UN, and at the regional level in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) or the Visegrad Group.[112] Accordingly, *S*'s membership in a supra-national organization is an opportunity to multiply its limited structural power; by exploiting the organization's power *S* can achieve a degree of influence over *G* that would not be possible in an isolated dyadic relationship. Supra-national organizations can also be influenced by *G* through its external pressure on the organization as a whole, or, if *G* is also a member of the organization, through its structural influence within it. For this reason, *S* must also explore other opportunities to support its policies.

The small state *S* can bypass its structural lack of diplomatic capabilities by engaging non-state actors as well as implementing and participating in sub-state diplomacy. Political scientists David Criekemans and Manuel Duran argue that small states

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[110] Cooper and Shaw, *The Diplomacies of Small States*, 11.

[111] Womack, *Asymmetry and International Relationships*.

[112] The Visegrad Group is composed by Czechia, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia.

can seize opportunities from the dynamics of sub-state diplomacy.[113] Various successful initiatives support this argument: the EUREGION *La Grande Region*, aimed at promoting and enhancing cross-border cooperation between Belgian, German, French and Luxembourg regions; or the *Regio Insubrica*, which aims to enhance cross-border cooperation in the Italian-Swiss regions of the Pre-Alpine Lakes. Accordingly, *S* could use its political sub-components (e.g., regions, states, provinces) to increase relations with specific peer areas in other countries, thus freeing diplomatic resources at the state level so they can be employed in another geographic or political areas. Similarly, *S* could engage with specific non-governmental-organizations (NGO) in order to enhance its impact in the policy domain. The role of the combined interaction of NGOs and other civil groups allows emerging and developing countries to obstruct moves by major powers to complete the Doha Round.[114] While *G* can rely primarily on its state means to support its policy, *S* has alternative opportunities outside its bureaucratic apparatus to boost and support its policy toward *G*.

Its smallness should allow *S* to be more flexible and adaptable to change in the political environment. Scholars from organizational science argue that small organizations are more responsive and flexible and are better positioned to develop a hybrid organizational structure that allows them to succeed in a pluralistic institutional environment.[115] Similarly, smallness of a state should allow a higher degree of flexibility and adaptability of its political-economical system.[116] Despite smallness affording these

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[113] David Criekemans and Manuel Duran, "Small State Diplomacy Compared to Sub-State Diplomacy: More of the Same or Different?" in *Small States in Europe. Challenges and Opportunities*, ed. Robert Steinmetz and Anders Wivel (New York: Routledge, 2016), 31–46.

[114] Susan C. Schwab, "After Doha: Why the Negotiations Are Doomed and what We Should Do about It," *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 3 (2011); Donna Lee, "Bringing an Elephant into the Room: Small African State Diplomacy in the WTO," in *The Diplomacies of Small States. Between Vulnerability and Resilience*, ed. Andrew F. Cooper and Timothy M. Shaw (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 195–206.

[115] Richard L. Daft, *Essentials of Organization Theory and Design* (Nashville, TN: South Western Educational Publishing, 2001); Anne-Claire Pache and Filipe Santos, "Inside the Hybrid Organization: Selective Coupling as a Response to Competing Institutional Logics," *Academy of Management Journal* 56, no. 4 (2013): 972–1001.

[116] Katzenstein, *Small States in World Markets: Industrial Policy in Europe*; Godfrey Baldacchino, "Meeting the Tests of Time: Small States in the 21st Century," *Current Issues in Comparative Education* 15, no. 1 (2012): 14–25.

advantageous conditions, this does not mean a state has *ipso facto* flexibility and adaptability. The economist Atle Midttun provides an example: he convincingly claims that small state like Norway, not taking into consideration its external environment, under some circumstances shows a degree of institutional inflexibility that has consequences at the economic and social levels.[117] Hence, smallness favors institutional flexibility, which if adjusted to the environmental conditions can lead to a higher degree of environmental adaptability.

B. MILITARY

The hybrid threat is mostly non-military in nature. However, if the strategic environment allows it, military means of statecraft can come into play to influence the opponent decision-making. The exploitation of military means of statecraft can, but must not necessarily, lead to the outbreak of a military confrontation. In this domain, as in the others, smallness can accentuate specific vulnerabilities and opportunities.

1. Vulnerabilities

In an asymmetrical relationship, the weaker party's lack of a military alliance may represent a significant vulnerability.[118] Scholars have explored the significance of numerous terms such as neutrality, non-alignment, non-belligerency, and their underlying positive and negative effects for small-state security.[119] While taking into consideration all the positive and negative aspects, history shows the fragility of a small state that is not a member of a military alliance. The invasions experienced by Belgium and certain Nordic

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[117] Atle Midttun, "Norway in the 1980s: Competitive Adaptation or Structural Crisis? A Comment on Katzenstein's Small-State/Flexible-Adjustment Thesis," *Scandinavian Political Studies* 13, no. 4 (1990): 307–26.

[118] In order to avoid any discussion about the different terms of neutrality, nonalignment, non-belligerency, this thesis synthesize the discussion accordingly with the declaration of the Finnish Foreign Minister Alexander Stubb "We are not a neutral country, we are not a militarily nonaligned country, but we are a country which does not belong to a military alliance." In Karl Ritter, "Cold War Neutrals Now Taking Sides, Timidly," *The Atlantic Council*, April 9, 2011, https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/natosource/cold-war-neutrals-now-taking-sides-timidly.

[119] Karsh, *Neutrality and Small States*; Robert L Rothstein, "Alignment, Nonalignment, and Small Powers: 1945–1965," *International Organization* 20, no. 3 (1966): 397–418; Goetschel, "The Foreign and Security Policy Interests of Small States in Today's Europe"; Agius and Devine, "'Neutrality: A Really Dead Concept?' A Reprise."

countries in World War II, and the persistent Indo-Pakistani conflict of the last seventy years, are just some examples demonstrating that neither neutrality nor non-alignment provide *ipso facto* immunity from armed conflict, regardless if triggered by external powers or by that state's own political decisions. Conversely, as argued by the political scientist Robert Rothstein, a military alliance "is an instrument, par excellence, of deterrence and defense."[120] To protect its autonomy, a state can adopt a defensive attitude opting for neutrality; nonetheless, the efficacy of this posture relies on the extent to which it can preserve its neutrality. In a direct confrontation between *G* and *S*, the latter can no longer remain neutral and must engage. It is called, willingly or unwillingly, to be an active part of the confrontation. Consequently, in that case, *S*'s non-member status in any military alliance, whether for its own reasons or due to external pressures, proves to be a vulnerability.

A small state's internal violent conflict can attract the military involvement of larger external actors. Since the resources that *S* can make available to quell the internal conflict are sparse, or because the consequences of violent disorder could afflict a larger actor, international organizations or more powerful countries with regional interests may be tempted to apply military intervention to restore order. Leaving aside the numerous IGO-led missions (UN and other regional security organizations), in the past many individual countries have intervened in smaller ones with the alleged purpose of solving or supporting the resolution of the internal conflict.[121] Accordingly, an internal violent conflict represents a severe vulnerability for *S* that can be exploited by *G* to affect the dyadic relationship in *G*'s favor.

The small state may have fewer resources to allocate for military purposes, causing reduced military capabilities. Going beyond the alleged RMA and regarding the ever-expanding costs of new technologies, it is appropriate to argue that limited resources might

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120 Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers*, 51.

121 For example, U.S. Intervention in Grenada and Panama (1983, 1990), Intervention of Russian Federation in Transnistria and Georgia (1990, 2008), Intervention of the United Kingdom in Sierra Leone (2000), and France in Cote d'Ivoire or Mali (2002, 2013).

prevent *S* from keeping pace with the military technology dynamic.[122] Furthermore, *S*'s more limited financial resources will presumably prevent it from maintaining a large defense industry at the expense of supporting other state domains.[123] The great power may also face this dilemma, but for *S*, the related difficulties (e.g., shortages, dependence on external suppliers) intensify at a higher rate. The weakness of its national defense industry, as well as its attempt to balance technology quality and quantity, would limit *S*'s adoption of a specific military doctrine and organizational structure, representing an important vulnerability for *S* in attempting to militarily influence the asymmetrical relationship with *G*.

2. Opportunities

Involvement in multilateral security arrangements can provide the small state an opportunity to enhance its military posture. A military alliance represents, at least formally, the highest form of commitment to a security organization. Despite transferring part of its political autonomy to the will of the alliance's dominant state, this commitment gives *S* the opportunity to increase its security in absolute terms and, eventually, by free riding, to reduce the costs of its security in relative terms.[124] The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Enhanced Forward Presence (EFP) in the Baltic States is an excellent example of this dynamic.[125] Another less invasive approach is available through membership in regional organizations like the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) or the African Union; although they are not military alliances, they make the maintenance of security in their region one of their core objectives. Partnership programs represent a third approach for the small state; although these programs do not explicitly

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[122] Loo, *Military Transformation and Strategy*, 3.

[123] "Limited resources" in this context means the absolute figures and not those relative to the percentage of GDP or the economic conditions of *S*.

[124] On the choice of bandwagon and free riding in alliance see Mancur Olson and Richard Zeckhauser, "An Economic Theory of Alliances," *The Review of Economics and Statistics* 48, no. 3 (1966): 266–79; John R. Oneal and Hugh Carter Whatley, "The Effect of Alliance Membership on National Defense Burdens, 1953–88: A Test of Mancur Olson's Theory of Collective Action," *International Interactions* 22, no. 2 (1996): 105–22; David A. Lake, *Hierarchy in International Relations* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009).

[125] Zapfe, "'Hybrid'Threats and NATO's Forward Presence."

focus on imposing or maintaining security, they do allow members to enhance their security capability by sharing experiences and training. Despite its neutral posture, Switzerland is an active member of the NATO Partnership for Peace (PfP) Program. Hence, multilateral security arrangements offer various options for strengthening a small state's military posture based on the degree of involvement that the small state can embrace.

During the Cold War, the concept of total defense represented for the non-allied small states the most comprehensive and independent answer for protecting their territory from more powerful countries. Numerous smaller countries around the world adopted and adapted, according to their characteristics, the concept of "Total Defense."[126] Total defense relies on a posture of deterrence, combining dissuasion and territorial defense to diminish the great powers' expected utility in a confrontation with the small state.[127] This concept poses many challenges to civil-military relations in the small country and is intimately linked to the concept of "citizen in arms," which leads to a non-aggressive policy not adapted for conducting external offensive military operations. In the last few decades, in many countries the traditional separation between the role of the armed forces defending the frontiers and beyond, and that of police forces guaranteeing homeland security, has blurred due to terrorist threats and limited resources.[128] Furthermore, the rise of an assertive Russia pushed some smaller European countries to revitalize and modernize their total defense concept as an opportunity to invigorate their resilience and deterrence in facing internal and external threats.[129] Thus, comprehensive security, combining and integrating military, and civil security forces, as well as other domains of civil society, can characterize a small state's opportunity in facing a more powerful actor.

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[126] On the concept of Total Defense and its application see Jean-Marc Rickli, "European Small States' Military Policies after the Cold War: From Territorial to Niche Strategies," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 21, no. 3 (2008): 307–25; Ron Matthews and Nellie Zhang Yan, "Small Country 'Total Defence': A Case Study of Singapore," *Defence Studies* 7, no. 3 (2007): 376–95.

[127] Karsh, *Neutrality and Small States*, 63–64.

[128] Alyson J. K. Bailes, Jean-Marc Rickli, and Baldur Thorhallsson, "Small States, Survival and Strategy," in *Small States and International Security: Europe and Beyond*, ed. Clive Archer et al. (New York: Routledge, 2014): 52–71.

[129] Government Offices of Sweden, *Development of Modern Total Defence*, June 11, 2018, https://www.government.se/articles/2018/05/development-of-modern-total-defence/; Prime Ministers's Office, *Government's Defence Report* (Helsinki: Finnish Prime Minister's Office, 2017).

In a conventional military confrontation, the application of irregular warfare by the weaker actor can increase its chances of success. Based on historical records of the last two centuries, Arreguín-Toft convincingly claims that a conflict's outcome between a weaker and a more powerful actor represents the result of the interactions of their strategies which are themselves rooted into two distinctive approaches: direct and indirect.[130] The British historian B. H. Liddert Hart suggests that a direct approach focuses on annihilating the adversary's military capacities, while an indirect one targets the opponent's will to fight.[131] Arreguín-Toft argues that, in an asymmetric confrontation, if the two actors engage in a similar manner (direct-direct or indirect-indirect), the weaker actor almost always loses.[132] Adopting this theory as a starting point, Hungarian officer Sandor Fabian suggests the creation of irregular professional units in small states as a viable military strategy for offsetting the stronger actor's conventional approach.[133] As discussed previously, the hybrid approach does not make conventional use of military forces its main instrument. Conversely, it applies an agent-based indirect approach to avoid triggering a conventional conflict. For this reason, a small state's military strategy based unilaterally on irregular forces would only lead to a strategic symmetry (indirect-indirect), which, as suggested by Arreguín-Toft, would point to the almost certain defeat of the weaker actor. Nonetheless, if *G* will decide to engage conventional military forces, for example, to obtain specific goals, *S*'s irregular capacity would provide a solid opportunity to threaten *G*'s achievements.

C. ECONOMIC

In the modern strategic environment, international economics and geopolitics are increasingly entangled and gaining momentum as means of statecraft. The increased interdependence between states amplifies opportunities and vulnerabilities in the economic

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130 Arreguín-Toft, *How the Weak Win Wars*, 105.

131 Hart, *The Strategy of Indirect Approach*, 5.

132 Arreguín-Toft, *How the Weak Win Wars*, 216–17.

133 Sandor Fabian, "Professional Irregular Defense Forces: The Other Side of COIN" (master's thesis Naval Postgraduate School, 2012), http://hdl.handle.net/10945/7338

domain. Moreover, economic *smallness* can give rise to specific vulnerabilities and opportunities of which a state must be conscious.

1. Vulnerabilities

Smallness can lead to economic vulnerabilities that arise partly because production is a function of accessible resources, while consumption is a function of income.[134] In line with this, economic historian Richard T. Griffiths argues that the smaller the state, the more likely it is the following characteristics will be found: limited range of output, fewer resources, and a small domestic market.[135] This is supported by numerous other scholars who emphasize the propensity of *S* to have a high import rate to meet its domestic consumption and investments, which in turn requires an export-oriented domestic economy focused on a smaller range of products and, eventually, countries to balance imports and exports.[136] In *Profiling Vulnerability and Resilience: A Manual for Small States*, the director of the Islands and Small States Institute in Malta, Professor Lino Briguglio recognizes four variables to define and assess small-state vulnerability: economic openness, reliance on a limited range of exports, dependence on strategic imports, and "peripherality"—referring to insularity and remoteness.[137] The first of Briguglio's variables is the most controversial and is much discussed in the literature. While empirical literatures tend to emphasize the positive relationship between openness and economic growth, other authors underline the adverse effects of too much market exposure and

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[134] On economic asymmetry see Snorri Thomas Snorrason, *Asymmetric Economic Integration: Size Characteristics of Economies, Trade Costs and Welfare* (Heidelberg: Physica Verlag, 2012), 47–74.

[135] Griffiths admit that fewer resources as characteristic is mostly a function of location than of size. Richard T. Griffiths, "Economic Security and Size," in *Small States and International Security*, ed. Clive Archer, Alyson J.K. Bailes and Anders Wivel (New York: Routledge, 2014), 46–65.

[136] Katzenstein, *Small States in World Markets*; Briguglio, Cordina, and Kisanga, *Building the Economic Resilience of Small States*; Sutton, "The Concept of Small States in the International Political Economy"; Baldur Thorhallsson, "The Icelandic Crash and Its Consequences: A Small State without Economic and Political Shelter," in *Small States in Europe*, ed. Robert Steinmetz and Anders Wivel (New York: Routledge, 2016), 199–216.

[137] Lino Briguglio et al., *Profiling Vulnerability and Resilience: A Manual for Small States* (London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 2010), 6.

volatility.[138] Leaving the discussion aside about the impact of economic openness on an alleged small state, it is arguable that the dependency on strategic goods importation and the limited range of export diversification may represent small-state key vulnerabilities.

The dependency on strategic importation and the limited range of export diversification exposes a small state to fluctuating policies of its major trading partners. Knowing *S* is reliant on its specific products and availability, the major trading partners find themselves in a favorable situation of being able to compel *S* by manipulating trade conditions. The blazing rise and catastrophic fall of Iceland's financial system in the first decade of the twenty-first century represents an example of this small state's vulnerability. The political scientists Edward Mansfield and Eric Reinhardt propose a possible solution to it, namely by tying as close as possible to one major trading partner through a preferential trading arrangement, like a customs union.[139] Nonetheless, this strong tie with a few greater states or even a single greater state may allow those greater states to press their interests unilaterally by employing their more substantial economic capabilities.[140] This economic asymmetry is a critical vulnerability that can be exploited to the detriment of the small state.

2. Opportunities

To lessen possible economic vulnerabilities, a smaller state should rely more heavily on multilateral economic organizations. As suggested by Michael Handel in *Weak States in the International System*, small states tend to seek protection or rely on international organizations to overwatch and impose fair trade regulations.[141] For instance, after World War II, small states were the most enthusiastic supporters of multilateral

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[138] On the discussion about positive and negative impact of openness see Sebastian Edwards, "Openness, Trade Liberalization, and Growth in Developing Countries," *Journal of Economic Literature* 31, no. 3 (1993): 1358–93; Godfrey Baldacchino and Geoffrey Bertram, "The Beak of the Finch: Insights Into the Economic Development of Small Economies," *The Round Table* 98, no. 401 (2009): 141–60; Pierluigi Montalbano, "Trade Openness and Developing Countries' Vulnerability: Concepts, Misconceptions, and Directions for Research," *World Development* 39, no. 9 (2011): 1489–1502.

[139] Edward D. Mansfield and Eric Reinhardt, "International Institutions and the Volatility of International Trade," *International Organization* 62, no. 4 (October 2008): 65–96.

[140] Vital, *The Inequality of States*; Keohane, "Lilliputians' Dilemmas."

[141] Michael I. Handel, *Weak States in the International System* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

economic organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Bank, the European Economic Community (EEC) and its successor the European Union (EU). Furthermore, the markets' globalization allows small states to create complex economic relations with other entities, increasing their integration in the global economy and subsequently their resilience against external pressures by great powers. The EU Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) is an example of how small states can make use of this mechanism. Because of the continuing accusations of preferential EU trade agreements, the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP) are encouraged to conclude the EPAs in regional groupings.[142] Despite critiques and different outcomes of the EPAs, based on the degree of regional specificity, the ACP states that showed a higher degree of regional cooperation among them clearly obtained a better negotiation outcome relative to the greater power (EU).[143] Accordingly, membership in a multilateral economic organization and the exploitation of this membership in the asymmetrical relationship with a more powerful state is an opportunity for the small state.

Small states can mitigate the negative consequences of their relatively smaller-scale economy, and hence, also their limitations in diversifying their exports, by focusing on niche products and services. Both small developed and developing countries have found niches in the global economy.[144] Many examples demonstrate how small states can develop unorthodox strategies focusing on specific niche products or services. The flags of convenience, started after World War I by small maritime countries, represent 50 percent of the commercial world fleet and generate significant revenue for the registered countries.[145] Other examples of the wide variety of products and services offered by

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[142] For the groups classification see EU Policy, Countries and Regions http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/regions/index_en.htm [accessed 2/1/2019]

[143] Merran Hulse, "Actorness and Trade Negotiating Outcomes: West Africa and the SADC Group in Negotiations for Economic Partnership Agreements," *International Relations* 32, no. 1 (2018): 39–59.

[144] Katzenstein, *Small States in World Markets*; Naren Prasad, "Escaping Regulation, Escaping Convention: Development Strategies in Small Economies," *World Economics* 5, no. 1 (2004): 41–65.

[145] Richard Morris and Thomas Klikauer, "Crews of Convenience from the South West Pacific: The" German" Sailors of Kiribati," *New Zealand Journal of Employment Relations* 26, no. 2 (2001): 185.

various small states include fishing rights, passports (residence), country codes, domain names, satellite slots, and internet gambling platforms.[146] Other countries focus on advantageous market mechanisms and specific skills or natural resources present in their territory thus allowing a small state to establish itself among world leaders in specific areas and mitigating the circumstances of their possible smallness in other domains.[147] The emphasis on specific niche commodities and services allows the small state to increase its leverage in those specific markets where its economy can excel; if the malicious great power shows a relative degree of interdependence with the small state's specific market or product, the latter can leverage and exploit that interdependence to its advantage.

The small state's comparatively small bureaucracy and relative short relational distances between policy decision makers, permit *S* to adapt quickly to new economic circumstances. As suggested by Mikko Kautto et al., small states may be swifter and better capable of adjusting to international competition and other challenges than non-small states.[148] There are different ways this adaptability unfolds. While Handel argues that small states often withstand economic pressures from more powerful states by shifting trade patterns, Katzenstein claims specific corporative governance as a potential key to success.[149] For instance, a comparative analysis of small European states with neighboring regions of larger countries shows that the former eventually achieved better economic performance because of the independence and flexibility in defining its economic

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[146] Naren Prasad, "Small but Smart: Small States in the Global System," in *The Diplomacies of Small States. Between Vulnerability and Resilience*, Andrew F. Cooper and Timothy M. Shaw (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 41–64.

[147] Some examples are: the Swiss Leadership in the gold world market (around 20 percent of the worldwide gold imports and 21.1 percent of the worldwide gold exports). Kuwait represents the 7th highest crude oil exporter worldwide (4.5 percent of the worldwide export). source: http://www.worldtopexports.com

[148] Mikko Kautto et al., *Nordic Welfare States in the European Context* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001).

[149] Handel, *Weak States in the International System*, 236–56; Peter J. Katzenstein, "Small States and Small States Revisited," *New Political Economy* 8, no. 1 (2003): 9–30.

policies.[150] Hence, the adaptability to the challenges arising from a global dynamic economic environment may represent an opportunity for the *S* facing a malicious *G*.

D. SOCIETAL

Societal security refers to the level of equilibrium that exists within a social system and is one of the underlying aspects of a state's security system. The political scientist Barry Buzan in his seminal work about societal security *People, States and Fear* adopts societal security as one of the essential components of modern security.[151] He argues that the security of the state is entangled with the security interests of society's sub-groups and individuals.[152] Accordingly, society represents both the reference element and the potential actor of societal security. Consequently, the state[153] and its citizens are mutually and concurrently security suppliers and customers. Endogenous and exogenous sources of pressure can cause a disequilibrium within and between the values and environmental sources of the two constituent elements, leading to societal conflicts and, if not equalized, causing state disruption.[154] Therefore, even in the case of a small-state–great-power relationship, vulnerabilities and opportunities for a small state's societal security can be generated by its major opponent (exogenous pressure) and by the small state itself (endogenous pressure), namely by the small state's constituent components: the society (and its sub-groups) and the state.

1. Vulnerabilities

The presence of societal subgroups tied with other countries may be a source of social pressure for the small state. Societal sub-groups linked to neighboring countries and

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[150] Harvey W. Armstrong and Robert Read, "Trade and Growth in Small States: The Impact of Global Trade Liberalisation," *World Economy* 21, no. 4 (1998): 563–85.

[151] Barry Buzan, People*, States & Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era* (Colchester: Ecpr, 2009).

[152] Buzan, People, *States & Fear*, 18–30.

[153] Understood as the running elite and the state apparatus.

[154] Chalmers A. Johnson, *Revolutionary Change* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1982); Nathan Leites and Charles Wolf Jr. *Rebellion and Authority: An Analytic Essay on Insurgent Conflicts* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1970).

diasporas can reduce small-state social homogeneity, introducing substantial and increasing differences that can generate pressures and antagonism with other subgroups not tied to the neighbor state.[155] The Balkans, specifically Kosovo, represents a typical example where tensions between ethnic groups supported by neighbor countries can endanger state societal security. Another example related to ethnicity and religion is the support that the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) received from Malaysian officials during the conflict against the Philippine government between 1969 and 1975.[156] Even though in the Cold War period proxy conflicts were more an expression of competition between great powers rather than of a great-power/small-state conflict, the revealed principal-agent relationship between the great power and its proxies within the target state effectively reflect how a great power could exploit a society subgroup to destabilize the societal security of the targeted small state.

Societal polarization and radicalization can cause devastating effects on the small state's societal security. According to the two economists Esteban Joan and Debraj Ray, polarization is the result of the interrelation of within-group identity and across-group alienation.[157] Social identity theories demonstrate that the social group construct maintains collective identities by drawing symbolic boundaries and distinctions between themselves and other groups.[158] These categorical distinctions based on ethnic origin, religion, nativity, and other "societal classifications" can lead to enduring systems of social closure, exclusion, and control over the "others," imprinting patterns of durable inequality within the more extensive system's social structure.[159] Social closure understood as the closure

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155 Alyson J. K. Bailes, "Societal Security and Small States," in *Small States and International Security: Europe and Beyond*, ed. Clive Archer, Alyson J.K. Bailes and Anders Wivel (New York: Routledge, 2014), 66–79.

156 Shanti Nair, *Islam in Malaysian Foreign Policy* (New York: Routledge, 2013). 67

157 Joan-Maria Esteban and Debraj Ray, "On the Measurement of Polarization," *Econometrica: Journal of the Econometric Society*, (1994): 819–51.

158 Marc Sageman, *Misunderstanding Terrorism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

159 Karen S. Cook, Margaret Levi, and Russell Hardin, *Whom Can We Trust? How Groups, Networks, and Institutions Make Trust Possible: How Groups, Networks, and Institutions Make Trust Possible* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2009), 186.

of the in-group network to external ties leads to a group's radicalization.[160] Both polarization and radicalization have a significant positive relationship within the level of conflict.[161] At this point, it is necessary to draw a fundamental difference between polarization and fractionalization. While a larger number of groups increases fractionalization, the same large number decreases polarization, with the highest level of polarization by two equally sized groups.[162] In the framework of intra-state dynamics, societal fractionalization reduces the risk of conflict, while polarization and radicalization increase it.[163] In the asymmetrical relationship, the great power's influential support of the radicalization of small-state societal sub-groups can affect the internal stability of the state, and in the worst case, may cause disruption of societal security and finally of the political system.

Smaller states are particularly exposed to favoritism and clientelism. In small societies there are relatively short ties between groups or individuals, and social relationships tend to become more personal.[164] This closeness and the relatively increased network density enhance the degree of cohesiveness between the elite and its electorate. Research on in-group favoritism illuminates a widespread mechanism that fosters trust for those on the inside of the circle as well as distrust for outsiders.[165] This dynamic between elites and their in-group members can blur the notions of ethics and public service, potentially facilitating the rise of favoritisms, such as nepotism and clientelism. Different

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[160] Cass R. Sunstein, "The Law of Group Polarization," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 10, no. 2 (2002): 175–95.

[161] Joan Esteban and Debraj Ray, "Conflict and Distribution," *Journal of Economic Theory* 87, no. 2 (1999): 379–415.

[162] Joan Esteban and Gerald Schneider, "Polarization and Conflict: Theoretical and Empirical Issues," *Journal of Peace Research* 45, no. 2 (2008): 134.

[163] Paul Collier, "Doing Well out of War" (Paper presented at the Conference on Economic Agendas in Civil Wars, London, April 1999), 6.

[164] Bailes, "Societal Security and Small States," 72.

[165] Elinor Ostrom and James Walker, *Trust and Reciprocity: Interdisciplinary Lessons for Experimental Research* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2003), 227.

kinds of social delineations can exacerbate these forms of favoritism.[166] The small state's inclination toward favoritism has a major implication for its societal security, which is a common good of all members of the considered society. Eleonor Ostrom recognizes some ideal fundamental principles for governing the allocation of common goods, among these the idea that those affected by the rules should have the opportunity to engage in adapting those rules, and that there exists a need for a mechanism to match the rules to local needs and circumstances.[167] Consequently, the presence of favoritism, and the relative tendency to include specific members of a group in the participatory rules-setting process while excluding others, would undermine the trust the out-group citizens have in the elite. The resulting trust erosion is a threat to societal cohesion, undermining the societal security equilibrium between citizens and state.

2. Opportunities

Social cohesion represents a significant source of resilience for the small state and reduces internal insecurity. The political scientist Anton Steen argues that the greater the insecurity and the smaller the state, the higher is the elite's involvement in and cohesiveness during the political discussion.[168] The resulting strong social cohesion allows the small state to adapt quickly to changing circumstances.[169] Given a certain level of democracy, the readiness and willingness to compromise and to negotiate decisions are more pronounced in a small state. For instance, Luxembourg shows a greater ability to reach national political consensus than, for instance, France or Britain.[170] This enhanced predisposition to collaboration is explained by the fact that cohesive groups are more

166 Doug Jones et al., "Group Nepotism and Human Kinship," *Current Anthropology* 41, no. 5 (2000): 779–809; Tatu Vanhanen, "Domestic Ethnic Conflict and Ethnic Nepotism: A Comparative Analysis," *Journal of Peace Research* 36, no. 1 (1999): 55–73.

167 Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

168 Anton Steen, "Small States and National Elites in a Neoliberal Era," in *Small States in the Modern World. Vulnerabilities and Opportunities*, ed. Harald Baldersheim and Michael Keating (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2015), 198.

169 Katzenstein, "Small States and Small States Revisited."

170 Jean-Marie Frentz, "The Foreign Policy of Luxembourg," in *Small States in Europe: Challenges and Opportunities*, ed. Robert Steinmetz and Anders Wivel (New York: Routledge, 2016), 131–45.

efficient at generating normative, symbolic, and cultural structures. Accordingly, the smaller the state, the greater the adaptability in the citizen-state relationship as concerns societal security.

The small state's ability to integrate the minorities present in its territory is positively correlated to its level of social cohesion and, accordingly, to its societal security. A national majority's elite can attempt to include and contain the ambitions and demands of minorities' elites through several policies, relying on ideological appeal, sharing of political power, distribution of economic and utilitarian rewards, coercion, or a combination of all or some of these.[171] The success of these policies depends mainly on the interaction between the minorities' demands, the suitable majority policy response, as well as the stimuli from the international environment. The success or failure of this interaction will decide whether the integrative process is constructive or disruptive. The history of modern Pakistan between the enactment of its constitution in 1947 and Bangladesh's secession in 1971 represents a practical example of a destructive integration process.[172] On the other hand, the integration of minorities in the Czech Republic and Romania during the EU membership entry process shows a successful example of this interaction.[173] Thus, the successful integration of minorities within its territory represents for the small state a significant opportunity to enhance its societal security and to influence the asymmetrical relationship with a more powerful state in its favor.

Societal pluralism can be viable opportunity for a small state to enhance the integration of minorities and to increase its resilience against external and internal threats to its societal security. The political scientist Robert Dahl refers to organizational pluralism as "the existence of a plurality of relatively autonomous (independent) organizations

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[171] Inayatullah, "Internal and External Factors in the Failure of National Integration in Pakistan," in *Small States and Segmented Societies*, ed. Stephanie G. Neuman (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1976), 85.

[172] Inayatullah. "Internal and External Factors in the Failure of National Integration in Pakistan,"86–87.

[173] Melanie H. Ram, "Democratization through European Integration: The Case of Minority Rights in the Czech Republic and Romania," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 38, no. 2 (2003): 28–56.

(subsystems) within the domain of a state."[174] Hence, the pluralist system places greater emphasis on joint decision making and mutuality of rights and obligations than upon majority decisions and majority-minority alternation of power, adapting the political system to local societal characteristics and values.[175] Another important pluralism tenet is the idea of crosscutting affiliation.[176] Societal pluralism calls for representation of diversity within the same political space, whereby there is deliberate association between members and representatives of different groups across in-group boundaries. The more the affiliation is crosscutting, the smaller the number of persons who are (or are represented) solely in one of the different cleavages; hence, the more difficult it is to build a coalition or a potential conflict-group consisting exclusively of individuals who have no link or interests with other groups.[177] This mechanism represents one of the reasons why, "if ethnicity is crosscut by socioeconomic class, geographic region, and religion," even civil war onset is consistently reduced.[178] Consequently, societal pluralism is a real opportunity for a small state to relax the threat of internal unrest between different social groups that could challenge its societal security.

E. INFORMATIONAL

Mass media systems are a decisive constituent of state influence and control. As argued by Max Weber, state sovereignty represents the legitimate monopoly on the use of force.[179] Legitimacy arises from the success of the state to induce in its citizens a reciprocally-acknowledged right to expect from everyone a behavior conforming to the

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[174] Robert Alan Dahl, *Dilemmas of Pluralist Democracy: Autonomy vs. Control*, vol. 31 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 5.

[175] Lorwin, "Segmented Pluralism"; Peter Larmour, *Foreign Flowers: Institutional Transfer and Good Governance in the Pacific Islands* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005), 98.

[176] Arend Lijphart, *The Politics of Accommodation. Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968), 7.

[177] Douglas W. Rae and Michael Taylor, *The Analysis of Political Cleavages* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1970): 87-88.

[178] Joshua R. Gubler and Joel Sawat Selway, "Horizontal Inequality, Crosscutting Cleavages, and Civil War," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 56, no. 2 (2012): 206.

[179] Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, trans. Hans H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Galaxy, 1998).

state's prescriptions.[180] This inductive process and the resulting production of compliance rely broadly on the use of communication to produce commitment.[181] Accordingly, it is not surprising that the political scientist Camber Warren empirically "demonstrates that mass media infrastructure represents one of the most powerful forces for peace and stability," producing substantial barriers to mobilization against the state.[182] Consequently, this evidence suggests that mass media represents one of the most dominant forces for consistently shaping the informational spectrum to maintain or achieve political control over the population and state legitimacy, and hence, state stability.[183] The following section analyzes small state opportunities and vulnerabilities in the informational domain, focusing primarily on mass media.

1. Vulnerabilities

The audience of the small state is exposed to the influence of foreign mass media to a greater extent than non-small states. The more limited resources of the small-state media enterprises induce the mass media home-market to become more exposed to transnational influence.[184] The more powerful the neighbor country's media system, the higher the risks of its influence on the small-state media environment, especially if that neighbor shares the same language.[185] This mechanism applies broadly to the press, but in particular to broadcasting, since sovereignty in broadcasting is not formally sheltered from

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[180] Stephen Krasner, *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 10.

[181] Karl W. Deutsch, *Nationalism, and Social Communication: An Inquiry into the Foundations of Nationalism* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1953); Karl W. Deutsch, *The Nerves of Government: Models of Political Communication and Control* (New York: Free Press, 1966).

[182] Camber T. Warren, "Not by the Sword Alone: Soft Power, Mass Media and the Production of State Sovereignty," *International Organization* 68, no. 1 (January 24, 2014): 113, https://doi.org/DOI: 10.1017/S0020818313000350.

[183] This thesis does not differentiate mass media from social media, which are considered a sub-category of the former.

[184] Trappel, "Born Losers or Flexible Adjustment?" 361.

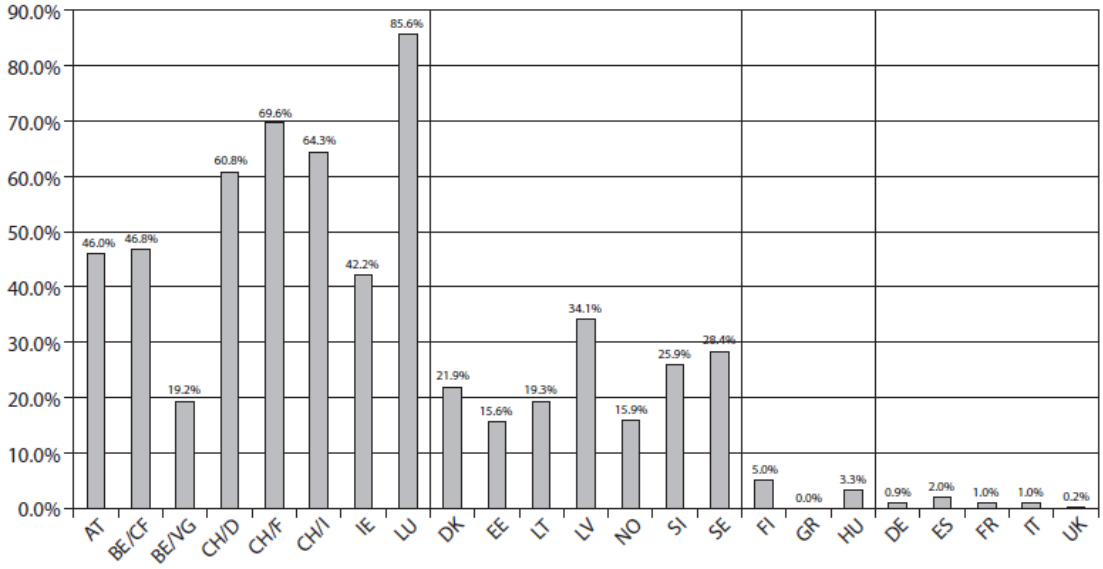
[185] A. Grisold, "Press Concentration and Media Policy in Small Countries: Austria and Ireland Compared," *European Journal of Communication* 11, no. 4 (1996): 485–509; Gabriele Siegert, "The Role of Small Countries in Media Competition in Europe," in *Media Economics in Europe*, ed. J. Heinrich and G.G. Kopper (Berlin: Vistas, 2006), 191–210.

effects of foreign television channels via natural "terrestrial spillover," satellite, and highly developed cable networks.[186] While small-state media production is often focused on appeasing home-market peculiarities and not on producing export-worthy content, media productions of larger states tend to be more internationalized to amortize costs by selling the product to outside markets.[187] Because of this, the probability that a small state's audience consumes media products from larger states' media is higher than the reverse. For instance, small European countries with same-language larger neighbors show a higher audience market share of foreign television channels than small countries with specific languages; similarly, larger states sharing a smaller neighbor's language show only marginal market sharing (see Figure 2).[188]

[186] Burgelman and Pauwels, "Audiovisual Policy and Cultural Identity in Small European States," 173. Within the media, the "spillover effect" indicates the reception of the media signal beyond national borders, given by the fact that electromagnetic waves are not blocked by customs, walls or fences. In this sense it may happen that television or radio broadcasts issued by the media in one state can also be received in another even though there are no broadcasting contracts between the two countries.

[187] Burgelman and Pauwels, "Audiovisual Policy and Cultural Identity in Small European States," 173.

[188] Puppis, "Media Regulation in Small States," 12.



Key: AT: Austria; BE/CF: Belgium/Wallonia; BE/VG: Belgium/Flanders; CH/D: Switzerland/German-speaking region; CH/F: Switzerland/French-speaking region; CH/I: Switzerland/Italian-speaking region; DE: Germany; DK: Denmark; EE: Estonia; ES: Spain; FI: Finland; FR: France; GR: Greece; HU: Hungary; IE: Ireland; IT: Italy; LT: Lithuania; LU: Luxembourg; LV: Latvia; NO: Norway; SE: Sweden; SI: Slovenia; UK: United Kingdom.

Figure 2. Audience Market Share of Foreign Television Channels, 2004.[189]

This language specificity may draw the focus of the small-state audience from the small state's media to the great power's media, so that, in turn, the great power is better positioned to influence the small-state audience by inoculating its narrative and values to the small state's detriment.

Small-state mass media companies may be taken over by foreign companies, decreasing the state's channels of communication and its means to shape the populace's attitude. Shortage of financial resources or the temptation of higher incomes may instigate small states' mass media companies to commit to joint ventures or even full fusions with larger companies from a more powerful country. While for a larger company the acquisition of or participation in a smaller state's mass media enterprise may not represent a big deal financially, for the smaller partner the participation may substantially strengthen

[189] Source: Puppis, "Media Regulation in Small States," 12.

its financial bases.[190] The appropriation by larger foreign companies eventually means a considerable loss of domestic control over the media outcomes, which involves a change in program structure and content to fit the larger enterprise strategy.[191] The risk for the small state is to lose control not only over the communication content but also over the communication infrastructure and service distribution.[192] Consequently, *S* would not only see its narrative overwhelmed by *G*, but it would also experience rising difficulties in accessing the communication system in its territory. In an attempt to regain control, *S* could impose more restrictive media policies, although these carry the risk of undermining media freedoms from censorship intervention and over-regulation.

A lack of governmental support for the public service heightens small state vulnerability in terms of the state's narrative influence and control. The political scientist Colin Hay argues that institutionalization of the neo-liberal economic paradigm caused a "shift from a *normative* to a *normalized* and *necessitarian* neoliberalism."[193] This shift could explain why the socio-political media policy paradigm that emphasizes mostly technical and market-focused factors replaced normative concerns about the need for democracy and the media's social responsibility.[194] Of course, in the short term, relaxing state support to public service—in particular, when previously there was a state monopoly—may have positive effects such as the increase of mass media dynamicity and service alternatives. Nonetheless, underestimating the role of public service may induce the small state to leave some vacuum in the mass media landscape, which in turn can be filled by great-power-backed media companies.

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[190] Trappel, "Born Losers or Flexible Adjustment?" 364–365.

[191] Burgelman and Pauwels, "Audiovisual Policy and Cultural Identity in Small European States."

[192] On the three-layered Social Communication System based on communication infrastructure, distribution services and content and communication services see Jan Van Cuilenburg and Denis McQuail, "Media Policy Paradigm Shifts: Towards a New Communications Policy Paradigm," *European Journal of Communication* 18, no. 2 (2003): 181–207.

[193] Colin Hay, "The Normalizing Role of Rationalist Assumptions in the Institutional Embedding of Neoliberalism," *Economy and Society* 33, no. 4 (2004): 500–527.

[194] Kari Karppinen, "Media Diversity and the Politics of Criteria," *Nordicom Review* 27, no. 2 (2006): 58.

2. Opportunities

To protect state legitimacy and induce popular compliance when a small state is threatened by a larger state, the small state may need to implement specific media regulations. As mentioned previously, mass media in larger countries may face fewer obstacles in satisfying their social and cultural responsibilities than those in a smaller one, particularly if the small state audience is a segment of a broader language market; under these conditions, media regulation seems especially relevant to protect the population against foreign influence.[195] Increased mass media regulation represents a small state opportunity to reduce the vulnerabilities mentioned previously and protect the informational environment. Regulatory measures do not *ipso facto* imply a monopolistic state control of the media; specific synergies between the private and the public sector can arguably enhance the small-state mass media's resilience in both media production and distribution.[196] Regulatory measures do not exclude media diversity; on the contrary, they represent a viable way to promote a more interventionist articulation of diversity.[197] Accordingly, media regulation does not only help in protecting the small-state mass media environment from outside malicious interventions but also supports further opportunities in the informational domain, namely for media diversity.

Media diversity, especially in a small state, ensures the availability of diverse sources and content for a populace, preventing unilateral exploitation of the informational spectrum by a more powerful actor. A diversified media environment weakens penetration efforts from great powers. The population is already accustomed to specific sources of information about aspects of the environment important to them. Accordingly, as the sociologist Phillips Davison argues that "to influence behavior under these conditions the communicator's information must be more accurate or otherwise more useful than the data

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[195] Siegert, "The Role of Small Countries in Media Competition in Europe," 202.

[196] C. Hoskins and S. McFadyen, "Television in the New Broadcasting Environment: Public Policy Lessons from the Canadian Experience," *European Journal of Communication* 4, no. 2 (1989): 173–89; Jean Martin, "La Télévision Publique sans Publicité: Une Nécessité [Public television without advertising: a necessity]," *Mediaspouvoirs* 16 (1989): 25–29.

[197] Richard Collins, *From Satellite to Single Market: New Communication Technology and European Public Service Television* (London: Routledge, 2005), 62.

from competing sources."[198] A multitude of communication channels offers an equally broad range of options for exploitation and redundancy, which is important particularly in the cyber domain, where attributing malicious activities to a source is usually difficult, a prominent characteristic of the current informational environment.[199] Nonetheless, to make people do what the corrupted media says, one must first persuade those people to *believe* what it says.[200] The more diverse the sources and the content to which the audience is exposed, the more challenging to focus the audience on one specific and redundant message. Yet, Internet-based communication allows the formation of virtual communities of similarly minded people that offer new and easier methods of spreading misinformation.[201] Fitting design and appropriate delivering method present the fundamental elements for successful communication in order to attain the audience's attention; as such, people from similarly minded communities—albeit virtual one—are an easy target for specific tailored messaging.[202] Consequently, the small state, parallel to the centralized and vertically structured public service apparatus, can exploit media diversification to expand its influence in the informational domain in a decentralized, horizontal, and relatively inexpensive way.

The relatively greater orientation to the homeland informational domain allows the small state to develop specific and exclusive media products. Productions from smaller countries are less exportable because they are too socially specific to appeal to a more significant and international audience.[203] Nonetheless, a small state's specific pattern of

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198 W. Phillips Davison, "On the Effects of Communication," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 23, no. 3 (1959): 57.

199 On the challenge of attribution of cyber-attacks see Thomas Rid and Ben Buchanan, "Attributing Cyber Attacks," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 38, no. 1–2 (2015): 4–37.

200 Daniel Lerner, "Effective Propaganda: Conditions and Evaluation," in *Propaganda in War and Crisis: Materials for American Policy*, ed. Daniel Lerner (New York: George W. Stewart Publisher, 1951), 353.

201 Abram Shulsky, "Elements of Strategic Denial and Deception," in *Strategic Denial and Deception*, ed. Roy Godson and James J. Wirtz (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2002), 24.

202 Thomas Elkjer Nissen*, #TheWeaponizationOfSocialMedia: @Characteristics_of_ Contemporary_Conflicts* (Copenhagen: Royal Danish Defence College, 2015).

203 Burgelman and Pauwels, "Audiovisual Policy and Cultural Identity in Small European States," 173.

programming customized to the preferences of its own population may represent a strength rather than a weakness. The media scientist Josef Trappel argues that if small states' "national channels succeed in this respect, they would be merely unbeatable by large-scale, international-oriented channels;" in particular, in the case of a shared language, small-state media may be able to create niche products that appeal to the neighbor population as well.[204] This would allow reduced influence by the great power over the small state through addressing in a more tailored way the small-state population; at the same time it would enable the small state to take advantage of its geographic and ethnic vicinity to target the great-power neighboring community.

F. DOES GEOGRAPHY MATTER?

One of the most widely accepted traits of world politics is the anarchy that underlines the system of international relations between states; however, these relations occur within a whole closed network composed of all the states present in the world and their relationships (or ties)—namely, the international state system.[205] As already widely demonstrated by social network scholars, the position of an actor within a network influences that actor's ability to exercise power and influence over other members of the network.[206] Although in social network studies the location is not understood as the geographical position, the application of this science in international relations demonstrates that geolocation is one of the components that can affect an actor's position within a network, and hence, a state actor's ability to exercise power and influence within its international relations network.[207]

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[204] Trappel, "Born Losers or Flexible Adjustment?" 364.

[205] In this context the term network is applied similarly to the context of Social Network Analysis, hence, does not exclude degrees of hierarchy within the network. A *whole network* includes all relevant actors and all relevant ties between the actors, and it is also known as a full or complete network. On network definition and characteristics see Sean F. Everton, *Networks and Religion. Ties That Bind, Loose, Build Up, and Tear Down.* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

[206] Ronald S. Burt, "Positions in Networks," *Social Forces* 55, no. 1 (1976): 93–122; Karen S. Cook et al., "Social Exchange Theory," in *Handbook of Social Psychology*, ed. John Delamer (New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2013), 61–88.

[207] Emilie M. Hafner-Burton, Miles Kahler, and Alexander H. Montgomery, "Network Analysis for International Relations," *International Organization* 63, no. 3 (2009): 559–92.

The geographical closeness of states influences their relations. Brantly Womack contends that "locatedness" of interests is a fundamental characteristic of a state's asymmetric relationship.[208] As a distinct level of analysis, moving from the international system as a whole into the region, it is possible to observe that security-relevant events originating from a specific geographic area tend to influence the regional set of states to a greater extent than other states outside the area.[209] Tom Long argues that "proximity is likely to matter" and that "extra-regional and regional asymmetrical relationships might differ in consistent ways."[210] States, to maintain the regional order, manage their security in different ways, from the dominance of a regional power to balance of power, from regional power agreements to collective security organizations.[211] Regardless of its typology, the regional security system depends on the regional power, and in particular, its self-perceptions as a regional power and the perceptions of the other states in the region.[212] Thus, the geographical position in a specific world-region and the related presence of regional power and its attitude, as well as the attitude of the other states toward the former, influences every state located in that region.

The closer states are, the more likely their interests are tied. Understood as territory and population, a state has interests that are linked explicitly with its location and populace. Neighbor states will also have a territory and population with their own interests that, because of proximity, will be more likely tied with the first state than with the interests of another country far away. Hence, geographical proximity between states has a direct impact on the interests and relationship these states share. For instance, Belgium and France will have more shared interests than Belgium and China because the first two share

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208 Womack, *Asymmetry and International Relationships*, 40.

209 David A. Lake, "Regional Hierarchy: Authority and Local International Order," *Review of International Studies* 35, no. S1 (2009): 35–58.

210 Long, "It's Not the Size, It's the Relationship," 154.

211 Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); Lake, *Hierarchy in International Relations*; Emanuel Adler and Patricia Greve, "When Security Community Meets Balance of Power: Overlapping Regional Mechanisms of Security Governance," *Review of International Studies* 35, no. S1 (2009): 59–84.

212 Miriam Prys, "Hegemony, Domination, Detachment: Differences in Regional Powerhood," *International Studies Review* 12, no. 4 (2010): 479–504.

a regional neighborhood. Therefore, the geographical proximity of two states reinforces their asymmetrical relationship, having important implications for a country that is close to a more powerful state.

The proximity of a great power influences different domains of the small state. In her seminal work, Annette Fox argues that the geographic location of the small states she analyzed had a significant influence on their involvement in World War II.[213] Other scholars argue that small states' vulnerabilities increase with their closeness to a greater power's sphere of influence.[214] More recent studies go beyond vulnerabilities as the only characteristic of the small-state–great-power relationship. The proximity of more powerful countries can influence the foreign policy of small nations as described by studies on Latin American international relations that, exploring the foreign policy of small powers in the proximity of a more powerful one, find that autonomy is a central policy goal of those small states.[215] Another example is Luxembourg: its geopolitical environment and historical experiences make it particularly aware of the proximity of more powerful states, influencing in a significant way its foreign policy decisions.[216] Similarly, proximity with Russia was eventually Lithuania's main argument for joining NATO, and for Finland to keep its neutrality. These examples indicate that small states facing a systemic challenge from a more powerful state nearby respond in numerous ways based on the hegemonic power's behavior, the small state's internal political dynamics, politicians' individual choices, as well as historical circumstances.[217] This fact underlines the influence of

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213 Fox, *The Power of Small States*, 184.

214 Trygve Mathisen, *The Functions of Small States in the Strategies of the Great Powers* (Oslo, Universitetsforlaget, 1971); August Schou and Arne Olav Brundtland, *Small States in International Relations*, vol. 17 (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1971).

215 Sean W. Burges, *Brazilian Foreign Policy after the Cold War* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2009); Roberto Russell and Juan G. Tokatlian, "Modelos de Política Exterior y Opciones Estratégicas: El Caso de América Latina Frente a Estados Unidos [Models of Foreign Policy and Strategic Options: The Case of Latin America Facing the United States]," *Revista CIDOB d'Afers Internacionals*, (2009): 211–49.

216 Steinmetz and Wivel, *Small States in Europe*, 132.

217 Hey, *Small States in World Politics*, 187.

geography and specifically the small state's proximity to a great power, which exposes the former to the influence of the latter more so and encourages the latter to exert that influence.

G. THE ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Given the characteristics of the hybrid threat exposed in Chapter II, an analysis of the small-state–great-power asymmetrical relationship based on single factors, linear modeling, and regression or game theory reductionist approaches is destined to fail. Systems thinking, however, is "a scientific field of knowledge for understanding change and complexity through the study of dynamic cause and effect over time,"[218] and as such, is inherent to complexity theory. Complexity theory or the science of complex systems stretches over many disciplines including the sciences.[219] Thus, a systems-thinking approach may help to capture the complexity of the hybrid threat in a holistic way. But, why should we study the hybrid threat as a complex system? And what are complex systems? Before presenting the systems model that is applied in the case studies to explore the small state's opportunities and vulnerabilities, it is necessary to answer the two previous questions, starting with the latter.

Complex systems are mutually influencing multilayer networks and are highly sensitive to initial conditions. A system can be considered complex if its constitutive elements (or agents) meet at least the following criteria: diversity, connection, interdependence, and adaptation; and if the system as such usually shows non-linear and emergence behaviors.[220] In a complex system, diverse elements vary in kind and number, and they interact with the other individual components and with the system as a whole, creating interdependence, especially mutual influence, whether intentional or not.[221] These mutual interactions, which can be of different types and may change over time, may cause

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[218] Kambiz E. Maani and Robert Y. Cavana, *Systems Thinking, System Dynamics: Managing Change and Complexity* (New Zealand: Pearson Education, 2007), 7.

[219] On an overview over the application of the theory of complex system in different fields of science Stefan Thurner, Rudolf Hanel, and Peter Klimek, *Introduction to the Theory of Complex Systems* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2018), 1-26.

[220] Scott E. Page, *Diversity and Complexity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).

[221] Scott E. Page, *Understanding Complexity* (Chantilly, VA: Teaching Company, 2009).

adaptation of the constitutive elements, their network, and even of the system as a whole.[222] These adaptations can lead to emergent phenomena. Emergence is a phenomenon whereby aggregate system behavior arises from the localized elements' behavior.[223] The neuro-anthropologist Terrence Deacon describes three levels of emergence.[224] First order emergence occurs when individual localized behavior aggregates into system behavior disconnected from its origin.[225] For instance, the properties of water emerge from the relations among its constitutive molecules but are not the properties of the same molecules in isolation. Second order emergence, also called self-organization, occurs when a system's spatial pattern or structure emerge and change over time even though the individual behavior rules of its constituents are constant; an example of this phenomenon is a birds' flock.[226] Third order emergence, also called phase transition or tipping points, involves radical changes of kind in the system. This event occurs when endogenous forces of the system or exogenous forces are not properly balanced out, so they accumulate and reach a critical threshold, causing an abrupt change in the macro-level properties of the system.[227] The emergence's dynamics may cause non-linear relationships; that is to say, "if the value(s) of the causal elements change by any given amount, it is possible to predict the change in the value of the dependent element."[228] In other words, we know the function, regardless of how complicated it may be, which exactly relates the dependent variable with its independent constituents. Given these complex systems' characteristics, are there some commonalities between them and those of the hybrid threat?

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222 John H. Holland, *Signals and Boundaries: Building Blocks for Complex Adaptive Systems* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014), 99-115.

223 John H. Miller and Scott E. Page, *Complex Adaptive Systems: An Introduction to Computational Models of Social Life*, vol. 17 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 46.

224 Terrence W. Deacon, "Three Level of Emergent Phenomena," in *Evolution and Emergence: Systems, Organisms, Persons*, ed. Murphy N. and Stoeger W.R. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 88–110.

225 Miller and Page, *Complex Adaptive Systems*, 44.

226 David Byrne and Gill Callaghan, *Complexity Theory and the Social Sciences. The State of the Art* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), 23.

227 Deacon, "Three Level of Emergent Phenomena," 106.

228 Byrne and Callaghan, *Complexity Theory and the Social Sciences*, 18.

The characteristic of the hybrid threat (HT) shows many commonalities with those of a complex system. Referring to the hybrid threat's features highlighted in Chapter II, the HT system meets the conditions to be defined as a complex system (Table 1). The application of multiple instruments of statecraft and the related combination of various actors involved satisfy the characteristic of diversity. The actions and interactions of these constitutive elements of the HT system are linked in the achievement of specific goals, meeting the connection criteria. In particular, the non-military means of statecraft show a high degree of interdependence.[229] The instrument of statecraft and its related actors adapt themselves according to the other system's constituents (both its own and an opponent's actors), the output of the HT system as a whole (achieved results), and the supra-system (international environment). The HT system's constitutive elements meet the criteria of diversity, connection, interdependence, and adaptation; hence, the HT system can be considered a complex system.

[229] On the interdependence of non-military means of statecraft see Keohane and Nye, *Power and Interdependence*.

Table 1. HT System and Complex System's Characteristics Combination.

Hybrid Threat's characteristics	Complex System's characteristics[a]
To attain linear (first order) and non-linear (second and third order) synergetic effects, in achieving specific objectives, it shows an integrated design of simultaneous, synchronized, and adaptive uses of multiple instruments of power along the political, military, economical, societal, and informational (PMESI) continuum.	Constituent: Diversity, connection, interdependence, adaptation. System: Non-linearity
To exploit the characteristics of the adversary society, it targets specific physical and psychological vulnerabilities across the full spectrum of societal functions, generating ambiguity, compulsion, coercion, or a combination of these.	Constituent: Diversity, adaptation. System: Emergence, non-linearity
To maintain the initiative, hinder the adversary decision-making process, and avoid counterproductive bursts of force, it applies strategic gradualism of escalation and de-escalation through a combination of the salami-slicing approach and fait accompli.	Constituent: Adaptation. System: --
To avoid military confrontation and blur the continuum between peace and war, it is mostly non-military in nature, applying military means only in the case where the strategic environment allows it.	Constituent: interdependence System: Non-linearity
To bypass the international or national norm system, overcome the lack of capabilities and reduce the socio-economic costs, it mixes or combines—in a networked principal-agent relationship—endogenous and exogenous state or non-state entities.	Constituent: Diversity, connection, interdependence, adaptation. System: Non-linearity

[a] Referred to the constituent characteristics as well as the system characteristics as a whole.

Furthermore, the HT system shows elements of emergence and non-linearity. Through the application of a measure in a time-space defined physical domain, it is possible to observe outcomes in the psychological domain on a larger time-space scale. For instance, on December 23, 2015, the three-hour-long cyber-attack on seven substations of the Ukrainian power grid, impacted not only portions of the distribution grid, causing the loss of power of 225,000 customers, but also had nation-wide consequences in the informational domain.[230] This is clear proof that, concerning hybrid threats, the macro outcome differs from the micro input not just in scale but also in kind, demonstrating the effect of emergence.

Given the fact that the hybrid threat is a complex system, applying a systems thinking approach to small-state vulnerabilities and opportunities substantially facilitates understanding the behavior of the HT system. Systems thinking allows exploration of the asymmetrical relation as a whole, and the behavior of its constituent elements: the agents (the actors related to the PMESI domains) and the principals (the small state and the great power). This enhanced understanding should enable the author to recognize emergent paths of opportunities and vulnerabilities, as well as feedback that may alter the dynamics of the system,[231] allowing the proposal of potential measures for changing the system's dynamic in favor of the small state.

This model considers the small-state political power as the dependent variable. Political power refers to a state's "capacity to achieve intended effects."[232] This is regardless of whether the power sources are intrinsic (from endogenous assets), derivative (drawing from the relations with another state), or collective (from the network with other countries).[233] The opportunities and vulnerabilities explored in the previous section build

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230 Robert M. Lee, Michael J. Assante, and Tim Conway, *Analysis of the Cyber Attack on the Ukrainian Power Grid*, Defense use case (Washington, DC: Electricity Information Sharing and Analysis Center, 2016).

231 On feedback and organized complexity see Miller and Page, *Complex Adaptive Systems,* 50-53.

232 Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers*, 3.

233 On intrinsic, derivative and collective power see Tom Long, "Small States, Great Power? Gaining Influence through Intrinsic, Derivative, and Collective Power," *International Studies Review* 19, no. 2 (2016): 185–205.

the independent variables of the system. The assumption is that, given the asymmetrical relationship, *S* will try to capitalize on its opportunities, while *G* will exploit *S*'s vulnerabilities (respective to the second hybrid threat's characteristics).

The author is aware that modeling, as the philosopher and sociologist Edgar Morin argues, *restricts* the complexity, blurring "the relation of the whole-part mutual implication."[234] Nonetheless, modeling allows a certain degree of formalization, without focusing on small, linear, and discipline-oriented relationships between phenomena as in the traditional reductionist approach. Accordingly, systems thinking implies that the constituents of the system, in this case, the vulnerabilities, opportunities, and the related actors, must be considered dynamically in terms of processes. The variables' interaction can be positive, negative, or neutral.[235] The interactions are not independent and may generate feedback loops or cycles that play a fundamental role in system stability.[236] Feedback loops are generally classified in *positive* (also *reinforcing*) cycles, which amplify the changes leading to instability; and, *negative* (or *balancing*) cycles, which absorb the change and thus stabilize the system.[237] In the HT model presented in Figure 3 feedback loops are not yet present. The analysis of the cases studies will allow the recognition of the emergence of feedback cycles and the relative impact on the system.

With the analytical framework defined, it is now time to apply it to the selected case studies to explore the small state's opportunities and vulnerabilities, and to identify trends when a small state faces a great power's hybrid threat. The temporal amplitude should allow one to assess whether the characteristics of the hybrid threat can be observed even before its formal conceptualization. The differentiation of the great powers and small-state actors should permit the formulation and evaluation of possible strategies.

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234 Edgar Morin, "Restricted Complexity, General Complexity," in *Science and Us: Philosophy and Complexity. Singapore: World Scientific*, ed. Carlos Gershenson, Diederik Aerts and Bruce Edmonds (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing, 2007): 6.

235 If positive, variable X reacts proportionally to a shift in variable W; if negative, variable X reacts inversely proportionally to a change in variable W; if neutral, no direct link exists between X and W.

236 Miller and Page, *Complex Adaptive Systems*, 50.

237 John D. Sterman, *Business Dynamics: Systems Thinking and Modeling for a Complex World* (Boston: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2000), 12-13.

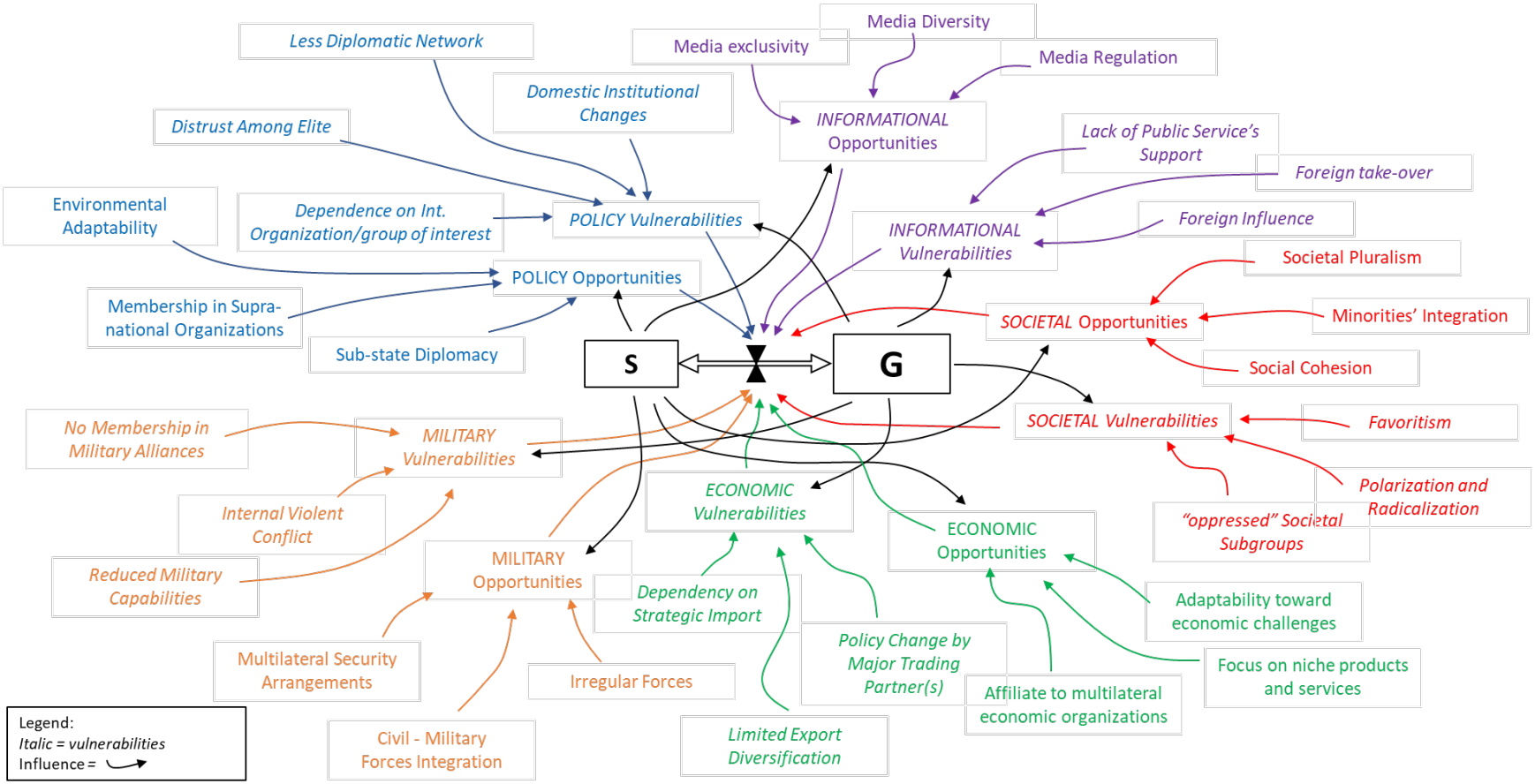

Figure 3. Hybrid Threat System

IV. GUATEMALA 1944–1954

On June 27, 1954 the Guatemalan president Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán was overthrown during a US-backed *coup d'état*; however, the events of June 1954 were rooted in the Guatemalan Revolution of 1944.

A. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In the spring of 1944, a series of protests initiated by students and further augmented by teachers, lawyers and other professionals, as well an important part of Guatemalan society and elites, forced the president-dictator Jorge Ubico Castañeda to resign on July 1, 1944. When army generals wanted to seize the opportunity to rise to power, young army officers backed by the armed populace prevented the establishment of a military dictatorship, which marked the beginning of the Guatemalan Revolution. Even though the revolution broke the corrupt and repressive oligarchic system that had reigned in Guatemala for almost seventy years, the economy and, most importantly, the social structure remained untouched.[238] The elected president Juan José Arévalo did not disrupt the traditional *latifundista* (landowner) land-tenure system and avoided agrarian reform. He focused on moderate social-reform programs, such as the new constitution's social guarantees, freedom of speech and the press, social security law, educational system improvement, and the labor code.[239] While advancing the ideas of the 1944 revolution, supporting the lower and middle classes in urban areas, and more broadly improving the conditions of the working class, the Arévalo presidency did not undermine the fundamental interests of U.S. companies.

Despite being moderate, Arévalo's reforms represented a change in the *status quo ante* revolution that did not please the most prominent foreign landowner and agrarian monopolist, the American-owned United Fruits Company (UFCO), nor did it please the

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[238] Michael Grow, *U.S. Presidents and Latin American Interventions: Pursuing Regime Change in the Cold War* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2008), 3–5.

[239] Stephen Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit: The Story of the American Coup in Guatemala* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 33–38.

Guatemalan upper class or the ruling elites of Guatemala's neighbor countries. For the UFCO, the labor code was a deliberate attack aimed at the company, and accordingly, the Guatemalan government had to adapt or remove it.[240] In summer 1947, UFCO began to lobby various offices of the U.S. government to pressure the Guatemalan leadership into changing the legislation, alleging communist infiltration into Guatemala.[241] United Fruits Company and its lobbyists were aware of the deep fear of communist expansion that permeated American foreign and internal policy makers at that time; exploiting this fear, the company employed this narrative with U.S. government officials.

The conservative upper class, closely tied to the Guatemalan Catholic Church led by Archbishop Mariano Rossell y Arellano, condemned Arévalo's labor reforms as "communist" because in the upper class view the reforms undermined the current social order and endangered "the Catholic sensibilities of our [the Guatemalan] people."[242] The opposition of the Guatemalan elite during this period was divided; its activities were limited to accusations of communism published in the local media that fed the UFCO narrative about the alleged rising communist threat in Guatemala.

Neighbor countries began to accuse the Guatemalan government of shifting to communism. Fearful that Arévalo's reforms could awaken similar requests from their own populations, the neighboring authoritarian elites of Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Honduras also pressed U.S. officials with allegations about the communist shift in the Guatemalan government and the possible implications for the security of the region.[243] While the Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza actively exchanged with Guatemalan counterrevolutionaries and asked the United States for support in the counterrevolutionary enterprise, the Honduran and Salvadoran regime of Juan Manuel Gálvez and Oscar Osorio periodically reported to U.S. officials the alleged communist infiltration from

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[240] Piero Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope: The Guatemalan Revolution and the United States, 1944–1954* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 94.

[241] Schlesinger and Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit,* 72–73; Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope*, 99.

[242] "Cuatro Puntos de La Oposición [Opposition's four points]," *El Imparcial*, October 7, 1946.

[243] Richard H. Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2010), 89–129.

Guatemala.[244] These accusations did nothing but foment the distorted image that the American government had of Guatemala and its changes since the revolution of 1944.

Accordingly, by the late 1940s, U.S. leadership saw Guatemala as a country plagued by communists. After his arrival in Guatemala in 1948, the U.S. Ambassador Richard Patterson—being susceptible to allegations of communist influence—aligned quickly with the point of view of UFCO, the senior embassy staff, and finally the American Republics Area (ARA) of the State Department.[245] Additionally, the opinion of the U.S. government was framed by influential politicians such as Senator Henry Cabot Lodge and propaganda luminary Edward Bernays, both enlisted by the UFCO: the first to shape the political environment in a direct way, the latter to design a specific media propaganda campaign to discredit the Arévalo government.[246] All this misinformation led the Truman administration to implement pressure measures: in 1949 it imposed an embargo on U.S. military equipment; then in 1950 it excluded Guatemala from its new Point Four technical assistance program and blocked a World Bank Loan that Arévalo had requested.[247]

While they increased the pressure on Arévalo's government, these measures were not designed for his overthrow. Under the Truman administration, the State Department and in particular its Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, which in this specific case had primary responsibility for policy implementation, was firmly opposed to any suggestion of intervention in Guatemala.[248] Furthermore, Arévalo accepted the reality that geopolitically Guatemala was tied to the United States.[249] Moreover, U.S. Intelligence reports indicated as likely winner of the 1950 election the middle-class army officer and minister of defense Jacobo Arbenz, backed by the conservative army, who would have reversed Arévalo's

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[244] Grow, *U.S. Presidents and Latin American Interventions*, 12–13.

[245] Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope*, 98.

[246] Schlesinger and Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit*, 79–97.

[247] Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala*, 109–110.

[248] Grow, *U.S. Presidents and Latin American Interventions*, 37.

[249] On Arévalo point of view about the Guatemala – U.S. relationship see U.S. Department of State, "United Nations, Western Hemisphere," in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1976), 907.

reforms and drifted the revolution rightward with a "determined anti-communist policy."[250] Accordingly, the Truman administration remained patient until March 1951 when President Arévalo's term ended.

Despite the U.S. government's expectations, Arbenz turned the revolution leftwards, increasing pressure on U.S. leadership and finally compelling it to intervene. The new president intended to confront two deep-seated interests left untouched by the previous administration: foreign monopolies and the landowner oligarchy.[251] Accordingly, Arbenz started new public projects like the new port on the Atlantic Coast to gain control over maritime export and import monopolized by the UFCO: the "Highway to the Atlantic" to lessen the transportation's monopoly held by the International Railways of Central America (IRCA); and finally, to break the American monopoly on electricity, a state-run hydroelectric plant to commercialize cheaper energy.[252]

Despite being more than legitimate, and pursuing a capitalistic approach of market competition rather than a communist approach of nationalization and control planning, all these projects undermined the established order as well as past and future American interests and investments. Furthermore, they fueled hostile feelings of UFCO toward the Guatemalan government and the resulting measures undertaken by the company to discredit it in the eyes of the U.S. government. As Arbenz argued in front of the Guatemalan Congress in 1952, the Agrarian Reform was "the most important pragmatic point of [his] government and of the revolutionary movement of October [1944]."[253] The agrarian reform legislated as Decree 900, and enacted on June 27, 1952, demonstrated from the beginning its implementation problems. First, the law contemplated the expropriation of idle land from holdings of over 223 acres and its redistribution to eligible recipients, and so it further widened the already existent rift between the government, the wealthy upper

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250 Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope*, 125–127.

251 Susanne Jonas, *The Battle for Guatemala. Rebels, Death Squads, and U.S. Power* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), 26.

252 Schlesinger and Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit*, 53.

253 Thomas Melville and Marjorie Melville, *Guatemala: The Politics of Landownership.* (New York: Free Press, 1971), 61.

class of the ladino *latifundistas,* and the largest landowner in Guatemala, UFCO. Second, violent actions between the interested parties took over; *finqueros* (farm owners) determined to defend their property from expropriation reacted violently against the peasants who received the farmers' expropriated land; conversely, impatient peasants, encouraged by leftist radicals, initiated spontaneous and sometimes violent land occupations.[254] The agrarian reform further catalyzed the activities of the UFCO in discrediting the Guatemalan government and lobbying for a U.S. intervention, at the same time it brought to the surface the social tension created by the October revolution but remained dormant or only at a rhetorical level until that moment.

Despite Arbenz lacking communist imprinting, as argued by historians Jim Handy and Stephen Schlesinger, his strong ties with Guatemalan communists and their disproportionate influence on his decision making suggested to external observers a robust communist influence on the Guatemalan presidency. As demonstrated by the political scientist Piero Gleijeses, Arbenz and his influential wife María started to create strong ties with Guatemalan communists by the late 1940s.[255] In particular one man, José Manuel Fortuny, who in 1948 became the secretary general of *Vanguardia Democrática*—the precursor organization to *Partido Guatemalteco del Trabajo* (PGT)—grew close to Arbenz; he wrote Arbenz's speeches during the 1950s campaign and finally became the most senior personal counsel of Arbenz during his presidency, helping him in the redaction of the agrarian reform.[256] The Communist party as such had a marginal function within the Guatemalan government.[257] Nonetheless, the fact that its most influential members were personal advisers to the president and some of its members held highly visible positions in the administration did nothing but support the narrative of those who accused Arbenz of communist drift.

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[254] Jonas, *The Battle for Guatemala. Rebels, Death Squads, and U.S. Power*, 27.

[255] Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope*, 141–143.

[256] Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope*, 144–145.

[257] The party membership never went over the 4,000 in a nation of 3 million inhabitants, only four party members held seats in the 61-member congress, Arbenz never appointed a communist to the Cabinet and only six hold prominent sub-Cabinet posts; unfortunately, highly visible to U.S. officials. Cullather, *Secret History,* 20–22.

In the early 1950s, many officials in the U.S. State Department, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and Pentagon considered all communists as Soviet agents. Immediately after World War II, the threat of Soviet expansion became the most feared threat in the Western world and shaped U.S. foreign policy. The U.S. government saw containment of this threat as the primary goal of its foreign policy strategy.[258] Accordingly, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) officials regarded Guatemala as a potential beachhead for Soviet expansion in the western hemisphere.[259] Moreover, proximity justified even more energetic measures to secure the United States' backyard from a communist penetration. The Truman administration, however, was divided over the threat posed by Arbenz; the State Department warned about the risk that covert actions posed to U.S. policy in Central and South America, while the CIA saw the alleged communist penetration as sufficiently grave by 1952 to justify a covert action program.[260] Doubts were swept away on May 1952 when the government put into effect the Decree 900.

The economic and political measures undertaken by the U.S. State Department had produced poor results in changing Guatemalan policies; for this reason, the CIA was tasked to develop a plan to support Arbenz's overthrow. Truman policy toward Arbenz until spring 1952 was analogous to that adopted with Arévalo in 1940s: diplomatic pressure supported by denial of economic aid.[261] The CIA was skeptical about the results of these measures; hence, in early 1952, its director Walter Bedell Smith tasked the CIA's Western Hemisphere Division to find dissidents willing, with the help of other Central American countries, to overthrow Arbenz.[262] During the summer of 1952, the CIA intensified exchanges with the Nicaraguan dictator Somoza and its protégé the Guatemalan army officer in exile Castillo Armas to coordinate the plan for covert intervention called

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[258] George F. Kennan, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," *Foreign Affairs* 25 (1946): 566; Clark M. Clifford, "American Relations with The Soviet Union," September 24, 1946, https://www.trumanlibrary.org/4-1.pdf; National Security Council, "NSC 68: United States Objectives and Programs for National Security," April 14, 1950, https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsc-hst/nsc-68.htm.

[259] Cullather, *Secret History*, 26.

[260] Cullather, *Secret History* 27.

[261] Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope*, 227.

[262] Grow, *U.S. Presidents and Latin American Interventions*, 15.

Operation PBFORTUNE that received White House authorization in September 1952.[263] The plan called for a CIA-backed invasion by counterrevolutionary forces led by Castillo Armas, supported by dissatisfied Guatemalan army's senior officers, UFCO (arms delivery), as well as neighbor countries.[264] In October 1952, though, following the intervention of the Department of State, and in particular by its head Dean Acheson, President Truman called off the plan.[265] The CIA did not have to wait long to find more fertile ground in the following administration.

The Eisenhower presidency, determined to show its resolve against the communist threats, supported and approved the covert operation that would bring the overthrow of Arbenz. During the first half of 1953, many signals increasingly pressured the new administration to approve intervention in Guatemala. On February 18, in a National Security Council meeting, the CIA director argued that the communist threat in Guatemala was about to bring crisis to the region; in April after his visit in Guatemala, the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs John Moors Cabot reported to the president that Arbenz was not open to policy changes; on May 19 the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) concluded that the political situation in Guatemala "is averse to U.S. interests."[266] Moreover, in July 1953 after his return from a fact-finding mission in Guatemala, Eisenhower's brother and adviser, Milton Eisenhower, argued that Guatemala "has succumbed to communist infiltration."[267] Finally, the assessment presented during the National Security Council of August 19, 1953, warned that "the U.S. present position in Guatemala is progressively deteriorating … [and that] ultimate communist control of the country and elimination of American economic interests is the logical outcome …

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263 Cullather, *Secret History,* 27–31.

264 Venezuela and the Dominican Republic would have contributed with finance, while Nicaragua and Honduras with Training camps and attack bases. Grow, *U.S. Presidents and Latin American Interventions,* 15.

265 Douglas Brinkley, *Dean Acheson: The Cold War Years, 1953–71* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 6.

266 Grow, *U.S. Presidents and Latin American Interventions*, 17.

267 Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope*, 269.

[meaning] a policy of inaction would be suicidal."[268] Consequently, the Eisenhower administration decided to reanimate the CIA's covert action plan to overthrow Arbenz and expand it into a comprehensive exploitation through different means of statecraft.[269] Operation PBSUCCESS would combine all of the tactics proven useful in previous covert operations.

B. PMESI VULNERABILITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The domestic institutional changes represented the most striking vulnerability in the political domain. Arbenz's agrarian reform was the most severe challenge to the system of political closeness. After its implementation, the different social groups were further polarized, and despite the possibility of the reform uniting cross-ethnic and cross-class interests, the fact that it was discredited and finally perceived as a product of communist thought fueled polarization and disrupted social cohesion within the population and distrust among the elites.[270] The leaders of the revolutionary party considered the agrarian reform premature and too radical, in addition, they were neither informed, involved, nor consulted during the draft redaction; their complaints were supported by the claims of the *Asociación General de Agricoltura* (AGA), which claimed to "reject the communist origin of the project."[271] The lack of integration of most political parties and the landowner elite was an essential sign of the decreasing trust among the elite of the country. A segment of the army officer corps feared that the Arévalo and Arbenz reforms would cause a decrease in budget for the army and increased chaos in the society.[272] The latter especially could become true after the agrarian reform and internal conflict that rose between landowners and peasants impatient to receive their land. The fact that Arbenz tasked one of his friends, a self-professed communist, Víctor Manuel Gutiérrez to be the intermediary between the

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[268] U.S. Department of State, "Draft NSC Policy Paper, 19 August 1953," in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952–1954* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1976), 1083.

[269] Greg Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America in the Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 77.

[270] Jonas, *The Battle for Guatemala*, 27; Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre*, 33–76.

[271] Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope*, 146.

[272] Zachary Karabell, *Architects of Intervention: The United States, the Third World, and the Cold War, 1946–1962* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University, 1999), 97.

president and local land reforms officials only exacerbated the impression of favoritism toward communist representatives.[273] This process further undermined the trust between the administration and the elite. These divisions and the resulting polarization and radicalization disrupted the possibility for an organized opposition able to restraint Arbenz's behavior or offer the United States the option for a peaceful change.[274] The resulting decrease of crosscutting social elements undermined societal pluralism.

Another consequence of the institutional changes created by the agrarian reform was the increasing isolation of Guatemala. The governments of Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, and the Dominican Republic opposed Arbenz and were decisive in convincing the U.S. government that Arbenz was dangerous and needed to be removed.[275] This negative attitude further weakened the poor Guatemalan diplomatic network pushing Guatemala to rely on its membership in supranational organizations but forcing it into greater dependence on the same international organizations. This effect came into play a couple of times during PBSUCCESS. The first time was in March 1954, the negative attitude of Guatemala's neighbor was exploited by Secretary of State John Foster Dulles during the Inter-American Conference in Caracas in order to further isolate Guatemala from the Pan-American international community.[276] The impressive speech of the Guatemalan foreign minister Guillermo Toriello accusing the United States of supporting the overthrow of the Arbenz government caused a change in the final conference resolution. Nonetheless, the United States achieved its goal of further fueling the feeling of isolation among the Guatemalan leadership.[277]

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[273] Karabell, *Architects of Intervention*, 117.

[274] Cullather, *Secret History*, 37.

[275] Karabell, *Architects of Intervention*, 122–123.

[276] Cullather, *Secret History*, 58.

[277] On the text of the resolution see Pan American Union, "Tenth Inter-American Conference," *The American Journal of International Law* 48, no. 3 (July 1954): 123–32; On details about the events around the conference see Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope*, 267–278; On a reassessment of U.S. success on the Conference see Max Paul Friedman, "Fracas in Caracas: Latin American Diplomatic Resistance to United States Intervention in Guatemala in 1954," *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 21, no. 4 (2010): 669–89.

A further example is Toriello's request to the United Nation Security Council (UNSC) on June 19, 21 and 22, of that year to intervene to stop the ongoing aggression and to help in resolving the crisis.[278] On June 20 the council approved a French motion enjoining all member nations to refrain from supporting the insurgency.[279] Despite the first signs of support from the UNSC, the intervention of the American president, the European allies, and members of the UNSC on the one hand, and the work of the American envoy Henry Cabot Lodge and members of the Security Council on the other, the UNSC abandoned plans of undertaking concrete measures to stop the invasion.[280] The events in Caracas and by the UNSC show on the one hand how Guatemala tried to exploit the membership of supranational organizations; on the other, they bring to light the dependence a small state has on international organizations.

Membership in international organizations can also foster unexpected consequences. At the beginning of June 1954 rumors spread (allegedly generated by the United States) that the United States was envisaging a special Organization of American States (OAS) conference to vote on sanctions against Guatemala, and U.S. journals argued that a majority of the Latin American Republics supported the sanctions.[281] Guatemalan leadership was very troubled that they were neither integrated into the preparative discussions nor knew the content of the sanctions. This fact eventually fueled tensions among government officials and mistrust of the internal opposition who was continually attacking the president and its entourage, compelling the government to suspend the constitutional guarantees on June 8.[282] The introduction of censorship coupled with increasing arrests further fed the opposition's radicalization and the international claim of authoritarian drift.

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[278] Schlesinger and Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit*, 179–181.

[279] UN Security Council Resolution 104 (1954), *Question Submitted by Guatemala*, S/RES/104 (1954) (20 June 1954), https://undocs.org/S/RES/104(1954).

[280] Cullather, *Secret History*, 92.

[281] "Panama Favoring Guatemala Talks," *New York Times*, June 10, 1954.

[282] Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope*, 313–317.

Arbenz did not seize the characteristics of the strategic environment, failing to adapt his policy accordingly. That Arévalo was widely denounced in the United States as pro-Communist despite his explicitly anti-communism platform was an early sign of Washington's unreliable faith in even a pro-American government in Guatemala. Arbenz should have caught the U.S. belligerency and should not have further pushed domestic institutional changes.[283] It is incorrect to define the Arbenz Government as communist but his actions, in the light of the Cold War-shaped strategic environment, were a clear provocation to those who were moved by anti-communist ideology. Cullather supports this argument arguing that CIA officials judged the situation through the global pattern of communist activities instead of seeing the events in a historical Guatemalan context.[284] The lack of adaptability polarized and radicalized Guatemalan society and exposed the government to armed confrontation.

Guatemala's military vulnerabilities were exacerbated by the U.S. operation but also by critical internal vulnerabilities. Guatemala was not a member of any military alliances, and so when on June 1954 the group of insurgents led by Armas pushed into Guatemala neither Arbenz nor his army could count on external help. The institutional changes initialized by Arévalo and accelerated by Arbenz significantly catalyzed other vulnerabilities. Internal violent conflicts arose within the frustrated opposition, formed by the upper-class, Catholic groups, anti-revolutionary activists, and landowners on one side, and the lower-class and peasants in the countryside on the other. This violent spiral led to polarization and radicalization among the different societal groups. The CIA plan had the foresight to unify the most influential of Arbenz's opponents, to increase pressure on Arbenz and finally overthrow him via the surest option, a military coup.[285] Accordingly, the U.S. government first needed to weaken the significant support Arbenz had from the army.

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[283] For instance, the legalization of the Communist party in 1951 and the ominous agrarian reform in 1952.

[284] Cullather, *Secret History*, 9.

[285] Cullather, *Secret History*, 60.

The CIA knew that army compliance was mainly based on the government's ability to provide it the necessary military capabilities. In 1949 and 1951 the Truman administration restricted U.S. military equipment sales to Guatemala as a warning to the Guatemalan Armed Forces that the United States was dissatisfied with Arévalo's politics. The CIA identified the Guatemalan army as the center of gravity of the Arbenz presidency, and for this reason the operation was designed to target mainly the army by preventing Guatemala from importing arms and other materials, undermining Arbenz's efforts to keep his officers content.[286] In 1953, the U.S. Department of Defense interfered aggressively to prevent arms transfer deals between Guatemala and Canada, Germany, and Rhodesia.[287] Consequently, by the end of the same year, Guatemala was no longer able to buy military equipment of any kind; this fact worried the military leadership, who observed a vast flow of equipment into Nicaragua and Honduras, and saw its small arsenal jeopardized by the tasks in the countryside due to security issues related to the land reform decree.[288] Hence, the institutional changes caused a degradation of military capabilities, which were already put under pressure by internal violent conflicts. The precarious capabilities situation, the influence of the U.S. mission in Guatemala, Arbenz's support for the PGT, and his friendship with senior communist leaders all pushed the military away from Arbenz.[289] The distancing of the army leadership from Arbenz did nothing but increase the distrust within the Guatemalan elite and undermined the opportunity for robust civil-military integration.

Arbenz's attempts to leverage opportunities in the military domain were undermined by Guatemala's internal dynamics and by U.S. intervention. Arbenz's reliance on multilateral security arrangements like the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance or OAS proved ineffective because of U.S. influence efforts aimed at other member states, which were facilitated by the hostility of Guatemalan's neighbor countries. Although nearly thirty coup attempts occurred during the Arévalo presidency, the army

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[286] Karabell, *Architects of Intervention*, 129.

[287] Cullather, *Secret History*, 52.

[288] Cullather, *Secret History*, 53.

[289] Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope*, 304–305.

remained the unchallenged organization in maintaining social order and defending the country. Accordingly, there were no civilian security forces ready to step on the president's side when the army compelled him to resign the June 25, 1954. Arbenz and his entourage understood the shifting attitude of the army and tried, unsuccessfully, to organize a popular militia of laborers and peasants.[290] Facing an international arms embargo, Arbenz clandestinely tried to import Czech weapons and ammunition for his militia. Unfortunately for him, information about the cargo's arrival leaked to the army, which then confiscated the weapons. This failed attempt to acquire military equipment from an Eastern Bloc country only enhanced the narrative of international communist interference, further fueling the mistrust and societal polarization, undermining Guatemalan social cohesion.

The United States' measures to target Guatemala's economic vulnerabilities did not have a decisive influence. Guatemala was primarily an agrarian state, and hence relied extensively on imports to sustain its common goods needs. By 1952–1953, 85 percent of Guatemalan coffee exports, which alone made up 80 percent of all exports, and 83.2 percent of all exports went to the United States, while 62.9 percent of all imports originated from there.[291] Accordingly, it is not surprising that this dependency on strategic imports and the limited export diversification became the target of U.S. pressure. A group of high-level U.S. entrepreneurs were tasked to cut Guatemalan export earnings and create critical imports' shortfalls by exercising covert economic pressure.[292] UFCO, willing to reverse the labor code and in particular the agrarian reform, supported the U.S. government in its enterprise and changed their policy toward the Guatemalan government, becoming instrumental in the U.S. sanctions architecture.[293] By contrast, the CIA and its planners, counter to the views of many U.S. senior politicians and government officers, did not see economic sanctions as an effective strategy.[294] The U.S. cut off direct financial assistance,

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290 Jonas, *The Battle for Guatemala*, 36–37.

291 Luis Cardoza y Aragón, *Guatemala: Las Líneas de Su Mano* [Guatemala, the lines of its hand] (Ciudad de México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1965), 101.

292 Cullather, *Secret History*, 41.

293 Cullather, *Secret History*, 18–19.

294 Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope*, 264–65.

excluded Guatemala from the Point Four Program, and stopped development loans from the World Bank, but did not substantially undermine the Guatemalan economy. Hence, the dependency on strategic imports was more accentuated in the acquisition of military equipment rather than in civilian goods, and the changes in U.S. trade policy while putting some pressure on Arbenz government did not compel a change in Arbenz policy.

The Arbenz government, focused on the implementation of its reforms, was not able to exploit economic opportunities. After the U.S. sanctions in 1951, the Guatemalan government refused to conform to some World Bank recommendations, becoming an isolated entity in the international credit community.[295] Arbenz's steadfast rejection of external requests such as this reduced his ability to obtain help from multilateral economic organizations to relax U.S. economic sanctions. The only element that avoided a critical increase in economic sanctions was Guatemala's position in the international coffee market, in particular from the U.S. perspective. In March 1954, at the OAS conference in Caracas, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles failed to orchestrate an embargo on Guatemalan coffee, because UFCO executives warned that the burden of paying for such sale restrictions would fall on American consumers.[296] In this case, the focus on the niche product of coffee proved to be a critical if undeliberate element that prevented Guatemala from further malicious economic sanctions.

President Arbenz's reforms and strong ties with Guatemalan communists exacerbated societal vulnerabilities present in the Guatemalan society. The agrarian and social reforms were supposed to ameliorate conditions for the broad underprivileged lower-class workers both in rural and urban areas. However, the rapidity and in some areas the abrupt implementation of the reforms did nothing but fuel polarization and radicalization of the revolution's skeptical social sub-groups, which saw their privileges put at stake.[297] The administration of Decree 900 included expropriation and attribution of land in ways that ignored local needs and sometimes exploited the reform to pursue the administrators'

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295 Jonas, *The Battle for Guatemala*, 28.

296 Cullather, *Secret History*, 52.

297 On the relationship between peasants and Landowner see Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre*.

own ambitions.[298] These procedures gave birth to favoritism, further polarizing the rifts among peasants and Mayan Indian land workers and white Ladino landowners.[299] This ultimately empowered indigenous leaders who disregarded the old order and embraced the government idea of pluralization and secularization of local politics, thus threatening traditional local authorities.

Consequently, the section of the population that sought to contain the effects of the 1944 revolution were increasingly deeply dissatisfied by the Arbenz reforms and became progressively prone to the U.S. influence. In *The Last Colonial Massacre* historian Greg Grandin explores the experiences of numerous members of the Guatemalan society, revealing the failed attempt of minority integration initialized by the Arbenz reforms.[300] The misapplication of the agrarian reform decisively hindered the integration of Indian minorities into peasant society. Furthermore, the strong and mostly hermetical social horizontal and vertical divisions made it necessarily impossible to achieve any form of societal pluralism.[301]

The United States massively exploited Guatemala's informational vulnerabilities, creating decisive conditions for Arbenz's overthrow. The negative propaganda campaign against the Guatemalan government was initialized by UFCO already during the Arevalo government. This campaign was later enlarged and intensified by the CIA.[302] The escalating year-long campaign of rumors and propaganda weakened and demoralized government supporters and created dissension in the society, fueling polarization, undermining social cohesion, and eroding trust within the elite. For instance, the United States Information Agency (USIA) propagated stories throughout Latin America about Guatemalan communist drift; the U.S. media screamed about the communist danger in

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298 Karabell, *Architects of Intervention*, 107.

299 Jim Handy, *Revolution in the Countryside: Rural Conflict and Agrarian Reform in Guatemala, 1944–1954* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 90–127.

300 Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre*.

301 In this context social horizontal division means in ethnicities (Ladino and Indians) and regions (urban and rural) and vertical means class division (Aristocracy, middle- and worker-class, as well peasantry).

302 Cullather, *Secret History*.

Guatemala; CIA-backed pamphlets distributed in Guatemala encouraged suspicion within the military apparatus, alarming and polarizing the middle and upper classes.[303] The massive influence not only created the illusion of organized and robust opposition against Arbenz but also of a dramatic spiral toward an inevitable confrontation with the United States which pushed potential Arbenz supporters into becoming only inert spectators.[304] Accordingly, it is arguable that the U.S. influence campaign decreased the probability of a popular uprising and profoundly affected the morale of the Guatemalan armed forces.

The CIA campaign was not only planned to shape the informational environment from abroad but also envisaged the information take-over within Guatemala. The CIA, with the support of local opposition members and the Roman Catholic Church, started to distribute flyers and pamphlets spreading lies about the agrarian reform and inculcating mistrust within the Guatemalan elite.[305] On May 1, 1954, *Radio Voz de la Liberación* went on air; the alleged rebels' radio broadcast represented the last and eventually decisive piece of the information campaign puzzle, spreading anti-government propaganda and arguing an imminent revolt.[306] The public service in Guatemala at that time was very fragile, the government did not have an official newspaper, and in the last month before the overthrow, the only one supporting Arbenz was the *Tribuna Popular*, the communist official party newspaper. Furthermore, in the middle of May 1954 the only state-run radio station TGW went off the air for three weeks because of a scheduled antenna change, giving the rebels a broadcast monopoly on the radio by default.[307] The mostly illiterate rural populace, unable to read newspapers, turned to *La Voz de la Liberación* for information about the confusing events in the capital, thus becoming highly exposed to the "rebels'" propaganda. This event demonstrates the lack of public service apparatus and media diversity within the Guatemalan information landscape.

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[303] Karabell, *Architects of Intervention*, 130–136.

[304] Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre*, 66.

[305] Cullather, *Secret History*, 64–67.

[306] The broadcast was not generated, as allegedly argued by the speaker from the Guatemalan jungle, but in Miami. The records were transported into Panama and afterwards Honduras from where they were beamed.

[307] Cullather, *Secret History*, 76–77.

The propaganda campaign pushed President Arbenz to misguided media regulation. Being unable to contain the malicious influence, he revoked the freedom of speech and assembly, and coercively closed some opposition newspapers, supporting his opponents' narrative of a repressive communist government. At no time did the Arbenz government make use of exclusive media channels to specifically address the rural communities or the urban middle-class to counter the malicious narrative. Furthermore, he never consistently reached out to foreign media to expose and explain his policy to relax the U.S.-forged criticism in the international community. President Arbenz did not exploit informational opportunities, and when he tried to undertake measures to mitigate informational vulnerabilities, the measures only further negatively influenced vulnerabilities and opportunities in other domains.

C. ANALYSIS

Capturing PMESI vulnerabilities and opportunities in the Guatemala case we can create a HT System model specific to this case (Figure 4). The very first observation of the Guatemala–United States HT system is the absence of specific opportunities. The government never engaged in sub-state diplomacy, and because foreign companies mainly led the economy, the government never showed any economic adaptability. Furthermore, the inherent fragmentation of Guatemalan society never allowed the development of societal pluralism. Similarly, the less developed mass-media environment did not allow the development of media diversity. Moreover, the Guatemalan government never exploited media exclusivity. Yet, other opportunities and vulnerabilities interacted and influenced each other.

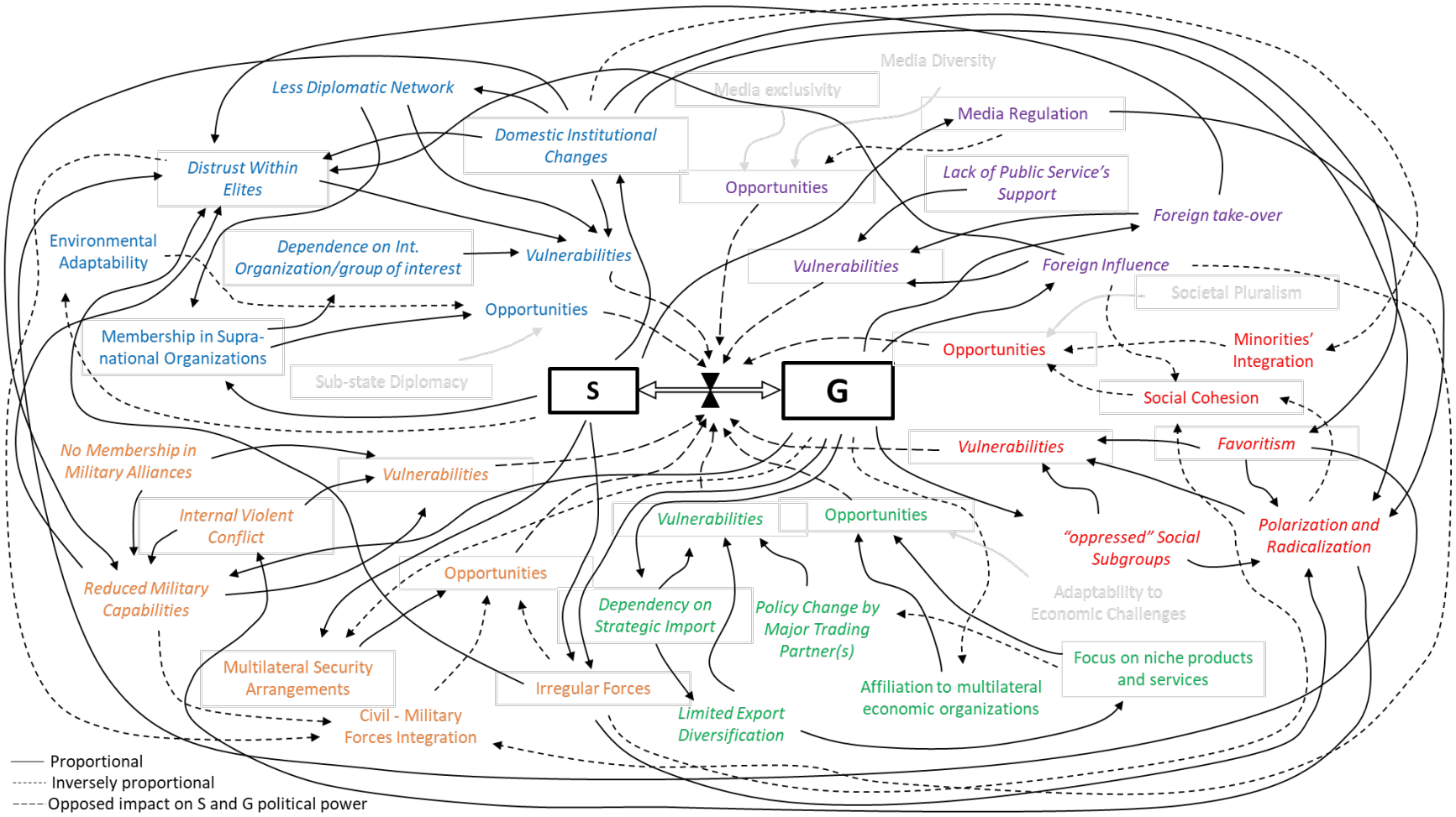

Figure 4. Guatemala–United States HT System

To define the influence of each variable it is necessary to create a cross-impact matrix (see Appendix).[308] In the matrix, *AS* (active sum) describes the sum of all the outgoing influences that can be ascribed to a specific variable. Thus, *AS* indicates how strongly the specific variable influences the system, the higher *AS* the higher the influence on the system. Conversely, *PS* (passive sum) describes the sum of all the incoming influences. Hence, *PS* indicates how strongly the system influences the specific variable. Vulnerabilities are inversely proportional to *S* (Guatemala) political power, while proportional with *G* (U.S.) political power. Conversely, the opportunities are proportional to *S* political power, while inversely proportional to *G* political power. The degree of cross-linking represents how heavily the variables are interconnected: the higher the degree value, the more essential is the variable for the persistence of the system.

Not surprisingly, the exerted power of *S* and *G* shows the highest *PS* cross-linking score. Logically both variables have the highest crosslinking value because both are essential for the survival of the system: if one does disappear, the asymmetric dyadic relationship will disappear; hence, the HT system would not exist. Similarly, both show the highest *PS*, because the HT system decisively influences the power that both *S* and *G* can exercise on one another. This implication underlines how important it is to understand the hybrid threat as a system, and as a system, it can be exploited to increase its own exercised power and decrease the exercised power of the opponent. As expected, *G*'s political power value (32) is higher than that of *S* (30), indicating that *G* was the actor with more influence on the HT system, and confirming the asymmetry of the relationship. It is very interesting to note the closeness of the values, which indicates that the United States was not the overwhelming "influencer" of the system, and Guatemala was highly responsible for the dynamics of the system.

The three variables with the highest cross-linking value are vulnerabilities, indicating that in the Guatemala case the power balance was decisively influenced by

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308 Peter Gomez and Gilbert Probst, *Die Praxis des Ganzheitlichen Problemlösens: Vernetzt Denken-Unternehmerisch Handeln-Persönlich Ueberzeugen* [The practice of holistic problem solving: networked thinking-act entrepreneurially-convince personally], vol. 3 (Bern: Haupt Verlag, 2004); Frederic Vester, *The Art of Interconnected Thinking: Ideas and Tools for a New Approach to Tackling Complexity* (Muenchen: Deutsche Taschenbuch Verlag, 2012), 318–27. This thesis only considers direct relationships.

vulnerabilities; hence, the Guatemalan government was highly vulnerable to the U.S. exerted power (Table 2).

Table 2. Guatemala–U.S. HT System, Top Vulnerabilities and Opportunities[309]

	Crosslink (AS+PS)		Active Sum (AS)		Passive Sum (PS)	
Rank	Vulnerability	Opportunity	Vulnerability	Opportunity	Vulnerability	Opportunity
1	Domestic institutional changes (9)	Social Cohesion (5)	Domestic institutional changes (8)	Irregular Forces (4)	Distrust Within Elites (6)	Social Cohesion (3)
2	Distrust Within Elites (9)	Civil-Military forces integration (5)	Foreign Influence (5)	Media Regulation (3)	Polarization and Radicalization (4)	Civil-Military forces integration (3)
3	Polarization and Radicalization (8)	Irregular Forces (5)	Polarization and Radicalization (4)	All other (2)	Reduced military capabilities (4)	Multilateral Security Agreement (2)

The most central and at the same time influential variable of the system was the vulnerability *domestic institutional changes*. The highest crosslink and *AS* values demonstrate that the reforms initiated by Guatemala were not only the main cause of the American threat, but also the variable that continued to fuel American opposition to the Guatemalan government. The second most important vulnerability for the permanence of the threat was the *distrust within elites*, namely between Guatemala's political elite and the conservative elite of Guatemalan society (Church and landowners) as well as the political elite and leadership of the Guatemalan armed forces. In addition to self-generated vulnerabilities, the second most active vulnerability, *foreign influence*, shows that the United States and its information operation campaign had a very important role in shaping the HT system.

309 See the Guatemala Cross-Impact Matrix in the Appendix. The rank is based on cross-link, AS and PS values.

The opportunities that show the highest degree of cross-linking are *social cohesion, civil-military force integration*, and *irregular forces*; these variables have more ingoing than outgoing links, meaning that as an influencing factor they are susceptible to changes in the HT system. Yet, all three opportunities had detrimental effects on Guatemala's political power. *Social cohesion* was more a passive rather than an active system variable. That means, the variable did not affect other variables but was affected by other variables. Specifically, this opportunity was negatively affected by other vulnerabilities and opportunities, ultimately having a detrimental effect on Guatemalan political power. The same can be said of the variable *civil-military force integration*. On the other hand, *irregular forces* was the most active opportunity. But, this opportunity turned out to have a negative effect on the system, namely by degrading another opportunity (*social cohesion*) and fueling two vulnerabilities (*distrust within elite*, and *polarization and radicalization*).

The Guatemalan Government was responsible for generating specific reinforcing feedback loops that destabilized the system, and finally decreased Guatemala's expressed power. Figure 5 shows the two primary reinforcing feedback cycles generated by the Arbenz administration. Accordingly, it is possible to observe that variable *domestic institutional changes* is involved in six feedback loops, confirming its importance within the system but also demonstrating its decisive role in destabilizing the system. *Distrust within elites* is involved in three loops, indicating that its role in destabilizing the system warrants intervention. The variable *polarization and radicalization* is involved in two feedback loops. The implication for the Guatemalan government is that it would have been able, without necessarily relying on external means, to decrease its vulnerabilities and increase its opportunities, primarily relaxing the feedback loops by addressing the three mentioned variables and the following three specific domains: political, military, and societal.

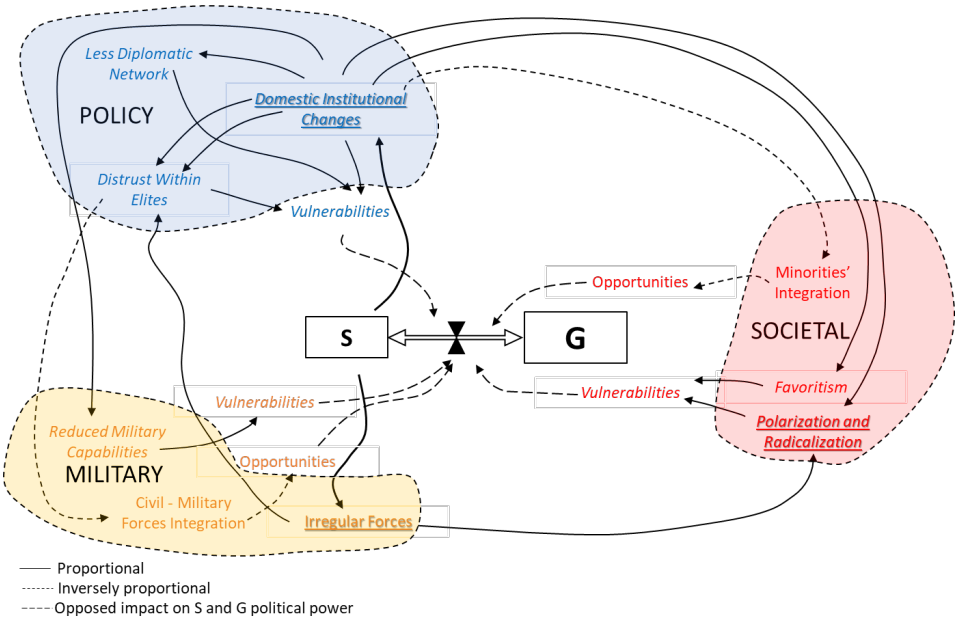

Figure 5. Guatemala's Primary Reinforcing Feedback Loops

In a system approach, time plays a leading role, even moreso when the analysis explores a hybrid threat, which exploits and extends time in support of strategic gradualism. To understand how the HT system can be leveraged over time and knowing that the adjustment of one variable does not affect the whole system immediately, it is crucial to consider delays in the model. In the cross-time matrix, the values of the cross-impact matrix are substituted with a time value. The time delays are short-term (< 1 month, value 1), mid-term (1 month–1 year, value 2), and long-term (> 1 year, value 4). The produced delay (PD) and received delay (RD) show the mean values of every row (PD) and column (RD). The cross-time matrix allows defining which variables have a faster impact on the system (see Appendix).[310] Given the impact of the variables on the system and the time needed for the variables to influence the system effectively, it is possible to establish which variables are most appropriate for intervention. The assumption is that the higher the impact and the shorter the delay, the better suited the variable is for intervention. The

[310] On Cross-time matrix see Mark Hürlimann, *Dealing with Real-World Complexity: Limits, Enhancements and New Approaches for Policy Makers* (Wiesbaden: Gabler, 2009), 139–153; for a practical application see Lukas Schoenenberger, Andrea Schenker-Wicki, and Mathias Beck, "Analysing Terrorism from a Systems Thinking Perspective," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 8, no. 1 (2014): 16–36.

combination of the cross-impact and the cross-time matrices allows identifying the intervention variables (see Figure 5).[311] The variables with the quickest and highest impact on the system, hence those to be prioritized, are visible in the quadrant with the Roman number one (I).

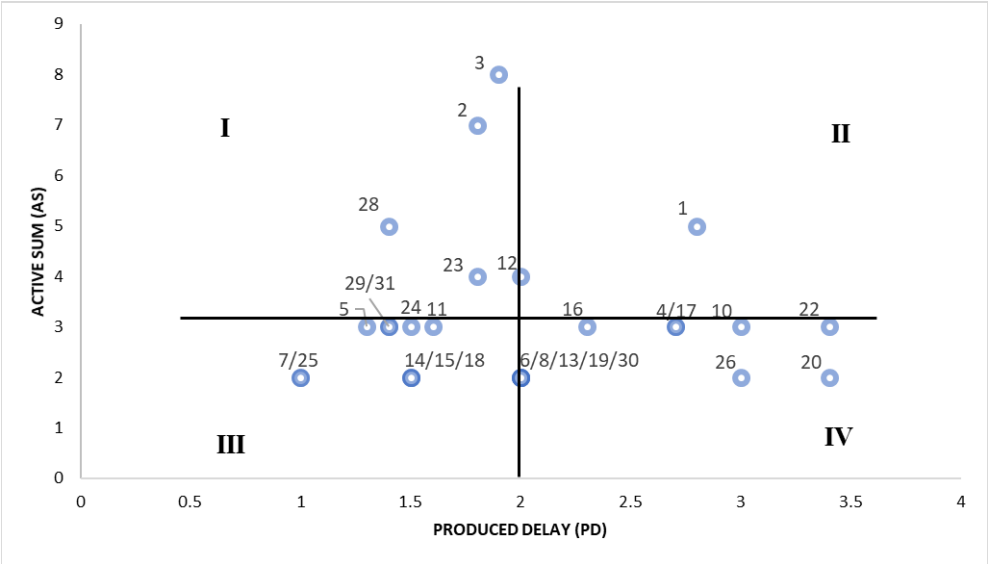

Figure 6. Guatemala Intervention Variables

The intervention variable is one that President Arbenz would have been able to control or at least address. Accordingly, this fact excludes variable 2 (*U.S. political power*). The variables *domestic institutional changes* (3), *foreign influence* (28), and *polarization and radicalization* (23) satisfy the criteria of being ideal (relative high impact, and quick) and controllable. Additionally, it is also appropriate to consider the variable *distrust within elites* (5) because of its high cross-linking score and low produced delay.

D. DISCUSSION

Although it is possible to recognize some of the characteristics of the hybrid threat, the American intervention in Guatemala does not adequately demonstrate the level of

[311] The variable should have a high number of outgoing links (high active sum) and its influence should rapidly spread throughout the system (low produced delay).

integrated design and synchronized actions along the PMESI spectrum expected in a hybrid approach. The American government applied a variety of instruments of statecraft during the period between 1947 and 1954, targeting Guatemalan vulnerabilities and limiting that state's opportunities. Nonetheless, most of the vulnerabilities and the missing opportunities were already present in Guatemalan society.

Furthermore, as Cullather consistently demonstrates in his analysis of disclosed CIA documents regarding the operations PBFORTUNE and PBSUCCESS, within the U.S. government the opinions regarding the measures to be implemented toward the Guatemalan government were partially conflicting. Moreover, until the last day of Arbenz's resignation, the CIA had serious doubts about the success of the plan focused on propaganda operations and the support of Armas' rebels. As the declassified CIA documents show, its officials that participated in the plan's development often had "little *understanding of* and *interests in* the motives of those in the Department of State, the Pentagon, and the White House"; accordingly, it should not be surprising that in the end they could not really explain the positive result of the operation.[312] Hence, it is tough to argue that the overall campaign was an integrated design of simultaneous, synchronized, and adaptive use of multiple instruments of statecraft attaining synergistic effects, as the first characteristic of the hybrid threat suggests it should be.

The operation PBSUCCESS generated the expected psychological effects. The U.S. propaganda campaign targeted the various Guatemalan social groups successfully. The lower classes of society were fed with ambiguous information about the government's decision, and the negative narrative about the agrarian reform created a feeling of compulsion in the Ladino peasantry that, following the land expropriations, felt coerced by the government. The stories about death threats and sabotage that the CIA planted in the Guatemalan press created a feeling of dissension and confusion within the Arbenz government. Finally, the misinformation about Arbenz's communist drift and the related shadow and U.S. intervention compelled the upper classes and the armed forces to act and coerce Arbenz to resign.

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[312] Cullather, *Secret History*, 97–98.

The measures taken by the U.S. government were focused primarily on escalation and were not the primary cause of the poor decision-making process of the Arbenz government. As confirmed by Jose Fortuny, the PGT secretary and personal advisor of Arbenz until his resignation, Arbenz and his entourage were idealists who did not comprehend the gravity of the situation until the very end.[313] It was this idealism that prevented Arbenz and his entourage from recognizing at the right time the signals that should have led them to different decisions. The negative consequences for the U.S. government were not avoided by de-escalation tactics, but by the intervention of external actors, as in the case of the avoided embargo on coffee beans or in the case of the Caracas resolution. Thus, there is a lack of evidence to confirm the presence of strategic gradualism.

PBSUCCESS was originally non-military in nature. Nevertheless, it targeted military opportunities and vulnerabilities to achieve secondary and tertiary order effects in the political and informational domains. Despite the final act of the operation involving a paramilitary operation, the decision about conducting the paramilitary operation was less based on the strategic environment rather than forced by the loss of momentum by the opposition. This time pressure would also in part explain the level of improvisation of the paramilitary action. Although Armas' action had never been conceived to depose Arbenz militarily but to force the army's hand in doing so, the invasion was factually a failure.[314] Accordingly, the strategic environment's constraints played a minimal role in the decision of the American government to execute the military action operation.

As the most covert operation, PBSUCCESS relied mostly on proxies. United Fruits Corporation played an important role in convincing the U.S. government to intervene in Guatemala; however, later it became an American proxy, instrumental in fulfilling the U.S. government's aims. The paramilitary force that entered Guatemala was formed and conducted by Guatemalan exiles. International organizations such as the UNSC, the OAS or the World Bank were also instrumental for the implementation of U.S. plans. Similarly,

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313 Gleijeses, *Shattered Hope*, 188.

314 On a detailed discussion about the poor planning and execution of the paramilitary operation see Cullather, *Secret History.*

Guatemala's neighboring countries not only supported the U.S. intervention actively but also influenced the United States to act. Guatemalan actors played a fundamental role in Arbenz's overthrow. The Catholic Church, the opposition, the upper-class and the armed forces should not be strictly understood as agents of the U.S. government, but more as actors who aligned with the intent of the overall plan.

The overthrow of President Jacobo Arbenz was less the result of a designed hybrid operation, rather than it was the result of many Guatemalan external and internal factors in which the U.S. intervention played a pivotal and resolutive role. As suggested by many scholars, demonstrated by the declassified CIA documents, and confirmed by the system analysis in the previous section, the success of the covert operation against the Arbenz government does not indicate it was a well-designed operation. Conversely, it was the convergence of the Guatemalan situation, the inability of the Arbenz government to understand that it was a central part of the problem, and its incapacity to undertake the necessary measures to relax the system that caused the operation to proceed as it did. The intent, and failure, to apply the Guatemalan scheme in Cuba almost ten years later is further evidence proving that the United States was not really aware of Guatemala's fragility and of all the internal and external forces that pushed and pulled even before Op PBSUCCESS's planning and execution, and how this specific environment was decisive to its success. If the United States had been fully aware of the Guatemalan situation, including the related vulnerabilities and the weakness of the Arbenz government, they would not have tried to apply the same concept in Cuba, which experienced significantly different conditions.

The system analysis applied to the Guatemala case allows the teasing out of specific lessons for small states. First, the central variable that most influenced the relationship between Guatemala and the United States and therefore contributed to the overthrow of the Arbenz government was the *domestic institutional changes*, namely Arbenz's reforms. Second, eventually, President Arbenz would have been able to change the power balance with the United States by decreasing the tempo of the *domestic institutional changes*, by countering the *foreign influence* with a sound information campaign in Guatemala and abroad, by relaxing the ongoing *polarization and radicalization*, addressing the different

social groups, and reducing *distrust within elites*, in particular within the senior military leadership. Third, the Arbenz government exploited its opportunities very limitedly and mostly too late. Fourth, the Guatemalan government fueled specific positive loops in the policy, military and social domains, which catalyzed an overall system destabilization to its disadvantage. Accordingly, Arbenz should have prioritized the interventions in these domains. Finally, the system analysis shows that a great power does not only target the vulnerability of the smaller one but also tries to undermine or contain its opportunities.

After having analyzed the Guatemala case, it is possible to argue that to some extent the characteristics of a hybrid threat were already observable during the period of the Cold War. In this case, however, the United States as a great power, was not solely responsible for its success. Conversely, the small state of Guatemala was largely responsible for Arbenz's defeat. To assess whether a hybrid approach by another great power in more recent times may have further implications for a small state, the next case deals with analyzing the confrontation between Ukraine and the Russian Federation starting from the 1990s to the armed conflict in 2014.

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V. UKRAINE 1990s–2014

The main roots of the crisis between Russia and Ukraine in 2014 lie in the tumult of the decades following the dissolution of the Soviet Union; however, turbulent relations between Ukraine and Russia about the self-determination of the former go back at least to the beginning of the 20th century.

A. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

At the beginning of World War I, today's Ukraine was not yet an independent state. The central and southeastern piece was part of the Russian Empire, while its western part was territory belonging to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Therefore, Ukrainians fought on both sides, under the Central Power Austria-Hungary, and the Triple Entente member Russia.[315] As result of the Great War, both empires fell apart. In 1917, in the wake of the Russian revolution, Ukrainians of the former Russian Empire proclaimed the Ukrainian People's Republic first as part of the newly born Russian Republic and a year later as independent state. In 1918, western Ukraine declared its independence from Austria-Hungary, proclaiming the creation of the West Ukrainian People's Republic. At the same time, the significant Polish population called for the support of neighboring Poland. In December of the same year, both Ukraine Republics signed a unification agreement, which was implemented on January 22, 1919.[316] The unification did not last long, however, and in the summer of the same year, Polish forces invaded and took over the West Ukrainian People's Republic. The remaining Ukrainian People's Republic fell victim to the Russian Civil War, becoming in 1922 one of the Soviet Socialist Republics.

From the early 1920s and the beginning of World War II Soviet Ukraine was subjected to Stalin's forced agricultural collectivization, which proved to be a calamity for the Ukrainian people. Agriculture productivity deteriorated, and peasants who resisted the communist program were arrested, tortured, and deported. In 1932 and 1933, the

[315] Central powers: Austro-Hungary, Germany, Ottoman Empire, Bulgaria. Triple Entente: Britain, France, Russia.

[316] Since 1999, January 22 is celebrated in Ukraine as Day of Unity (Reunion) of Ukraine.

communist agriculture production plans and the foreseen punishments in case of failure to achieve the unrealistic goals created a period of hunger, better known in Ukrainian as the "Holomodor" (Great Famine).[317] In 1939, following the German invasion of Poland and its partition with the Soviet Union, Stalin annexed the former western territory of Ukraine that belonged to Poland since the 1920s. During World War II, many Ukrainian nationalist movements, mostly in western Ukraine, fought together with the Nazis.[318] After World War II, the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic became a pillar of Soviet Union military capability, with large arms production facilities and military bases multiplying on Ukrainian territory. In 1954, the Crimean oblast was administratively transferred to Ukraine.[319] Until the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ukraine remained a mainstay of the Soviet system, giving birth to some of its most famous leaders including Nikita Kruschev and Leonid Brezhnev. In 1991, the Soviet Union collapsed, and finally, Ukraine proclaimed independence.

From the beginning of the 1990s, the Russian government endorsed institutional arrangements to bind post-Soviet republics, including Ukraine, to Russia. The keystone of this enterprise was the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Ukraine, though, showed little interest in joining the Commonwealth.[320] Nevertheless, Russia wanted to protect its critical interests in the Crimean Peninsula and, in general, maintain control over Ukraine and its policy. Accordingly, Russia's interference into Ukraine endured through the 1990s, culminating in the 2014 confrontation that continues today.

After 1991, the independence of Crimea and the ownership of the Black Sea fleet was a central topic in the relationship between Ukraine and Russia. Just after the Ukrainian declaration of independence, the Russian president sent Russia's deputy vice president to

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317 On the Ukraine famine that caused millions of deaths see Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Random House, 2011).

318 John A. Armstrong, *Ukrainian Nationalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963).

319 On the transfer of Crimea see Mark Kramer, "The Transfer of Crimea from Soviet Russia to Soviet Ukraine, 1954," Wilson Center, March 19, 2014, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/why-did-russia-give-away-crimea-sixty-years-ago.

320 Elias Götz, *Russia, the West, and the Ukraine Crisis* (New York: Routledge, 2018), 59.

the Crimean Peninsula to restate the Crimean declaration of independence.[321] In 1992, after an escalation of the nationalists' rhetoric in Ukraine calling for the refusal of Russian basing rights on the Crimean Peninsula, the relationship between Kiev and Moscow worsened. Russia responded with economic measures, increasing the price for gas delivered to Ukraine by tenfold, and in May 1992, the Crimean parliament proclaimed the Republic's independence and adopted its own constitution, which compelled Kiev to instantly reject the act as illegal, forcing the Crimean authority to withdraw the announcement.[322] It did so only after receiving from Kiev a guarantee of greater rights to self-governance and hence more regional power.

In 1993, the Russian parliament, the Duma, attempted to declare the Crimean city Sevastopol, a "Russian city."[323] In 1994, several EU countries, as well as the United States and Russia, persuaded Ukraine to sign the "Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances" giving up its nuclear arsenal, while assuring security against threats or the use of force against its political independence or territorial integrity.[324] In the same year, Ukraine rejected the Russian proposition to exchange Ukrainian debt for Russian ownership of energy infrastructure, and, even more critical for Russia, Ukraine entered the NATO Partnership for Peace (PfP) program. In response, Moscow started a new diplomatic and economic retaliation campaign, dictating new customs duties on Ukrainian goods, disconnecting Ukraine from the Russian power grid, and reaffirming its resolve to preserve the control of the Black Sea fleet.[325] Only in 1997, after a several-year dispute, did Ukraine

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321 Elizabeth A Wood et al., *Roots of Russia's War in Ukraine* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 8.

322 On the Russian sanctions see Daniel W. Drezner, *The Sanctions Paradox: Economic Statecraft and International Relations* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 119; On the Crimean declaration of independence see Serhy Yekelchyk, *The Conflict in Ukraine: What Everyone Needs to Know®* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 125.

323 Don H. Doyle, *Secession as an International Phenomenon: From America's Civil War to Contemporary Separatist Movements* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2010), 284.

324 "Memorandum on Security Assurances in Connection with Ukraine's Accession to the Treaty on the NPT," accessed April 15, 2019, https://www.msz.gov.pl/en/p/wiedenobwe_at_s_en/news/memorandum_on_security_assurances_in_connection_with_ukraine_s_accession_to_the_treaty_on_the_npt.

325 Drezner, *The Sanctions Paradox*, 203–206.

and Russia agreed about the partition of the Black Sea fleet; in the "Big Treaty," both countries formalized that Russia received 82 percent of the fleet, while Ukraine received 18 percent; Ukraine, however, sold part of its share to Russia and decommissioned another part.[326] The treaty effectively reduced Ukrainian war capacity in the peninsula and laid the groundwork for incremental Russian influence in the region.

Russia took advantage of its official presence in the Crimean Peninsula by expanding its footprint and leveraging the local population. By the end of 1999, Russia opened a consulate in Simferopol and started to hand out passports to all Black Sea sailors and their families.[327] In 2004, the Orange Revolution represented another milestone for the fate of Crimea. After this event and until the secession in 2014 numerous groups including the Russian Community of Crimea, the youth group called *Proryv* (Breakthrough), the People's Front Sevastopol-Crimea-Russia as well as paramilitary Cossack groups, and the Eurasian Youth Movement, tried to shift the Crimean Peninsula into the arms of the Russian Federation.[328] The years-long shaping of the human environment in the Crimean Peninsula would play a decisive role for the events in spring 2014 that led to the Crimean secession. Nonetheless, Russian involvement was not only limited within the Crimean Peninsula but extended over the whole of Ukraine.

Russia has always supported Ukrainian actors who were able to influence Ukrainian politics to keep it within the Russian sphere of influence while punishing those who tried to get out of it. In 1994, when the first Ukrainian president, Leonid Kravchuk signed the NATO PfP Program, Moscow in response, during the upcoming election, reportedly provided financial support to the leader of the opposition, Leonid Kuchma, who argued for closer ties with Moscow during his campaign.[329] Despite his rhetoric, Kuchma did not completely fulfill Russia's expectations, pursuing a NATO approach. In 1997, the signature of the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership between Russia and

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326 Yekelchyk, *The Conflict in Ukraine*, 127.

327 Yuri Y. Chubchenko, "Otkryto Genkonsul'stvo Rossii v Simferopole [Consulate General of Russia Open in Simferopol]," *Kommersant*, October 9, 1999, https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/227271.

328 Wood et al., *Roots of Russia's War in Ukraine*, 9–11.

329 Janusz Bugajski, *Cold Peace: Russia's New Imperialism* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2004), 92.

Ukraine which dissipated the dispute regarding the Black Sea fleet, overlooked the fact that Russia—which faced significant internal political turmoil and substantial economic crisis—supported Kuchma's opponents in the Ukrainian elections. In 2002, Kuchma signed the NATO Action Plan sustaining a "long-term goal of NATO membership," and in June 2003 this intent was further formalized into Ukrainian military doctrine.[330] The Ukrainian turn to the West had a short duration. When numerous scandals on corruption, assassination plots, and electoral fraud undermined Ukraine's image in the West, Kuchma turned to Russia where companies had meanwhile started to heavily invest in Ukrainian market sectors such as energy, metallurgy, telecommunications, and banking.[331] In 2003, he accepted the (symbolic) post of Chairman of the CIS, and a year later, he restated the strategic relationship between Ukraine and Russia, putting on hold the NATO membership goal.[332] In the 2004 presidential elections, Russia decided to assure consistent financial and political support to the Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovych, who ran against Viktor Yushchenko, the opposition leader.[333] However, the support and the related election fraud rebounded and when irregularity about the victory of Yanukovych emerged, more than half a million Ukrainians gave birth to what became the Orange Revolution, which led to a revolt and the victory of the opposition leader Yushchenko.

The substantial improvement of the Russian economy and Ukrainian dependence on Russian energy allowed the Kremlin to use energy and finance to shape the political relationship with Kiev. In 2005, following the unfavorable result of the Orange Revolution

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330 NATO, "NATO-Ukraine Action Plan," November 22, 2002, https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_19547.htm.

331 Margarita M. Balmaceda, *Energy Dependency, Politics and Corruption in the Former Soviet Union: Russia's Power, Oligarchs' Profits and Ukraine's Missing Energy Policy, 1995–2006* (London, UK: Routledge, 2007), 29–31; Bugajski, *Cold Peace*, 86–89; Rosaria Puglisi, "Clashing Agendas? Economic Interests, Elite Coalitions and Prospects for Co-Operation Between Russia and Ukraine," *Europe-Asia Studies* 55, no. 6 (2003): 839–840.

332 Rajan Menon and Eugene B. Rumer, *Conflict in Ukraine: The Unwinding of the Post–Cold War Order* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015), 28.

333 Taras Kuzio, "Russian Policy toward Ukraine During Elections," *Demokratizatsiya* 13, no. 4 (2005), 495–509; Michael McFaul, "Ukraine Imports Democracy: External Influences on the Orange Revolution," *International Security* 32, no. 2 (2007), 70; Nikolai Petrov and Andrei Ryabov, "Russia's Role in the Orange Revolution," in *Revolution in Orange: The Origins of Ukraine's Democratic Breakthrough*, ed. Anders Aslund and Michael McFaul (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2006), 145–64.

and the rise to power of Western-oriented and Russian-adverse president Yushchenko, Russian companies raised the fuel, petroleum, gas, and nuclear fuel prices in Ukraine.[334] A year later, when the Ukrainian government declined to pay the new gas prices and the negotiations froze, Russia interrupted the supply, and only some days later the supply restarted at the new price of $95 per thousand cubic meters (bcm).[335] In 2008, when Yulia Tymoshenko was elected prime minister, beating Russian-backed Yanukovych, the Russian gas company Gazprom intervened, cutting gas supplies and starting another dispute about debt repayment.[336] In 2009, when Yushchenko refused to uphold a deal that his prime minister had reached with the Russian President Vladimir Putin, Ukraine was left without a contract on gas prices and transit fees, and Russia replied by setting new prices first at $250 bcm and then at $450 bcm.[337] In 2010, the continuing conflicts within the "Orange" coalition, Yushchenko's dramatic loss of consensus, and an assertive Russian-backed Viktor Yanukovych changed the Ukrainian political landscape in favor of Russia.

After 2010, Viktor Yanukovych's political course swayed between balancing, bandwagoning and bargaining toward the European Union and the Russia Federation, and this had disastrous effects for Ukraine. Immediately after being elected, President Yanukovych indicated his intent to refocus Ukraine foreign policy toward Russia.[338] In April 2010, an agreement between Yanukovych and the Russian President Dmitrij Medvedev granted Russia a new lease on its naval base in Crimea until 2042, in exchange for an export tax decrease of 30 percent on purchases of Russian gas.[339] Furthermore, the

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334 Götz, *Russia, the West, and the Ukraine Crisis*, 62.

335 Originally, Gazprom raised the price from $50 to $220-230 bcm. On the negotiations and deal see Andrew E. Kramer, "Russia and Ukraine Reach Deal in Gas Cost Dispute," *New York Times*, January 4, 2006, https://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/04/international/europe/russia-and-ukraine-reach-deal-in-gas-cost-dispute.html; Robert L. Larsson, "Russia's Energy Policy: Security Dimensions and Russia's Reliability as an Energy Supplier," Scientific Report (Stockholm: Swedish Defence Research Agency, March 2006), https://ntrl.ntis.gov/NTRL/dashboard/searchResults/titleDetail/PB2007106453.xhtml.

336 Randall Newnham, "Oil, Carrots, and Sticks: Russia's Energy Resources as a Foreign Policy Tool," *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 2, no. 2 (2011), 141.

337 Menon and Rumer, *Conflict in Ukraine*, 43.

338 James Sherr, *The Mortgaging of Ukraine's Independence*, REP BP 2010/01 (London: Chatham House, August 2010), https://www.chathamhouse.org/publications/papers/view/109440.

339 Luke Harding, "Ukraine Extends Lease for Russia's Black Sea Fleet," *The Guardian*, April 21, 2010, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/apr/21/ukraine-black-sea-fleet-russia.

Ukrainian government dissolved by decree the structures coordinating the NATO-Ukraine integration process, while inviting the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) to establish offices in Kiev.[340] Moreover, Kiev readmitted the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) to the Black Sea Fleet and reinstated the cooperation between the FSB and the *Sluzhba Bezpeky Ukrayiny* (Ukrainian Security Service) (SBU) to enhance SBU capabilities.[341] Despite these concessions to Moscow, Yanukovych did not bow to Russian pressure to enter the Eurasian Economic Union, while pursuing closer ties with the EU. In 2012, the Ukrainian government and the EU intensified negotiations about the Association Agreement (AA) and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA). Both required Yanukovych to implement massive economic and political reforms that would have disrupted the system providing power and wealth to him, his party, and to many influential oligarch groups.[342] As the political scientist Rajan Menon asserts that "in retrospect, it appears that Yanukovych was more interested in the negotiations themselves than in their outcome," arguably because it "provided Yanukovych a hedge against Russian pressure."[343] In summer and autumn of 2013, both the EU and the Russian Federation made implicitly clear to Yanukovych that the time had come to decide which side to take.

Yanukovych, in an attempt to protect his interests and those of his entourage, decided to bandwagon towards Russia, thus triggering a chain of events that led to his dismissal. In June 2013, just after the Ukrainian agreement to become a Customs Union observer, Russia made clear that Ukraine's status would be lost if Yanukovych signed the DCFTA. The following month, Russia imposed an import embargo on numerous categories of Ukrainian products and introduced extensive inspections on its border with Ukraine, causing Ukraine losses of over $500 million.[344] Based on the reactionary

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340 Sherr, *The Mortgaging of Ukraine's Independence*, 13.

341 Taras Kuzio, "The FSB Returns to Ukraine," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 7, no. 100 (May 24, 2010), https://jamestown.org/program/the-fsb-returns-to-ukraine/.

342 Menon and Rumer, *Conflict in Ukraine*, 51.

343 Menon and Rumer, *Conflict in Ukraine*, 64.

344 Roman Olearchyk, "Russia Accused of Triggering Trade War with Ukraine," *Financial Times*, August 15, 2013, https://www.ft.com/content/99068c0e-0595-11e3-8ed5-00144feab7de; "Trading Insults. A Trade War Sputters as the Tussle over Ukraine's Future Intensifies," *The Economist*, August 24, 2013, https://www.economist.com/europe/2013/08/24/trading-insults.

measures taken by Russia, Kiev increasingly claimed the potential costs of signing the agreement were too burdensome, in an attempt to wrest concessions from the EU.[345] In September 2013, the EU negotiators made clear that due to legal impossibilities, "the Customs Union membership is not compatible with the DCFTAs."[346] Yanukovych was yet forced to choose, and the deadline was set: the Vilnius Partnership Summit on November 28–29, 2013.

Following a secretive meeting between Yanukovych and Putin near Moscow on November 9, the Ukrainian Prime Minister met on Wednesday, November 20 with his Russian counterparts in St. Petersburg.[347] The day after, just one week before the Summit in Vilnius, Viktor Yanukovych unexpectedly suspended the preparation for the AA and DCFTA signature. For Yanukovych, this decision might have seemed a good deal. The decision, though, shocked many Ukrainians who started to demand Yanukovych to rescind the decree that froze talks with the EU.

The Maidan Square popular demonstrations, born as a protest against Yanukovych's decision to abandon negotiations with the EU, escalated into a popular uprising. On November 24, 2013, the first Sunday demonstration took place, under the slogan "For a European Ukraine," involving some 100,000 people. The Ukrainian government, thinking that the demonstration was one of the many commonly "paid" events, did not undertake any measures. However, when the week after, the square filled up again, the government decided to use violence to disperse the protesters. The demonstrators continued to demonstrate and the Ukrainian anti-riot police, the *Berkut*, tried again to disperse the protesters with increased violence. As a first reaction to the intervention of the security forces, the protesters began to organize themselves, making

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345 Andrew Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis: What It Means for the West* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 64.

346 Štefan Füle, "Statement on the Pressure Exercised by Russia on Countries of the Eastern Partnership" (September 11, 2013), http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-13-687_en.htm.

347 "Putin's Gambit. How the EU Lost Ukraine," *Spiegel Online*, November 25, 2013, http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/how-the-eu-lost-to-russia-in-negotiations-over-ukraine-trade-deal-a-935476.html; Ian Traynor and Oksana Grytsenko, "Ukraine Suspends Talks on EU Trade Pact as Putin Wins Tug of War," *The Guardian*, November 21, 2013, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/21/ukraine-suspends-preparations-eu-trade-pact.

Maidan Square a real camp: they erected barricades and created self-defense groups. The Ukrainian–Russian "Action Plan" signed on December 17, 2013 meant for the protesters a twofold defeat: it confirmed the re-approach to Russia and the discard of the European option, and it gave the Yanukovych government the necessary means to endure.[348] On January 16, 2014, the government, having failed in the previous weeks to dissolve the demonstrations with the usual use of force, voted the anti-protest laws commonly known as the "Dictatorship Law," that *de jure* came close to abolishing freedom of speech, assembly, and information as well as other activities related to the protest.[349] On January 19, an unprecedented violent clash between the protesters and the *Berkut* triggered nation-wide dissent and occupations, which now involved a large part of Ukraine.

The uprising of the radicalized citizenship could be quelled only by Yanukovych's departure. The following main factors caused the nature of the demonstrations to change in the last month of protests from a mere claim for Europeanisation to a quasi-revolution: the repression laws, the extensive and increasingly uncontrolled violence of regime actors, and the failure of negotiations.[350] The *Berkut* and the hired thugs, the *titushki,* unable to de-escalate and displace the protesters from the Maidan square started to seize, snatch, and beat them elsewhere, at any time of the day or night.[351] In the last month, there were fatal victims in the protests.[352] On February 21, after the last and bloodiest days of the revolt, the government and the opposition signed an agreement that included the restoration of the

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348 Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis*, 79.

349 Will Englund and Kathy Lally, "In Ukraine, Protesters Appear to Be Preparing for Battle," *The Washington Post*, January 20, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/in-ukraine-protesters-appear-to-be-preparing-for-battle/2014/01/20/904cdc72-81bd-11e3-9dd4-e7278db80d86_story.html?utm_term=.2b55eabb21ec; "Ukraine: Brief Legal Analysis of 'Dictatorship Law,'" *Civic Solidarity*, January 20, 2014, http://www.civicsolidarity.org/article/880/ukraine-brief-legal-analysis-dictatorship-law.

350 Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis*, 88.

351 "Health Ministry: Beaten Journalist Chornovol Ready to Leave Hospital," *Kyiv Post*, January 7, 2014, https://www.kyivpost.com/article/content/ukraine-politics/health-ministry-beaten-journalist-chornovol-ready-to-leave-hospital-334723.html; "Police Try to Arrest Beaten Ukrainian Activist in Hospital," Reuters, January 31, 2014, https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-ukraine-activist/police-try-to-arrest-beaten-ukrainian-activist-in-hospital-opposition-idUKBREA0U1K620140131.

352 "Список Погибших в Ходе Акций Протеста в Украине (Январь-Март 2014) [The List of Those Killed during the Protests in Ukraine (January-March 2014)]," *LB.ua*, March 15, 2014, https://lb.ua/society/2014/03/15/256239_spisok_pogibshih_hode_aktsiy_protesta.html.

2004 constitution, constitutional reforms and a new election for the end of 2014, however, upon signing the agreement, Yanukovych fled the capital.[353]

Following Yanukovych's departure, Russia, with the intent to protect its assets in the Crimean Peninsula, supported a coup aimed to annex Crimea. On February 27, armed men stormed the Crimean government and at gunpoint compelled the present officials to pass a motion on secession and motion on organizing a referendum to sanction the decision.[354] The same night, Russian armed forces began the Crimean occupation with the capture of Simferopol and Sevastopol airports. From March 6, Russian forces started a conventional build-up on Ukraine's eastern border and on Crimea, sealing the peninsula from the mainland.[355] On March 16, the secession referendum was backed by 97 percent of voters and two days later Russia absorbed Crimea into the Russian Federation.

The unrest in eastern Ukraine began with the same secession intent as in Crimea. Up to the present day, the region remains disputed between Kiev and the Russian-backed separatists. On April 7, 2014, protesters seized and occupied administrative buildings in the east Ukraine cities of Kharkiv, Donetsk, and Luhansk, calling for a referendum on independence, and five days later, twenty men seized the City Council in Slovyansk.

353 Menon and Rumer, *Conflict in Ukraine*, 80–81.

354 Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis,* 110.

355 Michael Kofman et al., *Lessons from Russia's Operations in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2017), 9.

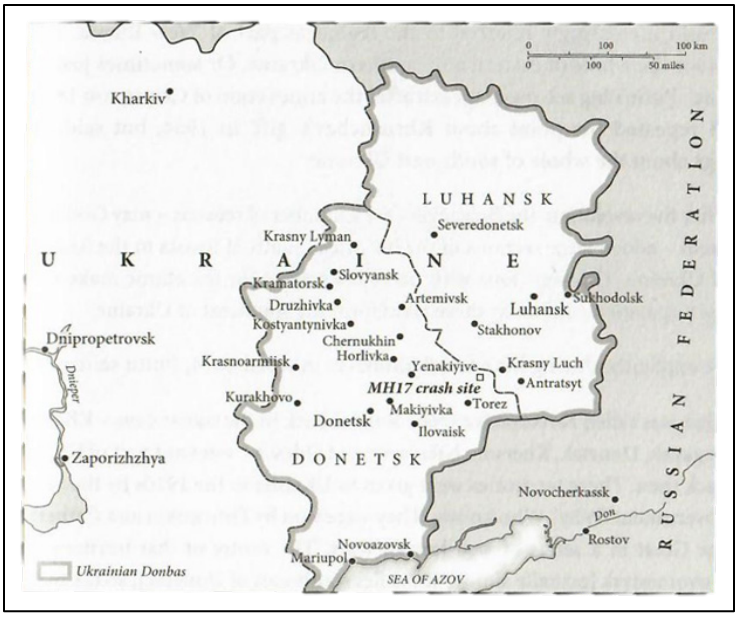

Figure 7. The Donbass Region[356]

When pro-Russian rebels, with the support of Russian security forces, started creating armed militias and proclaiming "people's republics" in the Donbas, there were no national or regional forces there capable of countering them.[357] On April 17, Russia, Ukraine, the United States, and the EU agreed on measures to de-escalate the crisis in eastern Ukraine.[358] Nonetheless, because of repeated cease-fire breaks, on the April 22 the Ukrainian acting president ordered the relaunch of military operations against the pro-Russian militants in the east. In response, Donbas leaders, copying the Crimean scenario, conducted a secession referendum on May 11. The referendum took place only in Donetsk and Luhansk where the separatists were stronger, while the other eastern key cities of Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, and Zaporizhzhya remained under government control.[359]

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356 Source: Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis*, 119.

357 Yekelchyk, *The Conflict in Ukraine*, 144.

358 "Ukraine Crisis: Deal to 'De-Escalate' Agreed in Geneva," *BBC News*, April 17, 2014, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-27072351.

359 Dmitriĭ Trenin, *The Ukraine Crisis and the Resumption of Great-Power Rivalry* (Moscow: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2014), 7; On the legitimacy of the referendum's results see the Leaked Phone Conversation between Aleksandr Barkashov, Leader of the Russian National Party and the Local Activist Dmitry Boitsov, 2014, accessed February 12, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J18RziLIl30&feature=youtu.be.

During summer 2014, Moscow intensified support for the rebels even with conventional forces to rescue them from collapse and reify the initiative against Ukrainian forces. In September, after extensive talks under the aegis of the OSCE representative of Ukraine, the Russian Federation, the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR), and the Luhansk People's Republic (LPR) signed the Minsk Protocol and the follow-up memorandum agreeing among others on a ceasefire, among other points. Unfortunately, after two weeks, the ceasefire was consistently violated and in January 2015 had completely collapsed.[360] On February 11, leaders of Ukraine, Russia, France, and Germany developed a new "Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreement."[361] At the end of February 2015, both Ukraine and the separatists started to implement parts of the Agreement. As of mid-2019, the conflict in eastern Ukraine persists with periods of escalation and de-escalation, and as restated by the UNIAN at the end of 2018, "not a single provision of the Minsk deal has been implemented by 100%."[362]

B. PMESI VULNERABILITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Since its independence, Ukraine has been confronted with institutional changes that have led to increased distrust between the elite, fueled favoritisms, and polarized the population, creating favorable conditions for the Russian hybrid threat. During the 1990s, Ukraine was governed by politicians forged by communism that did not implement deep economic and social reforms as in the case of the Baltic countries.[363] At the end of the 1990s, President Kuchma facing near-bankruptcy appointed the former head of the Ukrainian central Bank Viktor Yushchenko as prime minister and the gas trader Yulia Timoshenko as his deputy. Their reforms alarmed the oligarchy elite, who through their

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360 Shaun Walker and Oksana Grytsenko, "Ukraine Forces Admit Loss of Donetsk Airport to Rebels," *The Guardian*, January 21, 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/21/russia-ukraine-war-fighting-east.

361 United Nations Peacemaker, "Package of Measures for the Implementation of the Minsk Agreements," accessed May 3, 2019, https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/UA_150212_MinskAgreement_en.pdf

362 "Almost Entire 'Grey' Zone in Donbas Liberated by Ukraine Without Minsk Deal Breach," *UNIAN*, December 27, 2018, https://www.unian.info/war/10391709-almost-entire-grey-zone-in-donbas-liberated-by-ukraine-without-minsk-deal-breach-adviser.html.

363 Menon and Rumer, *Conflict in Ukraine*, 22–26.

influence brought down both in spring 2001.[364] This maneuver laid the foundations for mistrust between the country's Western-oriented and Eastern-oriented political elites and their electorate, breaking the already meager cohesion between the two land parts and undermining the integration of the pro-Russian minorities.

The "reformers" founded their parties laying the foundations for what would become the Orange movement and related revolution in 2004. The Orange Revolution revealed underlying tensions and polarization between the Ukrainian elite and between the pro-Western Ukrainian citizen's majority and the pro-Russia minority, exposing Ukraine to the competing geopolitical intent of Western powers and a resurgent Russia.[365] The initiated institutional changes focused on approaching EU membership were thwarted by an increasingly disruptive relationship between Timoshenko and Yushchenko. The alternating period of rivalry and appeasement finally ruined the cohesion that had supported the 2004 revolution, allowing the rise of Russia-backed Viktor Yanukovych.

Yanukovych's institutional balancing acts brought further polarization and radicalization, eventually being the last act leading to the Ukrainian internal conflict. From the moment he took office, Yanukovych re-established favoritism for his loyal oligarchs, allowing corruption to develop at even higher levels than in the 1990s.[366] At the same time, he approached the EU to appease the Western-oriented populace and counterbalance rising Russian pressure. However, when he realized that the EU agreements would have put in grave danger his oligarchic apparatus, suddenly he backed out of the AA, pleasing Russia and the pro-Russia minority, but triggering protests from the pro-Western majority. These activities soon escalated and forced Yanukovych to leave Ukraine abruptly. Afterward, the Russia-backed leaders tried with mixed results to enforce other institutional changes in Crimea and Donbass. Yanukovych's policy adaptation may be interpreted as an attempt to balance an assertive and asphyxiating Russia on the one hand, and a demanding

364 Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis*, 43.

365 Jeffrey Mankoff, *Russian Foreign Policy: The Return of Great Power Politics* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 224–225.

366 Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis*, 53–58.

but hesitant EU on the other. Even so, his attempt to adapt did nothing but fuel polarization of the society and mistrust among the Ukrainian elites.

Ukraine's dependence on international organizations and membership in supranational organizations has repeatedly proved to be a major vulnerability. In 1994, the *bona fide* act of signing the Budapest memorandum resulted in a loss of decisive means of deterrence, reducing Ukraine's military capabilities. In 2008, at Bucharest's NATO Summit, France, Germany, and Italy made pressure to relax the U.S. administration's enthusiasm to admit Ukraine into the alliance.[367] Eventually, these European allies, worried about the consequences for their relations with Russia, slowed Ukraine from entering the alliance. Russia exploited Ukraine's dependence on international organizations. For instance, in 2015, during the Minsk agreements, Russia compelled Ukraine's recognition of the Russian-backed proxies. Further, it polarized Ukrainian society and automatically inhibited future re-integration of the eastern minorities. Ukraine relied on Western mediation and its membership in the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) to de-escalate the conflict in Donbass. Nevertheless, neither of the Minsk agreements, both under the aegis of the OSCE, stopped the fights; conversely, they framed the conditions for a frozen conflict that Russia could heat and cool at will.

Russian interference and direct involvement in Ukraine's internal conflicts has consequences that go beyond the Crimean secession and the ongoing conflict in Donbass. In Crimea, the coordinated and synchronized operations of special forces, Russian airborne units on Sevastopol and Simferopol airports as well as the landing of marine infantry supporting the ongoing Russian "support" operation demonstrate direct Russian involvement in the—at that time—the Ukrainian internal conflict in Crimea.[368] In the summer of 2014, the transfer of weapons from Russia to Donbass rebels as well as the fire support and even direct employment of Russian soldiers on Ukrainian territory demonstrate that Russia was and maybe remains involved in the Ukraine internal conflict in

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[367] Neil S. MacFarlane, "Kto Vinovat? Why Is There a Crisis in Russia's Relations with the West?" in *Russia, the West, and the Ukraine Crisis*, ed. Götz Elias (New York: Routledge, 2018), 103.

[368] Kofman et al*., Lessons from Russia's Operations in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine*, 8–9.

Donbass.[369] The international community condemned this involvement and many governments have imposed a variety of punitive measures on Russia. Even though Russia's intervention has further stimulated Kiev's westward drift, it has also led several Western countries to rethink Ukraine's integration into the EU and NATO. Governments such as France, Germany, Italy, and Hungary may consider it too dangerous and risky for their national interests to approve EU and NATO membership status for Ukraine.

The limits on Ukrainian military capabilities were caused both by the direct influence of Russia and by Kiev's erroneous policies. In 1997, Ukraine allowed Russia to maintain ground forces in Crimea and leased to Russia its share of coastal facilities in the area to decrease the rising Ukrainian gas debt.[370] In 2010, Ukraine extended the lease in Sevastopol to 2042 as a deal for reduced gas prices. The years-long neglect Ukrainian troops on the Crimean Peninsula, and corruption within the forces, mainly constituted by local conscripts and officers, played a crucial role in Russia's ability to capture all Ukrainian infrastructure and assets without a noteworthy fight.[371] Russia also actively intervened in limiting Ukrainian response capabilities. For instance, it carried out cyber-attacks aimed at preventing communications between the peninsula and the capital during the operations' peaks in the Crimea;[372] or by employing special forces to support irregulars.

The Ukrainian and Russian governments employed, with divergent results, irregular forces to enhance their objectives' achievements. Since 2010, President Yanukovych had been creating his loyal security forces, the *Berkut*. Due to the *Berkut's* limited numbers and the intent to raise the level of violence toward the protesters, Yanukovych increasingly started to engage *titushki*; however, their engagement did nothing but further intensify protestors' frustration and further broaden the grab between

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369 Yekelchyk, *The Conflict in Ukraine*, 7.

370 Yekelchyk, *The Conflict in Ukraine*, 128.

371 Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis*, 112.

372 Kenneth Geers, "Strategic Analysis: As Russia-Ukraine Conflict Continues, Malware Activity Rises," *FireEye*, May 28, 2014, https://www.fireeye.com/blog/threat-research/2014/05/strategic-analysis-as-russia-ukraine-conflict-continues-malware-activity-rises.html.

them and the government.[373] Conversely, in Crimea and Donbass, Russia explicitly and successfully exploited irregular forces to create an image of a popular revolt against Kiev. On February 22, 2014, the Crimean *Berkut* came back to the Crimean Peninsula. Five days later members of the same *Berkut* as well as alleged Russian special operations forces disguised as local irregular forces formed the commando unit that seized Crimea's parliament building.[374] Furthermore, the irregular forces employed in Crimea were also composed of Night Wolves—Russian biker groups intimately related to the Russian president—that supplied the Crimean irregulars with uniforms and communication equipment.[375] In Donbass, strong circumstantial evidence demonstrates that Russia provided the insurgents with equipment, personnel, as well as financial and military support.[376] These examples show that Russia made extensive use of irregular forces and their combination with special forces to fuel the Ukrainian internal conflicts.

The Ukrainian approach to multilateral security agreements has revealed an insidious path that has brought mostly adverse effects. In 1996, as a result of the Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances, Ukraine completed the de-nuclearization process. Unfortunately, the clause "respect the independence and existing borders of Ukraine" was not observed by the memorandum signatory Russia, and when on March 15, 2014, the UN Security Council voted a resolution against Crimea's secession referendum, Russia imposed its veto.[377] Some scholars argue that the U.S. proposal to invite Georgia and Ukraine to prepare "Action Plans" for NATO membership in 2008 may have triggered Russia to engage Georgia the same year and start to contemplate measures toward

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373 Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis*, 78.

374 Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis*, 108–110.

375 Wood et al., *Roots of Russia's War in Ukraine*, 117.

376 Tor Bukkvoll, "Why Putin Went to War: Ideology, Interests and Decision-Making in the Russian Use of Force in Crimea and Donbas," *Contemporary Politics* 22, no. 3 (2016), 275; Trenin, *The Ukraine Crisis and the Resumption of Great-Power Rivalry*, 7.

377 Mirjam Donath, "Russia Vetoes U.N. Resolution Against Crimea Referendum," Reuters, March 15, 2014, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-un/russia-vetoes-u-n-resolution-against-crimea-referendum-idUSBREA2E0I520140315.

Ukraine.[378] The Ukraine petition for NATO membership did not only fuel Russian protests and retaliation measures in the economic domain but also increased distrust between the Ukraine elite and polarized the population already divided between pro-Russia and pro-Western countries.[379] Accordingly, multilateral security agreements can turn into a double-edged sword, especially if the agreements have not yet been reached or if they do not have a legally binding character.

On many occasions, Russia leveraged Ukraine's dependence on gas imports to hit numerous Ukraine vulnerabilities. One of Ukraine's most prominent inheritances from the Soviet era was the heavily discounted gas import from Russia.[380] For Ukraine, gas is a vital source of energy for both private and industrial consumers; the Donbass economy based on steel mining and chemical industries is highly dependent on Russian gas.[381] Accordingly, it is not surprising that Russia exploited this reliance on its gas supply to express discontent with Kiev's policy decisions and leverage domestic institutional changes in Ukraine. Three significant examples were in 2006 after the Orange Revolution and the rise of Yushchenko, in 2009 after Ukraine's request to start the NATO membership process, and in 2014 after Yanukovych's deposition.

Moreover, in 2009 Russia's increase of gas prices forced the IMF to step in and finance Yushchenko's government with $25 billion in loans, increasing Ukrainian dependency on international organizations. The worldwide economic crisis in 2008–2009 let the Ukrainian GDP slip by 15 percent and made it impossible for Ukraine to pay the IMF loan, which was suspended in 2011.[382] This dependence on Russian gas imports was also undermining Ukraine's adaptability to economic changes in the international environment. On April 21, 2010, Russia and Ukraine signed an intergovernmental

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[378] John J. Mearsheimer, *Great Delusion: Liberal Dreams and International Realities* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018); Stephen M. Walt, *The Hell of Good Intentions: America's Foreign Policy Elite and the Decline of U.S. Primacy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018).

[379] Mankoff, *Russian Foreign Policy*, 113.

[380] Menon and Rumer, *Conflict in Ukraine*, 43.

[381] Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis*, 121.

[382] Menon and Rumer, *Conflict in Ukraine*, 60.

agreement that provided Ukraine with Russian subsidized gas at the expense of budget revenues; in exchange, Ukraine extended the lease for the Russian naval bases in Crimea until 2042. Thus, Russia exploited Ukraine's gas need to reduce Ukrainian military capabilities in Crimea. In October 2013, arguably to persuade Yanukovych to abandon negotiations with the EU, Russia offered to supply 5 bcm of gas at $268/Mcm which represented a 33 percent discount over Naftogaz.[383] Hence, in 2013, Russia—similar to the 2009 NATO approach—exploited Ukraine gas dependency to undermine its efforts of pursuing membership in the EU.

Russia exploited its position as Ukraine's major trading partner to exploit trading policy changes to target Ukraine vulnerabilities and contain opportunities. The gas supply and transit contract signed between Russia and Ukraine in 2009 constituted a decisive Russian instrument to leverage the gas trade with Ukraine and imposed upon Ukraine important clauses that would have economic repercussions in the following years.[384] The long-term character of the contract forced Naftogaz into a disadvantageous position of dependence on Gazprom. The new price calculation exposed the Ukrainian company to significant gas price increases. The high price of take-or-pay gas reinforced Ukraine's pathological inefficient consumption pattern, causing needs for Russian gas and making gas import diversification uneconomical.[385] Furthermore, Ukraine accepted complete responsibility for ensuring stable and secure gas transit to Europe, exposing Naftogaz to important financial obligations related to network maintenance, thereby creating potential risks for the Ukrainian government if for some reason it was not able to safeguard the European gas supply. Accordingly, Russia used policy changes to increase Ukrainian dependency on strategic imports, decrease Ukrainian financial adaptability in case of economic challenges, and increase its dependency on international organizations.

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[383] Sarna Arkadiusz, "Russia's Gas Discount for Ukraine Is in Gazprom's Interests," OSW - Centre for Eastern Studies, October 9, 2013, https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2013-10-09/russias-gas-discount-ukraine-gazproms-interests.

[384] Although the text of the contract remains confidential, an alleged authentic version can be found on "Газова Угода Тимошенко-Путіна. Повний Текст [Tymoshenko-Putin Gas Deal. Full text]," *Ukrainska Pravda*, January 22, 2009, https://www.pravda.com.ua/articles/2009/01/22/3686613/.

[385] Cullen and Reichborn-Kjennerud, *Countering Hybrid Warfare (CHW)*, 6–8.

Russia exploited trading policy changes in domains other than gas to force domestic institutional changes in Ukraine. In July 2013, to increase the pressure on Ukraine to join the Customs Union (CU) Russia imposed a ban on several categories of Ukrainian imports and introduced extensive Ukrainian goods inspections at the borders, causing economic losses for Ukraine, estimated between $500 million and $2.5 billion.[386] The $15 billion loan that Russia offered to Ukraine in December 2013, as an exchange for the withdrawal from the Association Agreement with the EU, would have indeed provided instant and significant financial relief for Yanukovych. In the spring and summer of 2014, to put pressure on the westward shifting elements of the new Ukrainian government, Russia closed its border to Ukrainian trucks forcing some Ukrainian factories in Russia to close, and, as had become usual, increased the gas price.[387] Thus, Russian trading policy changes in different economic domains influenced Ukrainian institutional changes, while exploiting Ukraine's limited export diversification and at the same time fueling polarization within Ukrainian society.

The passage of gas to Europe was Ukraine's potential opportunity that Russia had to contain. In 2013, the gas pipelines "Soyuz" and "Bratstvo" on Ukrainian territory brought 16% EU's total natural gas demand from Russia to Europe.[388] This fact provided Ukraine with some strategic opportunity. However, Russia, becoming aware of the possible risks, built two new pipelines, Nord- and South-Stream, bypassing Ukrainian territory. With this move, Russia diminished Ukraine's significant tax revenues, reduced the advantages of Ukraine's broker position in the gas transit niche, and finally augmented its dependency on the import of Russian gas.

In 2014, Ukraine, aware of its vulnerabilities related to Russian gas supply, tried to find a solution to decrease this dependency and enhance its adaptability to the economic challenges caused by the ongoing confrontation with Russia. Accordingly, it

386 Menon and Rumer, *Conflict in Ukraine*, 77.

387 Blackwill and Harris, *War by Other Means*, 50.

388 Data source: U.S. Energy Information Administration, "16% of Natural Gas Consumed in Europe Flows through Ukraine," U.S. Energy Information Administration, March 14, 2014, https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=15411.

operationalized the key inter-connector pipeline Vojany-Uzhgorod with Slovakia that would have allowed Ukraine to substitute most of the Russian imports with imports from the EU.[389] The Ukrainian attempt did not go unnoticed by Russia. Slovakia noticed that, based on the contractual clause with Russia, gas reversal (the resale of gas) was not allowed without Russia's approval.[390] Furthermore, Russia decreased gas supply to its EU clients to reduce the potential amount of gas surplus that could have been re-exported to Ukraine.[391] Thus, Russia was able to head off Ukraine's attempt to enhance its adaptability to economic challenges.

Since Ukrainian independence in the 1990s, the varied policies of Ukrainian regimes have been the main culprits of the rift between the pro-Russian minority and the pro-Western majority of the country. In the early 1990s, Leonid Kravchuk initiated a policy of administrative and cultural Ukrainization, pursued by his successors Leonid Kuchma and Viktor Yushchenko; that policy fueled Ukraine political polarization and radicalization in the southeastern and western parts of the country and allowed regional politicians and Russia to exploit the division for its own purposes.[392] As a result, the most conservative and Russophile-related social minority groups felt increasingly marginalized and not understood by the central government. This process did nothing but degrade the social cohesion of the country and prevent the development of societal pluralism. On the one hand, Crimea associated the government in Kiev with corruption and inefficiency that had little to offer to their region, while on the other hand, they developed an idealized image of Russia, based on the wealthy Russian tourists and the Russian naval base that significantly

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389 Jakub Groszkowski and Wojciech Konończuk, "Gazowy Rewers Ze Słowacji Na Ukrainę [Gas Reverse from Slovakia to Ukraine]," OSW - Centre for Eastern Studies, September 10, 2014, https://www.osw.waw.pl/pl/publikacje/analizy/2014-09-10/gazowy-rewers-ze-slowacji-na-ukraine

390 Groszkowski and Konończuk, "Gazowy Rewers Ze Słowacji Na Ukrainę."

391 Alexander Panin, "Russia's Gas Supply Cuts to Europe Bolster Gazprom's Bargaining Power," *The Moscow Times*, September 18, 2014, https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/09/18/russias-gas-supply-cuts-to-europe-bolster-gazproms-bargaining-power-a39574.

392 Yekelchyk, *The Conflict in Ukraine*, 72–73. On political identities and divisions within Ukraine see Grigore Pop-Echeles and Graeme Robertson, "Do Crimeans Actually Want to Join Russia?" *The Washington Post*, March 6, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2014/03/06/do-crimeans-actually-want-to-join-russia/?utm_term=.446a76df1d9b.

contributed to the local economy.[393] Over the years, these two images polarized the Crimean population, between a minority that recognized Ukraine as their homeland and those who wanted to break away.

Russia, aware of the divisions within Ukraine, exploited the separatism topic to increase rifts within Ukrainian society and finally create the ideal conditions for internal conflicts that could lead to institutional changes. In the past, in Ossetia, Abkhazia, and Transnistria, regional separatism worked well by generating a virulent environment that proved its utility as a Russian instrument to shape the policies of its neighbor countries. Hence, Crimea presented a favorable environment to foster the same scheme. With a key Russian military base, a majority of Ukraine's Russian ethnic population, persistent dissatisfaction with Kiev policy, and a long history of separatism ambitions, Crimea was an almost perfect target for perpetrating a significant blow to Ukrainian sovereignty.[394] A similar pattern was recognizable in eastern Ukraine. Accordingly, Russia not only exploited the frustration of societal minorities but also supported those minorities to foster internal conflict leading to institutional changes in Ukraine.

Russia also employed its means to foster the polarization of Ukrainian society. Since Ukraine's independence, Russia has supported Russian-speaking neo-communist parties in order to catch the Soviet-nostalgic part of the population and counter the Westernizing parties.[395] In 2004, Yanukovych was supported by Russian "political technologists" who pursued the polarization of the eastern part of Ukraine against the western one, to degrade the Ukrainian social cohesion.[396] During the Maidan demonstrations, Russian political instructors, *politruks*, infiltrated the *Berkut* to radicalize them.[397] The *Berkut* radicalization not only caused an escalation of their violence, but also

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393 Yekelchyk, *The Conflict in Ukraine*, 129.

394 Menon and Rumer, *Conflict in Ukraine*, 83.

395 Shale Horowitz and Michael D. Tyburski, "Reacting to Russia: Foreign Relations of the Former Soviet Bloc," in *Beyond Great Powers and Hegemons*, ed. Kristen P. Williams et al. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 165.

396 Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis*, 44.

397 Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis*, 74–75.

alienated the unit from other Ukraine security organizations, making future reintegration impossible and, finally, marking the unit's destiny. On February 25, 2014, the acting Minister of Interior, Arsen Avakov, signed the unit's dissolution decree.

Favoritism has shaped Ukrainian society and its elite for many years, fostering distrust and having deleterious effects on different socio-economic domains. Ukraine has been governed since 1991 by a predatory elite that incentivizes the polarization of the society.[398] The privatization of the Ukrainian economy in the 1990s occurred through a path of favoritism; government connections and political appointments were used to accumulate wealth via favors in the organized crime groups that ruled the private business sector, generating a ruling elite focused primarily on its own wealth accumulation—resulting in merged big business.[399] The oligarchic environment created strong rivalry and distrust among its members, as well as with those who wanted to break such a system of favoritism. Moreover, the rapidly growing gap between the wealthy and poor exacerbated the popular antipathy against corruption and the exploitation of political charges.

The corruption machine did not stop with the Orange Revolution. The constant rivalry between Yushchenko and Tymoshenko proceeded with ups and downs until 2010. While the two leaders focused on their leadership, oligarchs continued to feed officials playing a divide and rule game that persisted and even increased under the successor Viktor Yanukovych.[400] Therefore, it is not surprising that surveys showed that most Ukrainians felt helpless and estranged from the state they considered corrupt.[401] Accordingly, it is possible to argue that the corrupted system disrupted social cohesion and created favorable ground for the polarization and radicalization of groups that felt oppressed by what they saw as unjust resource distribution.

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398 Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis*, 39.

399 Yekelchyk, *The Conflict in Ukraine*, 77–79.

400 Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis*, 47–48.

401 Taras Kuzio, "Regime Type and Politics in Ukraine Under Kuchma," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 38, no. 2 (2005): 167–90; "The Fight Against Corruption in Ukraine: Public Opinion" (Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation, June 1, 2018), https://dif.org.ua/en/article/the-fight-against-corruption-in-ukraine-public-opinion.

The system of favoritism not only corrupted the socio-political domain, but also affected the state's capacity to shape the informational environment. The more unpopular the government was, the more it resorted to freedom of press limitations and increased its surveillance and information manipulation.[402] The fact that oligarchs owned most of the private mass media companies made information manipulation all the more possible. This diminished opportunities to develop critical media diversification and an uncorrupted public broadcasting service that would have been able to expose the malicious activities of corrupted officials and greedy oligarchs.

Even the security domain was not immune to the vast system of favoritism. For decades, the Ukrainian Armed Forces was a neglected organization, which, with the end of the Cold War, saw its importance decline. Corruption and favoritism also filtered through the armed forces, creating disinterest and passivity among the lower ranks.[403] Under Yanukovych, most of the expenses in security organizations were in favor of his loyal interior troops and militias and the highly corrupt customs service, rather than the regular forces.[404] Therefore, it is not surprising that when the time came for the Ukrainian Armed Forces to stand up and fight against a brutal authoritarian regime, foreign infiltrations, and take-over attempts, the organization simply ignored the situation, surrendered, or waited inert for orders that never came.

Russia applied its years-long anti-Western narrative to shape its influence in Ukraine. The patriotic "hostile West" rhetoric was already present in Russian media narratives long before the Ukraine crisis bloomed.[405] In 2004, Russia tried to undermine Yushchenko's presidential election campaign by organizing alleged pro-Yushchenko nationalist extremist demonstrations with the presence of Nazi flags and banners.[406] Five years later, Russia accused Yushchenko of anti-Russian policy targeted at discrediting

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[402] Menon and Rumer, *Conflict in Ukraine*, 32.

[403] Yekelchyk, *The Conflict in Ukraine*, 146–147.

[404] Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis*, 112.

[405] Olga Malinova, "'Spiritual Bonds' as State Ideology," Russia in Global Affairs. Last modified December 18, 2014, https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/Spiritual-Bonds-as-State-Ideology-17223.

[406] Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis*, 44.

Russia in the West, and of supporting the Orthodox Church's split from Moscow and the Georgian anti-Russian war the previous year.[407] Hence, Russia's influence in Ukraine was explicitly targeted for suggesting an endangerment of Russian patriotic culture by alleged right-wing politicians. Accordingly, during Euromaidan the Russian state-run media portrayed the protests as pro-Western and pro-Nazi, treating the two terms interchangeably, and playing on the population's fears in Crimea and eastern Ukraine.[408] This information campaign was supposed to further reduce the poor social cohesion between the pro-Western majority and the pro-Russian minority and their polarization.

In February 2014, just after Yanukovych left Kiev, the pro-Russian leaders exploited the narrative developed in the previous years. Russian propaganda accused the Maidan uprising as a neo-Nazi coup that would have disrupted the Crimean Russian culture.[409] Russian influence targeted the Crimean feeling of being an "oppressed" minority. A robust propaganda campaign in the Russian media supported the Crimean annexation process.[410] In Donbass, in the previous decade, the pro-Russian elite supported by Russian media had fostered the narrative of ethnic-based Ukrainian political divisions by associating civil society and democracy with Ukrainian right-wing nationalism; and the narrative allowed the same people to depict the new Ukrainian government as a reborn fascist trend.[411] Accordingly, the informational environment in both Crimea and Donbass was a powder keg ready to trigger internal conflicts between the new government and the pro-Russian population.

Russia was able to heavily influence the Ukrainian population in the rebel regions because Kiev by neglecting the importance of the own media lost its capability to shape the informational environment there. In 2014, a Gallup report stated that television was the dominant news medium in Ukraine, as almost all Ukrainians (97%) and Crimeans (96%)

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407 Mankoff, *Russian Foreign Policy*, 228.

408 Yekelchyk, *The Conflict in Ukraine*, 6.

409 Yekelchyk, *The Conflict in Ukraine*,130.

410 Menon and Rumer, *Conflict in Ukraine*, 84.

411 Yekelchyk, *The Conflict in Ukraine*, 140–143.

watched TV for news at least weekly; of particular interest is the evolution of this media in Crimea where, in the 2012 survey, the population enumerated only Ukrainian news media in the top five spots, while in 2013 it enumerated only Russian media.[412] This evolution shows an evident Russian take-over in the informational environment and a blatant lack of public service from the Ukrainian state. Hence, it is no surprise that Russia was able to claim the informational environment for its propaganda purposes. In Donbass, in order to establish pro-Russian information dominance, some Ukrainian broadcasts were blocked and replaced by Russian broadcasts.[413] Accordingly, in this region, Russian TV outlets further polarized society.[414] Hence, in this region, Russian influence increased the hostility and distrust toward the new government in Kiev. Yet, it did not extensively raise public support for separatism as in Crimea.[415] Russian informational superiority in the separatist regions was essential to shape the conflict environment, and Kiev's misconduct in previous years allowed this take place.

The Yanukovych regime significantly undermined media diversity and disregarded public service. Since 95 percent of Ukrainians rely on television for political information, control over this mass media is essential in Ukraine. Accordingly, Yanukovych and his supporters took over most of the media outlets, acquiring the largest media conglomerates to shape the informational environment according to their needs.[416] This move undermined media diversity and degraded public service, putting it at the oligarchs' service. One of the centerpieces of media diversity is the freedom of the press. Unfortunately, since its national independence, Ukraine's press has never been free from government pressure, and the situation deteriorated rapidly in 2013 and worsened further in the first half of 2014.[417] The situation started to change in spring 2014 when the new government started to improve

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412 Broadcasting Board of Governors, "Contemporary Media Use in Ukraine," BBG Research (Gallup, 2014), https://www.bbg.gov/wp-content/media/2014/06/Ukraine-research-brief.pdf.

413 Broadcasting Board of Governors, "Contemporary Media Use in Ukraine."

414 Leonid Peisakhin and Arturas Rozenas, "Electoral Effects of Biased Media: Russian Television in Ukraine," *American Journal of Political Science* 62, no. 3 (2018): 535–50.

415 Kofman et al., *Lessons from Russia's Operations in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine*, 54.

416 Menon and Rumer, *Conflict in Ukraine*, 56.

417 On Ukraine Freedom of the Press historical see https://freedomhouse.org

access to information and increase the independence of the broadcasting regulatory body.[418] Furthermore, to diminish the impact of Russian media, the new government started to ban the broadcasts of Russian television, and some private initiatives started to support independent media coverage and monitoring.[419] Yanukovych's loss of the media domain put Russia in a position of even greater strength to shape the informational environment in the Crimean and Donbass regions, exploiting Ukraine's vulnerabilities. Nonetheless, the new Ukrainian government has shown the will to seize some opportunities. Whether these initiatives will allow Ukraine to develop opportunities and diminish its information vulnerabilities remains to be seen.

C. ANALYSIS

The Ukraine-Russia HT system reveals a higher level of complexity compared to the previous case (Figure 8). The cross-linking values are higher on average, and all the opportunities and vulnerabilities were exploited by at least one of the two actors.[420] Nonetheless, similarly to the Guatemala-U.S. case, the small state Ukraine did not exploit specific opportunities, and when it did, it did so negatively. Kiev did not engage in sub-state diplomacy, instead shaping the political environment in a highly centralized manner, and leaving the initiative of engaging in sub-state diplomacy to the great power Russia. Furthermore, Kiev did not support *civil-military force integration*. Conversely, with its *favoritism,* it fostered rivalries and distrust between the armed forces and the internal security forces. Some Ukraine governments tried to increase their opportunities by setting out on the path to affiliation with multilateral economic organizations and increasing their adaptability to economic challenges. Unfortunately, the steps taken were repeatedly hindered by Russia or slowed down by involved third parties. Successive Ukrainian governments devoted limited attention to societal opportunities; on the contrary, their

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418 https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2015/ukraine

419 Peisakhin and Rozenas, "Electoral Effects of Biased Media: Russian Television in Ukraine"; Göran Bolin, Paul Jordan, and Per Ståhlberg, "From Nation Branding to Information Warfare. The Management of Information in the Ukraine-Russia Conflict," in *Media and the Ukraine Crisis*, ed. Mervi Pantti (New York: Peter Lang, 2016), 8–15.

420 See the Ukraine - Russia Cross-Impact Matrix in the Appendix.

policies aimed to exploit partisanship and societal divisions. Similarly, the political and personal interests of the Ukrainian elite hindered and even disrupted the development of opportunities in the informational environment.

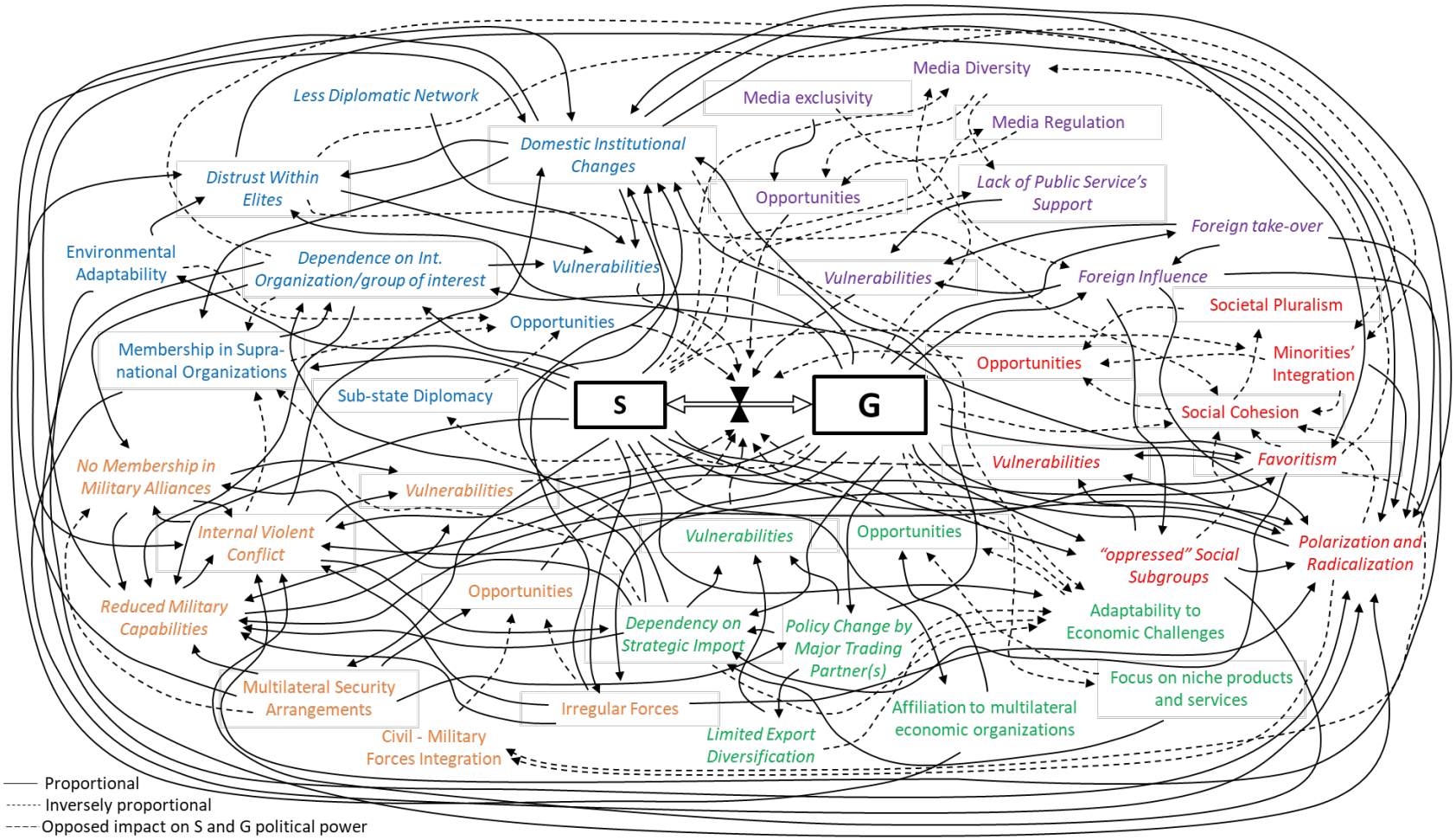

Figure 8. Ukraine–Russia HT System

Russia had the most significant influence on the HT system, though, Ukraine was still highly responsible for the ongoing dynamics. As in the previous case, *G* has the highest influence on the system. On the other hand, *S* shows almost the same influence value.[421] The three variables with the highest cross-linking value—thus, more essential for the HT system—are vulnerabilities, indicating that also in Ukraine's case the power balance was decisively influenced by vulnerabilities. Hence, the hybrid threat was mainly based on vulnerabilities (Table 3).

Table 3. Ukraine–Russia HT System, Top Vulnerabilities and Opportunities[422]

	Crosslink (AS+PS)		Active Sum (AS)		Passive Sum (PS)	
Rank	Vulnerability	Opportunity	Vulnerability	Opportunity	Vulnerability	Opportunity
1	Polarization & Radicalization (18)	Membership supranational org (9)	Dependency on strategic import (8)	Irregular forces (6)	Polarization & Radicalization (12)	Membership supranational org. (5)
2	Domestic institutional changes (17)	Irregular forces (8)	Favoritism (8)	Multilateral security agreements (6)	Domestic institutional changes (9)	Social cohesion (5)
3	Internal violent conflicts (14)	Social cohesion (8)	Domestic institutional Changes (8)	Membership supranational org. (4)	Internal violent conflicts (8)	Adaptability to economic challenges (6)

Ukraine's most influential vulnerabilities were self-induced. *Polarization and radicalization* and *domestic institutional changes* had a central role in the HT system. Many of the system's variables fueled these vulnerabilities. Thus, the different positions between the pro-Europe western Ukrainians, the pro-Russia southeastern Ukrainians—supported by an indigenous significant ethnic Russian population—as well as the continuously changing posture of Ukraine toward Russia and the EU were a central element in the persistence of the Russian hybrid threat. In Ukraine, *dependency on strategic* import, specifically on gas, is the vulnerability with the highest influence on other variables. Since

421 Russia political power has a cross-lining value of 48, while Ukraine of 47.

422 See the Ukraine Cross-Impact Matrix in the Appendix. The rank is based on Crosslink, AS, and PS values.

its independence, Ukraine did almost nothing to escape this "addiction"; on the contrary, its oligarchic system fed this vulnerability to the detriment of Ukraine's security. *Favoritism* is a key societal feature for Ukraine that had a negative impact across the PMESI spectrum, fueling other vulnerabilities. The *domestic institutional changes* implemented by the different governments over the years were inconsistent and contradictory. The continuous oscillations between the West and Russia did nothing but reinforce other vulnerabilities.

Based on the system interactions, the most critical opportunities turned out to have detrimental effects on Ukraine. The opportunities that show the highest degree of cross-linking are *membership in supranational organizations*, *irregular forces,* and *social cohesion*. However, deeper analysis of the results reveals that the active influence of *membership in supranational organizations* on the system is mainly a reinforcement of vulnerabilities, and the opportunity itself is negatively affected by other system vulnerabilities. Similarly, the opportunity *irregular forces* reinforces other systems vulnerabilities. *Social cohesion* was negatively affected by vulnerabilities and was involved in positive loops that decreased other opportunities. Furthermore, *membership in supranational organizations* and *social cohesion* have more ingoing than outgoing links, meaning that they are more influenced by changes in the system rather than being sources of change.

The analysis of Ukraine's intervention variables shows that most of the primary intervention variables are vulnerabilities that Kiev would have been able to address. (See Figure 9, Quadrant I). The only intervention variable in Quadrant I that Ukraine arguably would not have been able to control is *policy change by major trading partner* (18).

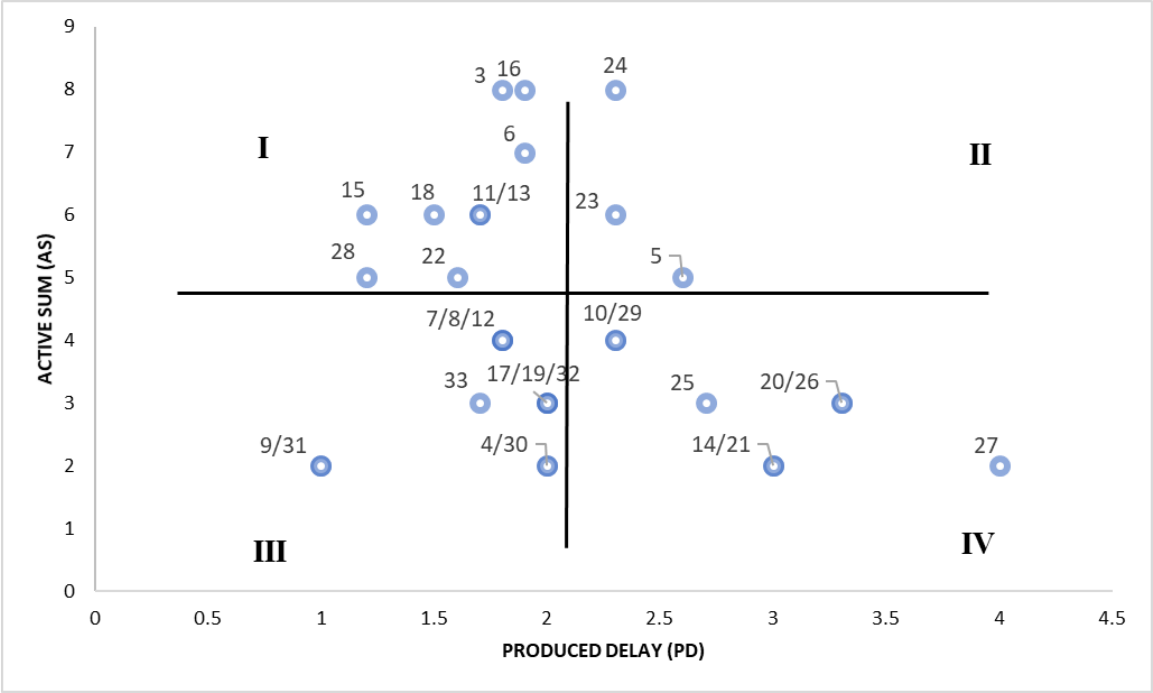

Figure 9. Ukraine Intervention Variables

The package of intervention variables that Ukraine could have implemented as a priority extends across the PMESI spectrum. In the policy domain, *domestic institutional changes* (3) and *dependence on international organizations* (6) show among the highest influence and a relatively quick impact. In the military domain, *internal violent conflicts* (11) and *multilateral security agreements* (13) show the same values of influence and delay; *irregular forces*, although having the same influence value (AD), shows the ability to impact the system more quickly. In the economic domain, the *dependency on strategic import* (16) shows the highest influence value on the system and a relatively quick impact on it. In the societal domain, addressing *"oppressed" societal groups* (22) would have had a relatively high and fast impact on the system. In the informational domain, Russian *foreign influence* (28) should have been addressed with priority.

The Ukrainian governments were responsible for generating specific reinforcing feedback loops that destabilized the system and finally decreased Ukraine's political power. Figure 10 shows the two primary reinforcing feedback cycles generated by the Ukrainian governments.

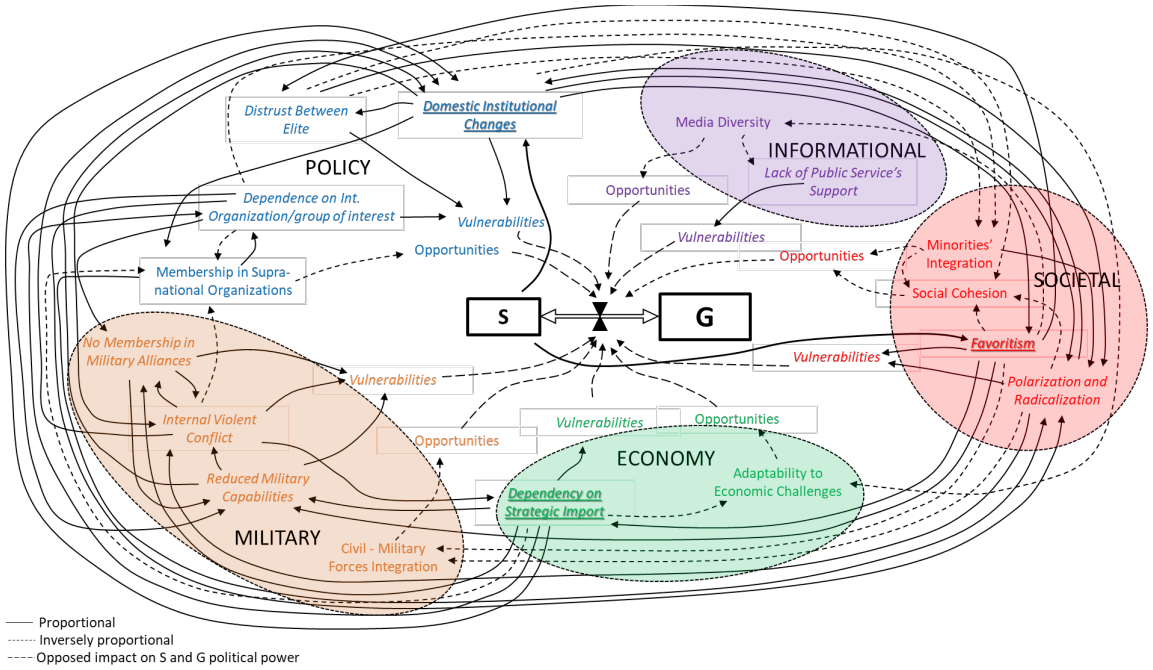

Figure 10. Ukraine's Primary Reinforcing Feedback Loops

Accordingly, it is possible to observe that Ukraine actively catalyzed two of the most significant vulnerabilities: *domestic institutional changes* and *favoritism*. The third and most active vulnerability within the system *dependency on strategic import* falls within the loop between *favoritism* and *domestic institutional changes*. Hence, Ukraine was pivotal in creating the HT system's critical conditions, not only in some domain as in the Guatemala case, but across the entire PMESI spectrum. This result suggests that these three vulnerabilities should have been the focus of the attention of the Ukrainian government. Furthermore, it demonstrates that Ukraine would have been able to substantially decrease its vulnerabilities without outside intervention.

D. DISCUSSION

It may be argued that the Russian hybrid warfare in Ukraine started after Yanukovych left Ukraine in February 2014; but, Ukraine was under the influence of the Russian hybrid threat many years before. During the 1990s, Russia applied various instruments of statecraft toward Ukraine to shift or maintain the balance of political power

in its favor. Moscow exploited Ukraine's vulnerabilities and contained Kiev's attempts to develop opportunities. Moreover, the case study demonstrates that Ukraine was responsible for its vulnerabilities and missed opportunities at least as much as Russia. From a historical perspective, Russian achievement in Crimea and Donbass was the result of highly favorable conditions that both Russia and Ukraine had created over the years.

Russian policies over the years were aimed at keeping Ukraine within its sphere of influence and maintaining its capability to influence the balance of power of the asymmetrical relationship decisively. Nevertheless, at this point, one can only speculate if and how long in advance Moscow planned the annexation of Crimea and southeastern Ukraine. Many critical factors across the PMESI domain had been mounting for years, fueled by both the Russian and Ukrainian governments. Yanukovych's escape on February 22, 2014, marked just the tipping point that triggered Russian escalation in the military domain.

Russia has applied an integrated design of simultaneous and synchronized uses of multiple instruments of statecraft across the PMESI spectrum. The analysis of the HT system shows that to achieve specific effects and objectives Moscow targeted Ukraine's specific vulnerabilities and opportunities, attaining second and third order effects that in some cases also proved detrimental for Russia. For instance, only a minority was genuinely anti-Russian before 2014, while after the crisis, the Ukrainian population with anti-Russian sentiments drastically increased; the Russians resorting to violence had consolidated a feeling of national pride and belonging in Ukrainian regions which hitherto had been more diffused.[423] With current information, it is challenging to infer how much the events and actions carried out by Russia were all part of an established overarching plan.

Moscow targeted Ukraine's specific physical and psychological vulnerabilities, and according to its own needs, Russia generated ambiguity, compulsion, and coercion toward the Ukrainian governments. Over the years, Russia has applied a stick-and-carrot approach

[423] Wayne E. Merry, "The Origins of Russia's War in Ukraine: The Clash of Russian and European 'Civilizational Choices' for Ukraine," in *Roots of Russia's War in Ukraine*, ed. Elizabeth A. Wood et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 43.

across the PMESI domains. Moscow proved to be friendly to Ukraine in specific areas and then punished Kiev in others. Ukraine was compelled to adapt its policies to the extent that they were in Russia's interests, and when Ukraine failed to comply with Russian requests, coercive measures followed.

Strategic gradualism over the years granted Russia the initiative and put Ukraine in a constant reactive position. The Russian gas import policy toward Ukraine demonstrates how Russia escalated the situation with exorbitant price increases, and then, in the negotiation phase, proved to be magnanimous in redefining its requests, which, however, remained higher than the original price. The permanent pressure on the Orange Revolution's government and the support to its detractors are an example of a Russian salami-slicing tactic that brought about Yushchenko's fall and the rise of Yanukovych. The power vacuum after Yanukovych's escape and the absence of a functioning government in Kiev gave Russia the *momentum* to achieve a fait accompli in Crimea.

According to the characteristics of the hybrid threat, Russian military escalation in Crimea and southeastern Ukraine (specifically in Donbass) took place in regions that showed the best conditions for it. The Russian military base of Sevastopol fully justified the presence of Russian troops in Crimea. Secessionist intents in Crimea were not at all new. The Russian majority in the region, influenced by Russian media that emphasized the worsening of the "fascist" turn in Kiev saw secession as an escape route within reach. Russian laws related to the protection of Russians abroad guaranteed Russia a pseudo-legal basis to justify the legitimacy of its action. In southeastern Ukraine, the situation was different. Hence, it required another approach. Russia could not enter Ukrainian territory with military means without explicitly transgressing international laws, so it had to rely more on clandestine and covert operations in support of local proxies. The gathering of troops at the border with the Donbass allowed both to conceal troop movements along and across the borders, but it was also a powerful deterrent to possible conventional Ukrainian military reactions.

The Russian hybrid threat was characterized by the extensive use of proxies. The list of Russian proxies who have played a role during the years and influenced Ukrainian

political power in Russia's favor is long. Politicians like Yanukovych, oligarchs such as Dmytro Firtash, private or public companies like Ostchem and Gazprom, who "reinforced" local militias and biker gangs are just some examples of the actors involved in the principal-agent relationship between Russia and its proxies. Unfortunately, one of the disadvantages of using proxies is that of not having absolute control over them. It proved to be the case with Yanukovych and his assertiveness after he came to power, or with the incident of the Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 (MH17), apparently shot down by a surface-to-air missile fired from the separatist-controlled area.[424]

The crisis between Russia and Ukraine that started in 2014 was the result of the years-long Russian hybrid threat and internal factors to Ukraine, which created favorable conditions for Crimea's annexation and the destabilization of southeastern Ukraine. The historical evidence shows that since Ukraine's independence, Russia has tried to influence the relationship with Kiev across the PMESI spectrum. Although Ukraine also played a decisive role in not reducing its vulnerabilities, and on the contrary worsened them and failed to develop opportunities that could have helped to reduce malicious Russian actions. Accordingly, it is factually wrong to assert that the Crimean annexation and the internal conflict in southeastern Ukraine is solely the logical result of the Kremlin's plan. This deterministic monocausal approach disregards all the conditions and chain of events generated by both actors and the interactions of vulnerabilities and opportunities across the HT system. The Russian hybrid approach decisively helped Russia to catalyze the system's destabilization. Nonetheless, the different results in Crimea and Donbass suggest that the differences in conditions in the two areas had a decisive impact on secession success.[425]

The system analysis applied to the Ukrainian case allows drawing specific implications for Ukraine. First, two variables were the most influential in the Ukraine-

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[424] On the incident see Dutch Safety Board, "Crash of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17" (The Hague: Dutch Safety Board, October 2015), https://www.webcitation.org/6cFSGnsRg?url=http://cdn.onderzoeksraad.nl/documents/report-mh17-crash-en.pdf.

[425] It is assumed that Russia goal was the secession of Ukraine Southeastern region in line with Putin's *Novorossiya*. On *Novorossiya* see Richard Sakwa, *Frontline Ukraine: Crisis in the Borderlands* (London: IB Tauris, 2014).

Russia HT system, namely *dependency on strategic import* and *favoritism*, bringing to light the most significant of Ukraine's vulnerabilities in its relationship with Russia: its dependence on the importation of Russian gas, as well as the oligarchic system present in Ukraine that extends its influence across the PMESI spectrum. The first vulnerability is relatively straightforward to offset: Ukraine should make better use of its natural energy resources, improve the energy efficiency of individuals and industry, and above all, seek alternative partners to reduce dependence on imports from Russia. Conversely, the second vulnerability needs a structural change in Ukraine's social system, which would arguably take decades. Meanwhile, Ukraine could implement measures to relax the third most important vulnerability, *domestic institutional changes*. Over the years, the successive Ukrainian governments have implemented or tried to implement inconsistent and contradictory policies. The continued policy oscillation between the West and Russia had a catalytic effect in polarizing society and increasing mistrust among its elites. Second, geography matters. Russia's ability to exploit the ambiguity of its closeness to Ukraine and ethnically related population in neighboring Ukrainian regions was not present in the previous case. The United States is hundreds of miles away from Guatemala; hence, for the U.S. government it would have been more challenging to apply the same strategic gradualism, ambiguity, and proxy support than it was for Russia in Ukraine. These two countries are neighbors; therefore, Ukraine must develop the ability to manage Russia's *Derzhavnost* (Statehood) thinking in terms of identity and actions as a great power.

Finally, it is arguable that in the Ukraine-Russia case it is possible to observe the characteristics of the great power's hybrid threat applied toward a small state. Similar to the previous case, the great power was not solely responsible for its success. Conversely, Ukraine was mostly responsible for its defeat. Furthermore, the systems approach allows understanding why and how events and variables interact with each other to cause an increasing destabilization of the system that was not observable and leading to unexpected results. The lack of a systemic vision has led various pundits to hypothesize the rise of an extremely effective Russian hybrid strategy. In light of a systemic analysis, the hybrid threat proves to be sophisticated and hard to understand, but too far away to be part of an alleged "silver-bullet" strategy. Conversely, it seems that this threat aims to disrupt the

small state both from the outside and from the inside by exploiting the small state vulnerabilities present in the system and decreasing its opportunities. To assess a further implication of the hybrid approach during a more extended period, the next case deals with the asymmetric relationship between China and Taiwan, from the 1970s up to the present day.

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VI. TAIWAN 1970s–2016

The beginning of modern Chinese history arguably straddles the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first of the twentieth. This period marks the end of the imperial system that reigns in China for thousands of years. The End of the Chinese Empire also marks the beginning of a turbulent process of change in the Chinese state system and the estrangement between Mainland China and Taiwan.

A. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The island of Taiwan was a province of the Chinese Empire under the Qing dynasty until 1895, when the Empire of Japan defeated the Chinese land and maritime forces in the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895). Consequently, Japan occupied Taiwan and other islands. Despite the iron fist Japan used to govern the new colony, the Japanese governorate was instrumental in the creation of modern infrastructure, a formal education system, and the launch of the island's industrialization. On the other hand, Mainland China continued to suffer under the millennial Chinese imperial rule and a longstanding Western exploitation. At the beginning of the twentieth century, however, the worldwide flourishing of revolutionary thoughts and underground movements also influenced Mainland China. In 1911, members of the New Chinese Army—created after the defeat with Japan and influenced by revolutionary thoughts—launched the Wuchang Uprising that signaled the beginning of the Xinhai Revolution that finally led in 1912 to the downfall of the Qing dynasty.

In 1912, the Republic of China replaced the Chinese Empire on the mainland, giving way to a very turbulent period in the Chinese history. In 1913, the newly elected president Yuan Shikai, former army general to whom the new republic promised the presidency in exchange for support for the rebellion, dissolved the majority party Kuomintang (KMT) and declared himself emperor in 1915.[426] Shikai's power

[426] Jonathan Fenby, *Modern China: The Fall and Rise of a Great Power, 1850 to the Present* (New York: Harper Collins, 2008), 123–31.

centralization enraged the provincial governors; hence, many of them declared their provinces' independence, dropping the mainland in a decade-long period of warlordism.[427] At the same time, young Taiwanese studying at Japanese universities took the opportunity to form an "Enlightened society" aimed at preserving Taiwanese culture and national identity.[428] In 1925, on the mainland, Chiang Kai-shek became the leader of the regenerated KMT, and one year later, with the support of the Soviet Union and simultaneously, the newly-founded Chinese communist movement, started a military reunification campaign. However, in 1927, Chiang quickly realized the communist plan to eradicate the KMT. Accordingly, he started a violent purge of the communist movement. On the other hand, in south China, where the communist movement outnumbered the nationalists, the scenario repeated itself with inverted roles. The conflict between the Chinese nationalist and communist movements led to the Chinese Civil War that lasted until 1949.[429]

The end of World War II and the defeat of the Japanese Empire re-ignited the conflict between the nationalists of Chiang Kai-shek and the communists of Mao Zedong. Immediately after the Japanese surrender, skirmishes erupted between the two actors and escalated into a full-scale civil war in June 1946. At the same time, the KMT troops and officials, with the U.S. support, took over the island of Taiwan, marking an end to the 50-year-long Japanese colonial rule. Despite the initial euphoria, the Taiwanese islanders soon became disappointed by the incompetence and authoritarianism shown by the new rulers, the KMT mainlanders.[430] On the mainland, the Chinese communists, emboldened by growing popular support, gradually inflicted a series of devastating defeats on the nationalists of Chiang Kai-shek. The nationalists, recognizing the impossibility of

[427] J. A. G. Roberts, "Warlordism in China," *Review of African Political Economy* 16, no. 45-46 (1989): 26–33.

[428] Jonathan Manthorpe, *Forbidden Nation: A History of Taiwan* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2016), 171-72.

[429] The Second Sino-Japanese War between 1937 and 1945, partially reunified the two actors in the fight against Japan.

[430] Manthorpe, *Forbidden Nation*, 187-94.

maintaining control of the mainland, evacuated their troops, the KMT officials, and the Republic of China's (ROC) political apparatus to the only part of China still in their hands, the island of Taiwan.

The conflict between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the ROC, or Taiwan, has evolved over the years into a small-state–great-power conflict. To date, the vast majority of states do not officially recognize Taiwan as an independent state, but rather as an integral part of China. Consequently, the question arises as to why one should analyze the asymmetrical relationship between these two countries in the framework of a small-state–great-power relationship. Despite lacking *de jure* recognition of Taiwan as a state, *de facto* it is. Indeed, Taiwan shows primary state characteristics: it maintain the monopoly of the legitimate use of force on its territory, it has a political organization, a centralized government, and a society able to provide productivity and political interest in practical terms.[431] Hence, Taiwan is a fully formed state able to generate political power. Therefore, despite neither China nor Taiwan officially recognizing the other's sovereignty, or refuting the other's authority to govern, this thesis considers Taiwan a state.

Since the escape of the Kuomintang (KMT) leader Chiang Kai-shek and the KMT governmental apparatus to the island of Taiwan in 1949 until the beginning of the 1970s, relations between the mainland PRC and the Taiwan KMT were belligerent and mainly focused on military confrontation. The Chinese Communist Party leader Mao Zedong aimed to definitively defeat the KMT by invading Taiwan, while Chiang Kai-shek aimed to retake the mainland. The two parallel alliances, the Sino-Soviet continental and the U.S.-ROC maritime alliances, in addition to the conflict in Korea polarizing these positions between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait, probably had a fundamental role in preventing an armed confrontation that would have dragged in the major allies on both sides. Yet, in 1954–55 and 1958, two Taiwan Strait crises brought the PRC and ROC close to a military

[431] Characteristics derived from Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Max Weber state definitions. On state characteristics see Gordon Alexander Craig and Alexander L. George, *Force and Statecraft: Diplomatic Problems of Our Time* (New York: Oxford University Press, U.S.A, 1995), 5; Gordon Scott, *Controlling the State: Constitutionalism from Ancient Athens to Today.* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 4.

confrontation. The first time, a brief armed conflict took place regarding the occupation of the Yijiangshan, Tachen, Kinmen, and Matsu islands in the Taiwan Strait. Despite its initial success, the PRC backed down after United States intervened, demonstrating military support for the ROC and threatening the use of nuclear weapons.[432] In August 1958, the PRC again started to bomb Kinmen and Matsu islands. Despite the decrease of bombardment after October 1958, the PRC and the ROC continued to bombard each other sporadically until 1979.

Until the 1970s, the PRC, despite its connections with other countries, mainly from the eastern bloc, was *de facto* relatively isolated from international relations, allowing the ROC to officially represent China on the international stage and maintain diplomatic ties with numerous countries around the world. The Sino-Soviet split that started in the second half of the 1950s and reached its climax at the end of the 1960s with the Sino-Soviet border conflict, pushed the PRC onto the international stage.[433] Eventually, the fracturing between the Soviet Union and the PRC convinced the U.S. government to approach the PRC to weaken the Soviet Union. Thus, in July 1971 Nixon's security advisor Henry Kissinger secretly met with China's head of government Zhou Enlai in Beijing.[434] This visit was instrumental in paving the way for the UN's recognition of the PRC as the only representative of China in October 1971 and the PRC's consequent takeover of the China seat on the UN Security Council. Until 1971, the ROC occupied the China seat at the United Nations, allowing Taipei to maintain an extensive network of diplomatic relations with the rest of the world. Nevertheless, the ROC pull-out from the United Nations signaled a key change for international relations in both countries and was the beginning of the ROC's

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[432] Li Xiaobing, "PLA Attacks and Amphibious Operations During the Taiwan Strait Crises of 1954–55 and 1958," in *Chinas Warfighting: The PLA Experience since 1949*, ed. Mark A. Ryan et al. (New York: Routledge, 2003), 156–57.

[433] On the Sino-Soviet conflict see Lorenz M. Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).

[434] Manthorpe, *Forbidden Nation*, 213.

political isolation.[435] Beijing was ultimately able to block the ROC from developing and maintaining its diplomatic ties.[436] Arguably, these two moments—the recognition of the PRC as the only representative of China in 1971 by the United Nations and a year later by the United States in the Shanghai Communiqué during President Richard Nixon's visit to China—represent the major milestones that laid the groundwork for the asymmetric relationship between Taiwan and Mainland China.

In the 1970s, despite increasing pressure from Mainland China on the international stage, Taiwan was able to advance fundamental changes in its economy and its political structure. After the PRC's recognition by the UN and the United States, Taiwan appeared condemned to political collapse: by 1975, all its diplomatic liaisons in Southeast Asia were gone. Yet, Taiwan did not rest on its growing political smallness but focused on economic reforms. During the 1970s, Taiwan successfully switched away from low-cost manufacturing based on foreign technology to an independent manufacturing country focused on electronic components for emerging information technologies.[437] A combination of dynamic private entrepreneurship and significant state-supported development projects and policies allowed Taiwan to become one of the four Asian Tigers.[438] Taiwan's roaring economy generated a growing middle-class of entrepreneurs mostly dominated by Taiwan natives who increasingly pressured the KMT mainlanders to focus its resources and political commitment more on the needs of the island, its people and the economy, and not on the increasingly vanishing dream of reunification with the mainland.[439] Finally, the death of Chiang Kai-shek in 1975 most strongly signaled the

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435 Steven Phillips, "Building a Taiwanese Republic: The Independence Movement, 1945-Present," in *Dangerous Strait: The U.S.-Taiwan-China Crisis*, ed. Nancy Bernkopf Tucker (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 58.

436 Samuel C. Y. Ku, "Strategies of China's Expansion and Taiwan's Survival in Southeast Asia: A Comparative Perspective," in *Taiwan and China. Fitful Embrace*, ed. Lowell Dittmer (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2017), 249.

437 Shelley Rigger, *Why Taiwan Matters: Small Island, Global Powerhouse* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013), 54–55.

438 On the four Asian Tigers or little Dragons see Ezra F. Vogel, *The Four Little Dragons: The Spread of Industrialization in East Asia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).

439 Phillips, "Building a Taiwanese Republic," 59.

decline of the KMT's mainland-led nationalism and primacy, and furthermore catalyzed the Taiwanese democratization process.

At the same time, profound changes on the mainland allowed Beijing to expand its influence worldwide and pave the way for strategy change over the "Taiwan question." During the 1970s, China was recovering from Mao's 1960s Cultural Revolution, the cause of significant social and economic setback.[440] Beijing increasingly established diplomatic ties worldwide undercutting Taipei's international recognition and status.[441] In 1976, Mao's death opened the door to a new generation of PRC leaders, resolute to approach the relationships with Taiwan in a less bellicose way and to emphasize a more indirect approach.[442] In January 1979, the U.S. administration withdrew its state recognition of Taiwan, and switched its diplomatic representation to Beijing. Furthermore, President Carter went on to abrogate the Mutual Defense Treaty between the United States and the Republic of China. However, in April of the same year, the treaty was replaced by the Taiwan Relations Act, which re-formed diplomatic relations between the United States and Taiwan, as well as U.S. support of the latter in the military domain.[443] This approach sealed the so-called U.S. "strategic ambiguity" that was meant to dissuade both Taiwan and China from unilateral actions toward the other.[444]

During the 1980s, the Taiwan government started to relax the KMT notion of reunification with Mainland China. For decades, both sides of the Taiwan Strait swore to liberate by force the other part of the strait from what they saw as the opposition and illegitimate government of China. Taiwan, however, witnessed its international diplomatic ties eroding and a growing friendship between the United States and China. In August

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[440] Central Committee Chinese Communist Party, *Resolution on CPC History (1949-1981)* (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1981), 32.

[441] Rigger, *Why Taiwan Matters*, 69.

[442] Rigger, *Why Taiwan Matters*, 5.

[443] On the content see Government Publishing Office, "Public Law 96-8—Apr. 10, 1979."

[444] On the concept of the U.S. "Strategic Ambiguity" see Pan Zhongqi, "US Taiwan Policy of Strategic Ambiguity: A Dilemma of Deterrence," *Journal of Contemporary China* 12, no. 35 (2003): 387–407.

1982, the Sino-U.S. Shanghai II Communiqué restated that the United States would not have pursued a long-term policy of arms sales to Taiwan and that the qualitative and quantitative sales level would not exceed the current level.[445] Yet, according to its "strategic ambiguity," while officializing the Shanghai II, the United States established with Taipei the "Six Assurances," which underlined the content of the Taiwan Relations Act and restated the major power's willingness to help Taiwan in its defense in case China attempted to retake the island of Taiwan by force.[446] Meanwhile, China set out to undermine international recognition of the ROC, and the number of governments recognizing the Taiwanese KMT government was on a constant decline. In 1985, only 23 governments worldwide recognized Taipei as the representative of China. At the same time, Taipei established a new "pragmatic diplomacy" concept, which shifted its focus off of the recognition of Taiwan as the only Chinese representative and onto the daily business of political and economic affairs; this allowed Taipei to switch from decreasing diplomatic representations to increasing "representatives offices" worldwide.[447] In the 1980s, Taiwan eventually realized that the KMT reunification goal was not achievable. The increase of Mainland China's importance and recognition on the international stage, the U.S. push for a peaceful reconciliation, and pragmatic economic interests, all convinced the Taiwanese leadership that it was time for Taiwan to move forward.

Chiang Kai-shek's son, Chiang Ching-kuo who followed his father as leader of the KMT and president of ROC, was pivotal in the Taiwanese process of democratization and progress. In 1984, Chiang decided to break the tradition of assigning mainlanders in high government positions by appointing the insular Lee Teng-hui as his vice president. Furthermore, he gradually loosened his father's hard hand against opposition movements. In fact, despite opposition parties still being officially outlawed, in 1986 he informally

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445 Manthorpe, *Forbidden Nation*, 217–218.

446 On the content see A concurrent resolution reaffirming the Taiwan Relations Act and the Six Assurance as Cornerstones of the United States-Taiwan relations, S.Con.Res.38, 114th Congress (2015-2016).

447 Ku, "Strategies of China's Expansion and Taiwan's Survival in Southeast Asia," 249.

accepted the foundation of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP).[448] Moreover, in July 1987, Chiang made the historic decision to end, after 38 years, martial law on Taiwan, allowing Taiwanese citizens to visit Mainland China.[449] Chiang's premature death in 1988 did not stop the democratization process of the island; his successor Lee Teng-hui brought Taiwan into the next phase.

During his presidency, Lee Teng-hui started a "Taiwanization" process that comprehensively affected Taiwanese society, while causing alternating relations of conflict and conciliation with the mainland. Since the beginning of the 1990s, the Taiwanese identity started to supplant the Chinese one in many areas of Taiwan's culture including arts, media, and education but also in politics.[450] In 1991, President Lee started a reform of the political system aimed at supplanting the anachronistic KMT political structure. He reformed the Legislative Yuan as the parliament of Taiwan and not, as the Chiang Family insisted for decades, as the whole of China parliament, by streamlining the island's political system, abolishing the Taiwanese province structure and refocusing on Taiwan as a state.[451] Lee's pursuit of Taiwan's *de jure* statehood did not go unnoticed in Beijing, which observed Lee's shift toward independence. Their interpretation was mainly focused on Lee's personality and less on the ongoing social changes on the island, believing that the Taiwanese continued to yearn for unification.[452] Confirming Beijing's interpretation, in January 1990, Taipei appealed the investment ban on China that had officially prevented Taiwanese entrepreneurs from investing in the mainland.[453] Furthermore, the leading

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448 Hsin-hui Lu and Chung-han Kuo, "DPP Should Clarify Its Cross-Strait Policy: Founding Member," News Channel, Focus Taiwan, September 28, 2016, http://focustaiwan.tw/news/aipl/201609280026.aspx.

449 Rigger, *Why Taiwan Matters*, 76–77.

450 Shale Horowitz and Alexander C Tan, "The Strategic Logic of Taiwanization," *World Affairs* 168, no. 2 (2005): 87.

451 Manthorpe, *Forbidden Nation*, 220–221.

452 Manthorpe, *Forbidden Nation*, 221.

453 Chung-min Tsai, "The Nature and Trend of Taiwanese Investment in China (1991-2014): Business Orientation, Profit-Seeking, and Depoliticization," in *Taiwan and China*, ed. Lowell Dittmer (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2017), 133.

KMT party conducted secret talks with Beijing representatives to discuss the reunification issue, leading to the controversial "1992 Consensus" about one China, two interpretations.[454] The Taiwanese decision was not so much an approach to reunification but dictated by the new challenges that Taiwanese microelectronics companies faced on the world market that encouraged a shift of the standardized manufacturing to Mainland China.[455] This caused economic relations between Taiwan and China to intensify. At the same time during the 1990s, Taipei intensified its relations with other Southeast Asian countries, and in 1994, in order to redirect Taiwanese investments from China to Southeast Asia, Lee promoted a southward policy.[456] Taipei's pursuit of economic and foreign policies alien to the one-China policy, combined with the increasing U.S. compliancy toward Taiwan, compelled Beijing to resort to intimidating measures.

In the mid-1990s, China's use of military instruments as intimidation measures only brought to light the weaknesses of Beijing's strategy when it came to its one-China policy. Taiwan's independence shift had already alerted Chinese leaders, but when President Lee received permission from the U.S. government to officially visit Cornell University (his *alma mater*) in the summer of 1995, Beijing saw this as a tipping point that it could not overlook. Eventually, in the following months, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) conducted missile tests and military maneuvers in the Strait of Taiwan, triggering the "Third Taiwan Strait Crisis."[457] On March 8, 1996, arguably to influence the Taiwanese population just before the Taiwan presidential elections, China conducted another series of missile "tests" in the proximity of two Taiwanese major international sea ports, Keelung and Kaohsiung. These actions not only had consequences for international shipping and flying routes but also triggered a major U.S. response, namely President Clinton's decision

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[454] On the "1992 Consensus" see Chi Su, *Taiwan's Relations with Mainland China: A Tail Wagging Two Dogs* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

[455] You-tien Hsing, "Social Entrepreneurialism and Social Media in Post-Developmental State Taiwan," in *Taiwan and China*, ed. Lowell Dittmer (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2017), 176.

[456] Tsai, "The Nature and Trend of Taiwanese Investment in China (1991-2014)," 134.

[457] Suisheng Zhao, *Across the Taiwan Strait: Mainland China, Taiwan, and the 1995–1996 Crisis* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

to send two Air Carrier Battle Groups into the region.[458] China's military enterprise had negative consequences for Beijing. First, it did not prevent Lee Teng-hui from becoming the first president of Taiwan by popular vote; on the contrary, a rally-around-the-flag effect increased Taiwanese distrust toward the Chinese narrative about peaceful reunification. Second, it increased the military relationships and arms sales between the United States and Taiwan.[459] Third, the PLA's relative impotence in front of the U.S. military deployment highlighted China's weaknesses in the maritime domain, demonstrating to Beijing the importance of investing in sea power.

At the dawn of the 2000s, Taiwanese independence aspirations seemed to have taken over the historical goal of rejoining the mainland. In 2000, Chen Shui-bian, the candidate of the Democratic Progressive Party won the Taiwanese presidential election. From the beginning, in line with his party program and pursuing his predecessor's "Taiwanization," Chen took many steps to underline Taiwan's distinctiveness from China. For instance, emphasis on the island language, Minnan, for official purposes increased; the name "Republic of China" was increasingly replaced by "Taiwan"; and school history programs started to detach the island's history from its mainland context.[460] Chen's hostile attitude toward the mainland made cross-Strait relations complicated and political exchange drastically decreased.[461] In 2001, China entered the World Trade Organization (WTO) further improving the conditions for external investors and enhancing its already-increasing economic power. At the same time, Beijing realized that direct approaches based on political relations or military threat toward Taiwan carried out up to that point had failed.[462] Beijing started to reiterate a policy based on strategic patience, underlining the

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458 Barton Gellman, "U.S. and China Nearly Came to Blows in '96," *The Washington Post*, June 21, 1998, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1998/06/21/us-and-china-nearly-came-to-blows-in-96/926d105f-1fd8-404c-9995-90984f86a613/?utm_term=.46c78abac520.

459 Shirley A. Kan, *Taiwan: Major U.S. Arms Sales Since 1990*, CRS Report no. RL30957 (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, August 29, 2014), https://fas.org/sgp/crs/weapons/RL30957.pdf. 2.

460 Manthorpe, *Forbidden Nation*, 232–233.

461 Tsai, "The Nature and Trend of Taiwanese Investment in China (1991-2014)," 133.

462 Manthorpe, *Forbidden Nation*, 236.

fact that unification must not forcibly come soon.[463] Beijing's strategy change was a switch to a more indirect approach rather than an admission of defeat. Taiwanese entrepreneurs continued to increase their investments in the mainland, reinforcing economic ties that the DDP government tried unsuccessfully to scale back through an "invest in Taiwan" policy.[464] The slowdown of the Taiwanese economy between 2000 and 2008 may also have compelled Taiwanese entrepreneurs to invest in the Chinese market, which was not hit so hard from the 2001 and 2008 worldwide economic recessions.[465] Therefore, at least in the economic domain, Taiwan's position toward China was shifting from competitor to partner.

The return to power of the KMT allowed China to relax tensions in relations between the two countries accumulated by the two previous presidents. During the 2004 presidential election campaign, the outgoing president Chen Shui-bian refueled the independence rhetoric supporting the intent to pass a law that allowed constitutional changes by popular referendum. After his disputed re-election, in June 2005 he successfully pushed through the referendum prerequisite for future constitutional revisions.[466] However, Beijing—based on Cheng's campaign rhetoric in 2004, and fearing a Taiwanese escape forward toward a formal independence referendum—this time did not react as in 1996 in a direct military way. Instead, in March 2005 the PRC passed an anti-secession law that explicitly underlined China's willingness for a peaceful reunification while reasserting the use of non-peaceful means in case of a Taiwanese unilateral declaration of independence.[467] After 2006 the increasing corruption allegation that affected President Cheng and his entourage, as well as the tension in the cross-Strait

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463 Rigger, *Why Taiwan Matters*, 5.

464 Tsai, "The Nature and Trend of Taiwanese Investment in China (1991-2014," 136.

465 Yu-Shan Wu, "Taiwan in 2001: Stalemated on All Fronts," *Asian Survey* 42, no. 1 (2002): 29–38.

466 Manthorpe, *Forbidden Nation*, 259.

467 On the content of the Law see National People's Congress, "Anti-Secession Law," March 14 20005, http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/zt/999999999/t187406.htm.

relationship and an unstable economic situation, paved the way for the KMT rising star Ma Ying-jeou.

In 2008, Ma Ying-jeou after winning the presidential election quickly and deeply reversed the previous administration's confrontational approach toward China, reinitiating interaction with the mainland. While maintaining his three-no's policy: "no reunification, no independence, and no war," Ma was able to balance Taiwanese fear of a forced reunification and Chinese apprehension about Taiwanese independence. In 2008, Ma relaxed the restrictions on sea and air connections with the mainland. In 2010, he signed the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA), a preferential trade agreement that provides a reduction of tariffs and commercial barriers between China and Taiwan. Despite its economic advantages, the ECFA is a very controversial topic in Taiwan. Already during the discussions that led to its ratification, the opposition party DDP had complained about the danger of ECFA creating economic ties with China so critical that they could be exploited by the latter for political reasons.[468] Furthermore, Taipei and Beijing ceased diplomatic competition about recognition as the true China.[469] Consequently, Ma's administration was able to regenerate diplomatic ties with some Southeast Asian countries including Singapore.

The rapprochement with China created more ties but did not bear the economic results set forth by Taipei. During the presidential election, Ma Ying-jeou was able to convince the Taiwanese majority that the KMT would be able to handle cross-Strait relations with China more quickly than the DDP and that an improved relationship with Mainland China would bring growth and development. Despite regenerating the relationship between Taipei and Beijing and the signing of the ECFA, between 2008 and

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[468] Sebastian Heilmann and Dirk H. Schmidt, *China's Foreign Political and Economic Relations: An Unconventional Global Power* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 135–136.

[469] Evan S. Medeiros, *China's International Behavior: Activism, Opportunism, and Diversification* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2009), 59–60.

2014 the unemployment rate in Taiwan increased and its economy grew slowly.[470] In 2013, Ma's administration signed the Cross-Strait Services Trade Agreement (CSSTA) with China to liberalize trade service between the two countries. The government advocated that more Chinese investments would have boosted the Taiwanese economy. By contrast, the opposition party DDP and the public opinion, in general, feared a "Trojan Horse" that would have handed over mass media and high-tech firms to the mainland.[471] As a result, Taipei did not ratify the CSTA. In the eyes of the Taiwanese majority and of the DDP, Ma and the KMT had brought the island dangerously closer to the mainland, creating links that could threaten the political independence of the country.

Consequently, the DDP won the local elections in 2014, and in 2016, it won the presidential-parliamentary election, achieving for the first time a majority in parliament. Since his election, President Tsai Ing-wen has pursued a pragmatic policy towards the cross-Strait relations based on the status quo. The DDP, recognizing the dangers of a unilateral declaration of independence has set aside the objective of a formal declaration of independence pursuing instead a *de facto* independence that continues to make Taiwan a sovereign state.

B. PMESI VULNERABILITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Taiwan undertook numerous institutional changes over the years that had fundamentally positive effects. The agrarian reform program initiated in the 1950s made it possible to improve equity within the country, laying the foundations for the light industrial revolution during the 1960s and 1970s.[472] During the 1970s, critical events such as the death of Chiang Kai-shek, the increasing isolation of the ROC government, and the central importance of economic growth dominated by islander entrepreneurs led the ground for

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[470] Yu-Shan Wu, "Pivot, Hedger, or Partner: Strategies of Lesser Powers Caught between Hegemons," in *Taiwan and China*, ed. Lowell Dittmer (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2017), 209.

[471] Lowell Dittmer, "Taiwan and the Waning Dream of Reunification," in *Taiwan, and China. Fitful Embrace*, ed. Lowell Dittmer (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), 296.

[472] Manthorpe, *Forbidden Nation*, 202.

the democratization process.[473] These developments triggered domestic institutional changes that initiated an integration process between KMT mainlanders and Taiwanese islanders, decreasing the pressure that until that point the Chang Kai-shek regime had exercised on the islander population. In the 1970s, Chiang Chin-kuo started to promote islanders to provincial and local government posts making an effort to integrate Taiwanese into the KMT organization, at both low levels and at leadership levels.[474] In 1973, the government started to inject money into scientific research and education institutions like the Industrial Technology Research Institute (ITRI), the Academia Sinica as well as the Tsinghua and Taiwan universities, encouraging cooperation between scientists, manufacturers, and policy makers.[475] Finally, in 1987 he ended martial law, enabling massive changes in Taiwan's political scene by opening the door to islander political independence and allowing freedom of the press in the political domain.

All these institutional changes allowed Taiwan to continually decrease the political constriction of the islander, increasingly integrating them into the political decision-making process. Furthermore, the growing openness diffused the distrust between the political elite (mostly mainlanders) and the increasingly powerful economic elite (mostly islanders), enhancing the environmental adaptability of the state that now was more and more able to rely on a decision-making process based on discussion rather than imposition. The fact that within five decades Taiwan was able to evolve from a preindustrial agricultural state in 1949 into a worldwide high-tech leading country at the dawn of the 21st century testifies to its high adaptability to environmental changes.

Greater political openness and participation allowed independents to accede to power and to implement institutional changes that exposed some vulnerabilities. The two presidents Lee Teng-hui and Chen Shui-bian who led Taiwan for two decades pushed Taiwan away from a formal reunification with the mainland, hence increasing the rift

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473 Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, *Dangerous Strait: The US-Taiwan-China Crisis* (Washington, DC: Columbia University Press, 2008), 59.

474 Rigger, *Why Taiwan Matters*, 70.

475 Rigger, *Why Taiwan Matters*, 56.

between conservative KMT members and fueling Beijing malevolence. Lee's concept of "one China, two political diplomacies" and Chen's ideology of "a zero-sum game with China" did nothing but increase polarization in the homeland. The mistrust between the DDP and the KMT and their coalitions led during the Chen administration to a decrease in military capabilities.[476] Moreover, it contributed to the disruption of Taiwan's diplomatic network, closing the doors to the ROC's membership in supranational organizations, or imposing conditions to the ROC membership.

For decades, China has successfully sought to reduce Taiwan's diplomatic relations with other countries to counter Taipei's independence drift. When in the early 1970s, the United States initiated the "One-China policy" and the United Nations officially recognized the PRC as the only representative of China to the United Nations, China saw this as an opportunity to isolate Taiwan diplomatically. For instance, within five years of China's first investment in Africa, the number of African states recognizing Taiwan fell from 13 to only 4.[477] Both Chinese presidents Hu Jintao and Xi Jinping prioritized the prevention of Taiwan's *de jure* independence over the promotion of reunification.[478] Taiwan has tried over the years through "dollar diplomacy" to offer economic and technological assistance and benefits to minor countries around the world; however, the number of states officially recognizing Taiwan eroded constantly over the years reaching the actual number of 17, including the Holy See.[479] Therefore, aggressive institutional changes focused on distinguishing Taiwan from China has had a detrimental effect on Taipei diplomatic network.

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476 Manthorpe, *Forbidden Nation*, 263.

477 Blackwill and Harris, *War by Other Means*, 56.

478 Jing Huang, "Xi Jinping's Taiwan Policy: Boxing Taiwan in with the One-China Framework," in *Taiwan, and China. Fitful Embrace*, ed. Lowell Dittmer (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2017), 240.

479 Chris Horton, "El Salvador, Citing 'Extraordinary Opportunities' with China, Cuts Taiwanese Ties," *The New York Times*, August 21, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/21/world/asia/taiwan-el-salvador-diplomatic-ties.html.

The decline of its lack of an official state-to-state diplomatic network has forced Taipei to depend on various international organizations and partners. From 1949, Taiwan had a relationship of dependence with the United States, and still today maintains this dependency in the political and military domains.[480] Hence, every time Taipei undertakes a political decision that could degrade the security context with China, the Taiwanese government must consider Washington's position on the matter. Therefore, Taiwan has reduced environmental adaptability. At the same time, the close ties with the United States in the military domain allow Taiwan to relax its military capabilities. The consequences demonstrate Taiwan's dependence on international organizations particularly following its expulsion from the United Nations in 1971. Indeed, the KMT's loss of legitimacy at the international level also weakened its legitimacy at home, forcing the party to regenerate legitimacy by starting a democratization process.[481] As such, the dependence on international organizations caused institutional changes at home.

Over the years, China, to avoid Taiwan's *de jure* recognition, has tried to reduce the ROC's representation in supranational organizations. During the 1970s and 1980s, China actively sought to decrease Taiwan's representation in intergovernmental organizations (IGO) by requesting to expel Taiwan or degrade it to a regional representative as a precondition for China's admission.[482] This goal is almost achieved, given that Taiwan is excluded from almost all international governmental organizations.[483] China has thus actively decreased Taiwan's membership in supranational organizations and multilateral economic organizations.

Taipei seeks to remedy its lack of diplomatic ties and membership in supranational organizations through economic sub-state diplomacy. Starting with its economic boom in the 1960s and 1970s, Taiwan has developed a robust trade and investment network and

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480 Womack, *Asymmetry and International Relationships*, 112–113.

481 Rigger, *Why Taiwan Matters*, 137.

482 Wei-chin Lee, "The Mutual Non-Denial Principle, China's Interests, and Taiwan's Expansion of International Participation," *Maryland Series in Contemporary Asian Studies* 2014, no. 1 (2014): 22–23.

483 Huang, "Xi Jinping's Taiwan Policy," 176–177.

relationships at a corporative and individual level around the world that allows Taiwan to shortcut official diplomatic channels and supplement its diplomatic weakness with sub-state diplomacy.[484] However, economic sub-state diplomacy can also induce domestic institutional changes. For instance, in 1996, the powerful Taiwanese elite entrepreneurs, the *Taishang*, of the high-tech sector cast sharp criticism of President Lee's "go slow" policy toward Taiwanese investments in China; eventually, this criticism pushed Taipei to change its policy to an "active opening, effective management."[485] Hence, economic sub-state diplomacy turns out to be an essential opportunity for Taiwan, even though in the future it could become a source of vulnerability if the *Taishang* were exploited by the PRC to influence the Taiwanese political decision-making process.

Similarly, in the political domain sub-state diplomacy enhances Taiwan's ability to influence policies in other states through lobbyist groups. For instance, at the end of 1978, after the announcement about the normalization of the U.S.-Sino diplomatic relations and the withdrawal of Taiwan's state recognition, Taiwanese diplomats in the United States and Taiwanese American scholars organized a lobbying campaign which eventually led to the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) approved by the U.S. Congress in 1979.[486] The U.S. "ambiguity strategy," as well as the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Offices (TECRO) that Taiwan has in 75 countries are rooted in the principle of sub-state diplomacy that allows the ROC to supplement its weak diplomatic network. This is how the ROC maintains its most-important ties with the United States in order to enhance its reduced military capabilities.

The U.S. government's support remains a cornerstone of Taiwan's defense. The TRA of 1979 specifies that the United States should provide Taiwan with arms to enable the ROC to maintain its self-defense capabilities. Despite that in the "Three Joint Communiqué" of 1982 the United States agreed to decrease arms sales to Taiwan, from

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484 Rigger, *Why Taiwan Matters*, 176–177.

485 T. J. Cheng, "China-Taiwan Economic Linkage: Between Insulation and Superconductivity," in *Dangerous Strait*, ed. Nancy B. Tucker (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 104.

486 Rigger, *Why Taiwan Matters*, 179–180.

the beginning of the 1990s until 2017 the United States continues to regularly sell armament to Taiwan.[487] Furthermore, the "Six Assurances" agreed by the Reagan Administration in 1982 and formally adopted by the U.S. House of Representatives in 2016 restated that there are "no plans to seek revisions to the Taiwan Relations Act."[488] Therefore, the United States continues to provide arms and military equipment to the ROC, relaxing pressure on the latter for its inability to join a military alliance, and formally enhancing its military capabilities.

Taiwan over the years has implemented various institutional measures to adapt its military posture; nevertheless, in recent years economic pressure has pushed Taiwan to reforms that could increase its vulnerability in the military domain. In recent decades Taipei has implemented structural reforms to Taiwan's military by reducing its personnel from 370,000 (2000s) to 170,000–180,000 (2017), rationalizing the chain of command, enhancing its joint-ness and rapid reaction capabilities, as well as engaging with the development of a national armaments industry focused on area denial weapons such as land-attack and anti-ship cruise missiles.[489] These changes have contributed to Taiwan's ability to relax over its reduced military capabilities and the vulnerability given by the impossibility of entering a military alliance. In the early 2000s, the Taiwanese government decided to switch from conscription to an all-volunteer force by 2019 in order to improve the proficiency and readiness of its military organization.[490] Military analysts and scholars

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487 On the annotated United States - Taiwan arms sales see https://www.ustaiwandefense.com/tags/arms-sales/ [retrieved 4/19/2019]; Kan, "Taiwan: Major U.S. Arms Sales Since 1990," 56–59.

488 *Reaffirming the Taiwan Relations Act and the Six Assurances as cornerstones of United States–Taiwan relations*, H. Con. Res. 88, 114th Cong. (2015-2016), accessed March 10, 2019, https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/house-concurrent-resolution/88

489 Michael J. Cole, "Taiwan's All-Volunteer Force Pains: There's a Way Out," The Diplomat, April 24, 2015, https://thediplomat.com/2015/04/taiwans-all-volunteer-force-pains-theres-a-way-out/; Ian Easton et al., *Transformation of Taiwan's Reserve Force* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2017); Michael D. Swaine, "Taiwan's Defense Reforms and Military Modernization Program," in *Dangerous Strait*, ed. Nancy B. Tucker (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 131–61; Jim Thomas, John Stillion, and Iskander Rehman, *Hard ROC 2.0: Taiwan and Deterrence Through Protraction* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments (CSBA), 2014).

490 Thomas, Stillion, and Rehman, *Hard ROC 2.0*.

are divided about whether this decision will improve ROC defense capabilities.[491] The transition from a conscription system to an all-volunteer force not only demands increased personnel costs to the detriment of the investment budget, but also could consistently disrupt an essential pillar of Taiwan's deterrence potential, namely its reserve. The RAND report *Transformation of Taiwan's Reserve Force* consistently argues that the 2.5–3.5 million military and civilian reservists represent a crucial deterrent factor in case of a PRC decision to force reunification.[492] Hence, even though the current strategy still considers military reservists and civil contractors irregular forces, the dismantling of the conscription system could drain these two crucial sources of strength that helped Taiwan in the past to bridge its reduced military capabilities.

In recent years, China has taken a leading role in supplying Taiwan with critical import goods, exposing Taiwan to future pressure. As an island, Taiwan is highly dependent on natural energy resources, electrical machinery equipment, and food imports.[493] From the early 2000s, the steadily increasing trade relationship between Taiwan and China has dramatically amplified Taiwan's dependency on Chinese strategic imports. In 2000, China represented Taiwan's fifth major trade partner (3.63%), while in 2018 it has become the first one (24.19%) (Figure 11). As in 2018, Mainland China accounts for 63.9 percent and 85.5 percent of all Taiwan imported agriculture and industrial categories.[494] Becoming the largest importer in Taiwan, China will increasingly be able to leverage Taiwan's vital strategic imports.

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[491] On the contrasting opinions see Grant Newsham, "Taiwan's Military Reforms: Look to Ronald Reagan," The Global Taiwan Brief (Global Taiwan Institute, October 3, 2018), https://globaltaiwan.org/2018/10/vol-3-issue-19/; Cole, "Taiwan's All-Volunteer Force Pains;" "Problems Facing Taiwan's Transition to an All-volunteer Military," Stratfor, July 30, 2013, https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/problems-facing-taiwans-transition-all-volunteer-military

[492] Easton et al., "Transformation of Taiwan's Reserve Force," 42–44.

[493] Graham Allison, *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides's Trap?* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017), 174; Blackwill and Harris, *War by Other Means*, 301n57.

[494] "Taiwan - Prohibited & Restricted Imports," Export.gov, October 10, 2018, https://www.export.gov/article?id=Taiwan-Prohibited-Restricted-Imports.

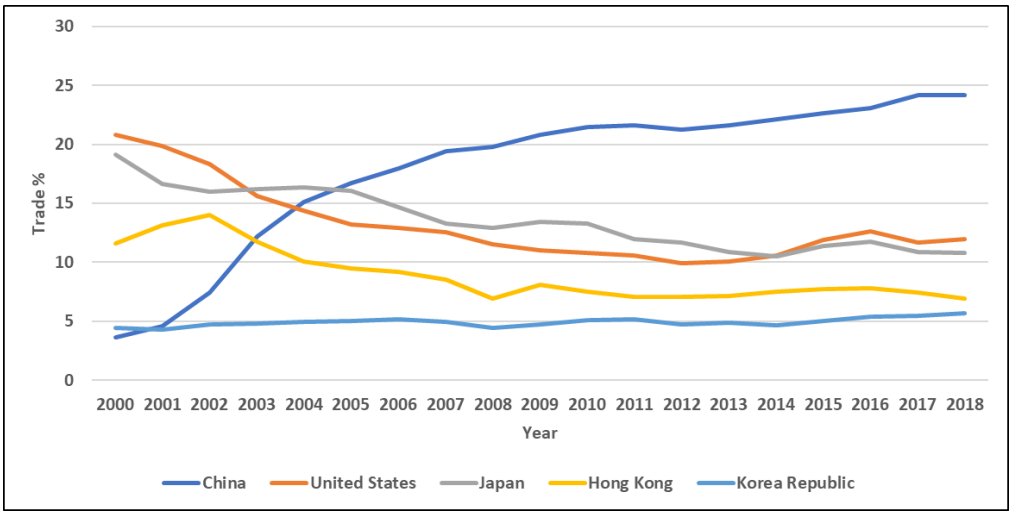

Figure 11. Taiwan's Five Major Trade Partners, 2000–2018[495]

Taiwan has become increasingly vulnerable to China's economic policy changes. The ROC and PRC have become economically tightly bound.[496] The bilateral ECFA opened numerous trade sectors for both Taiwan and China, encouraging Taiwan to invest about 70% of its foreign direct investments (FDI) in China.[497] Nonetheless, the exceptionally high FDI in China prevents Taiwan from investing in other countries and accordingly, from geographically diversifying its investments. Furthermore, Taiwan has a sizeable foreign-trade surplus in its trade with the PRC, and its high-tech industry's export is highly dependent on the supply relationship with the mainland.[498] Taiwan industrial manufacturing and sales are thus increasingly entangled with Chinese producers. On the other hand, the significance of Taiwan in relation to Chinese foreign trade has diminished.[499] This "embrace" by Beijing could indicate a trend like the one observed in the case of Hong Kong, where what started as an increase in economic relations

495 Author. Data Source: Taiwan Government, Bureau of Trade. https://cus93.trade.gov.tw/FSCE040F/FSCE040F

496 Wu, "Pivot, Hedger, or Partner," 209.

497 Ku, "Strategies of China's Expansion and Taiwan's Survival in Southeast Asia," 273.

498 Heilmann and Schmidt, *China's Foreign Political and Economic Relations*, 133–134.

499 Heilmann and Schmidt, *China's Foreign Political and Economic Relations*, 133–134.

transformed into the exercise of political pressure. Through its economic opening, China has already demonstrated with the ECFA that it can influence institutional changes in Taiwan, even though the change can lead to polarization within Taiwanese society as was the case for the CSSTA. Therefore, China will be able to impose economic policy changes in order to shift the power balance in its favor.

Taiwan seeks to maintain and develop economic relations also with other countries in Southeast Asia and the Indo-Pacific region. In the last 30 years, Taiwan has put much effort into creating economic ties with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and its members. First by the two presidents Lee Teng-hui and Chen Shui-bian, and more recently by the current president Tsai Ing-wen, however, as in the first two cases, China's intervention has undermined the effort.[500] President Tsai, since her election in 2016, has tried to rekindle ties with ASEAN by increasing Taiwanese investments into infrastructure projects in the region.[501] Taiwan's effort to generate new bilateral and multilateral economic partnerships with other countries can be interpreted as an attempt to increase its export market diversification and its flexibility in the event of economic challenges due to policy changes by its principal economic partner, China.

Taiwan's focus on high-tech niche products has allowed the country to leverage its position among the leading nations in this sector. In the 1970s, the Taiwanese government started its shift toward high-technology, low-energy industries allowing the island to become one of the world market leaders in semiconductors and electronics.[502] Taiwan's position in this specific IT market niche has various implications. First, Taiwan occupies a key position in the IT sector worldwide. In 1999, a power transmission tower in the

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[500] Ngeow Chow Bing, "Taiwan's Go South Policy:" Déjà vu" All Over Again?," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 39, no. 1 (2017): 96–126; Hong Zhao, "Taiwan-ASEAN Economic Relations in the Context of East Asian Regional Integration," *International Journal of China Studies* 2, no. 1 (April 11, 2011): 39–54.

[501] Eijas Ariffin, "Taiwan's Pivot to Southeast Asia," The ASEAN Post, May 26, 2018, https://theaseanpost.com/article/taiwans-pivot-southeast-asia.

[502] Tse-Kang Leng, "Cross-Strait Economic Relations and China's Rise. The Case of the IT Sector," in *Taiwan and China. Fitful Embrace*, ed. Lowell Dittmer (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2017), 152–153.

Taiwanese central mountains crumbled, interrupting the high-tech island industry for a day; this event almost doubled the price of microprocessors worldwide and slowed down the TFT-LCD flat screen supply for six months.[503] This micro-scale example allows estimating what the disruption of the entire Taiwanese IT production would mean for the world production of IT systems, in case of an armed conflict between the mainland and Taiwan. Hence, governments worldwide should be interested in a peaceful relationship between Beijing and Taipei. Second, major Taiwanese IT companies are the turntable linking Taiwanese know-how, American technologies, and Chinese production capabilities.[504] Hence, both major partners, the United States and China have extensive economic exposure with Taiwan. Third, China has not yet overcome its dependency on Taiwan in the high-tech and innovation sectors, meaning that Taiwan maintains a competitive advantage in those sectors, and Taipei arguably maintains a relationship of interdependence rather than one of strictly dependence.[505] Therefore, Taiwan's focus on niche IT products allows the island—at least in the economy domain—to reach a degree of local and global influence that otherwise it would not achieve. Taiwan takes advantage of this opportunity to increase its adaptability to economic challenges and to empower its *Taishang* sub-state diplomacy. Nonetheless, China, through targeted acquisitions and state-sponsored investments in research and development programs, is increasingly filling the gap with the Taiwanese industries.[506] Thus, as long as Taiwan manages to maintain a gap with China in cutting-edge technology, it remains unlikely that Beijing will enforce economic sanctions on Taipei.

Beijing's "One-China" policy, by attempting to target Taiwan's specific societal vulnerabilities, has done nothing but reinvigorate Taiwanese feelings of self-determination. From the PRC's point of view, the "One-China" policy is a zero-sum game that consistently

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503 Rigger, *Why Taiwan Matters*, 127–128.

504 Leng, "Cross-Strait Economic Relations and China's Rise," 151.

505 Rigger, *Why Taiwan Matters,* 127–128.

506 Kirk Yang, "Hello China; Goodbye Taiwan?" Barclays Equity Research (Barclays Capital, June 25, 2014), 14–33.

asserts that there is only one China; hence, Taiwan belongs to China, and the PRC is the only legitimate government to represent China. Therefore, Taiwan should not be recognized internationally as a state government. Beijing exploits both tenets to isolate Taiwan and increase political and economic pressure on the island. China's bully attitude toward Taiwan has for a long time polarized the Taiwanese political environment. In the last two decades, however, the continuous isolationist policy conducted by Beijing may have led the population, especially in the younger generations, to a specific trend of not only rejecting the idea of reunification and therefore of "One China," but also rejecting more and more the very concept of being "Chinese."[507] A survey of the Taiwan Elections and Democratizations study shows that in 1992, the percentage of interviewed Taiwanese citizens who identify as Taiwanese, Chinese, or both were respectively 18%, 26%, and 46%; while in 2016 the percentages were 59%, 3%, and 34%.[508] Furthermore, the PRC's assertive attitude has instigated the sociopolitical elites to assume a "trenching" mentality toward Beijing.[509] Thus, Beijing's attitude and appropriation of the "Chinese identity," instead of polarizing Taiwanese society or persuading citizens to rejoin the mainland, has caused an increased Taiwanese social cohesion around the idea of being an independent country.

Taiwanese society is the catalyst that has allowed Taiwan to achieve remarkable economic goals while maintaining its political independence. The gradual process of economic and political democratization permitted Taiwanese society to weave a robust social network and strengthen political, economic, and social exchanges, and bolster entrepreneurship.[510] Until the termination of the KMT hegemony towards the end of the 1980s, islander Taiwanese felt like second-rate citizens at home; many social elements

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[507] Yi-huah Jiang, "Taiwan's National Identity and Cross-Strait Relations," in *Taiwan and China. Fitful Embrace*, ed. Lowell Dittmer (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2017), 29.

[508] Fang-Yu Chen et al., "The Taiwanese See Themselves as Taiwanese, Not as Chinese," *The Washington Post*, January 2, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/01/02/yes-taiwan-wants-one-china-but-which-china-does-it-want/?utm_term=.a60ff1c32dbe.

[509] Lee, "The Mutual Non-Denial Principle, China's Interests, and Taiwan's Expansion of International Participation," 39–40.

[510] Rigger, *Why Taiwan Matters*, 187.

including history, religion, and language were discriminated against by the mainlander ruling class.[511] In the 1990s, the new political openness encouraged the rise of the "New Taiwanese" citizen identity. This new identity progressively provided stable and favorable conditions for Taiwan political and social development, respecting and increasingly encouraging societal pluralism. Therefore, social groups that until then were marginalized were now gradually integrated into a Taiwanese society that became more pluralistic and active. The highly dynamic political life encourages discussion and critical thinking. At the same time, the virulent and critical discussions around the cross-strait relationship should not be misunderstood as an *a priori* dislike for China. During his second term, the Taiwanese president Chen Shui-bian initialized a deliberate attempt to elevate Taiwanese culture by institutionally and culturally discarding islander Chinese heritage. Chen's reform rebounded because, for most of the Taiwanese, pro-Taiwan does not necessarily mean anti-China.[512] Consequently, Taiwan political thinking shifted from the binary posture focused on "unification or independence" to a more pragmatic one focused on "people's capability to determine their future."[513] This change in Taiwan's political posture has undoubtedly contributed to strengthening social cohesion, allowing Taiwan to increase its adaptability to changes in the political environment.

In the past, China has sought to exploit critical figures in Taiwanese society as agents of influence. Numerous *Taishang* economically active on the mainland have developed long and deep relationships with local Chinese governments, which in exchange for benevolent treatment has pressed the entrepreneurs into "reunification-friendly" voting behavior.[514] The economic favoritism did not work out so well, however, mainly because the *Taishang* are not interested in getting involved in political discussions that can

511 Rigger, *Why Taiwan Matters*, 30–32.

512 Rigger, *Why Taiwan Matters*, 155–157.

513 Rigger, *Why Taiwan Matters*, 161–162.

514 Gunter Schubert, "The Political Thinking of the Mainland Taishang: Some Preliminary Observations from the Field," *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 39, no. 1 (2010), 92.

undermine their business on either shore of the strait.[515] Thus, in the early 2000s, Beijing changed its target and started a charm offensive toward mainlander KMT members, inviting them to China and even persuading a few anti-Chen DDP members to take advantage of the Chinese Communist Party's generosity.[516] It is tough to evaluate how far this strategy influenced President Ma's rise to power in 2008 and his rapprochement policies toward China, yet Chinese favoritism-based strategy has undoubtedly contributed to increasing mistrust among the political elite, particularly between the KMT and DDP coalitions.

Since the late 1950s, the PRC has continuously tried to influence the ROC through different means. In 1958, the PLA put on the air "Voice of the Strait" (VOS), a radio broadcast that supports information operations for influencing Taiwan; over the years, VOS has evolved into an international broadcast that exploits different media channels.[517] China has never renounced the use of force as a possible option in order to prevent a formal separation from Taiwan and as a mean of influence. Conversely, on many occasions it has used military exercises in order to display its capability for carrying out military action against the island or, as in case of the Taiwan Strait Crisis in 1954–55, 1958, and 1995–96, to attempt to coerce the Taiwanese government.[518] The PLA has combined show-of-forces and readiness as a sophisticated means of influence. For instance, in the early 2000s, on its side of the strait, China started to build up an impressive arsenal of missiles aimed at Taiwan; this build up not only actually increases the PLA readiness in case of armed action against Taiwan but also represents an import element of influence toward the Taiwanese population. Indeed, the PRC missile build-up played a significant role in polarizing polls opinions during the Taiwanese election campaigns in 2004.[519] Given the official position

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515 Tucker, *Dangerous Strait*, 108–109.

516 Manthorpe, *Forbidden Nation*, 234.

517 Michael Raska, "Hybrid Warfare with Chinese Characteristics," *RSIS Commentary*, no. 262 (December 2, 2015): 4. See also the official website at http://www.vos.com.cn/

518 Timothy R. Heath, *Chinese Political and Military Thinking Regarding Taiwan and East and South China Seas* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2017), 10.

519 Manthorpe, *Forbidden Nation*, 238.

of the PRC regarding reunification with the island of Taiwan, as well as the periodic military and media measures aimed at influencing the Taiwanese population and its political elite, it makes sense to believe that the PRC's influence measures will also continue in the future.

The Taipei government has on several occasions put in place measures to counter the influence of the mainland and to improve its posture in the informational domain. Since the beginning of its confrontation with the PRC in the late 1940s, the ROC has developed its own media channels in order to counter the communist propaganda. In 1942, the KMT founded the "Voice of Han" (VOH) a broadcasting station aimed at supporting the Chinese nationalist narrative, which over the 1990s evolved into the Taiwanese nationalist narrative, creating new communication channels on the internet and on social media.[520] Additionally, in 1949, the KMT after its withdrawal to Taiwan island founded "Voice of Free China," which until 1998 was focused on Chinese nationalist propaganda; however, the government integrated the radio into the Taiwanese public service "Central Broadcasting System" changing the name first to "Radio Taipei International" and later to its current name "Radio Taiwan International."[521] Moreover, the KMT and later the Taiwanese government exploited print media in order to shape the informational environment, such as "Free China Review," which was renamed "Taipei Review" in 2000 and the "Free China Weekly," which after some rounds of renaming changed into the current "Taiwan Journal."[522] Thus, Taipei supported a robust public service aimed at countering Chinese propaganda and communicating the government's point of view.

The increasingly dynamic Taiwanese media environment has prompted the Taiwanese government to intervene in order to ensure media diversity, with beneficial consequences for Taiwanese society. The lifting of martial law in 1987 signaled the start

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[520] On the "Voice of Han" see http://www.voh.com.tw/

[521] U. Yunus, H. S. Budihardjo, and B. Hartanto, "Building Image of Government Through Radio Taiwan International for Indonesian Female Listeners," *International Journal of Social Science and Humanities (JSSH)* 24 (2016): 81–94. More on Radio Taiwan International at https://www.rti.org.tw/

[522] Gary D. Rawnsley, *Taiwan's Informal Diplomacy and Propaganda* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000).

of increasing deregulation of the media environment. The following two decades saw a dramatic increase of media outlets, shifting the informational sphere from the highly controlled and censored state-owned public media to a highly diversified multi-platform environment.[523] Unfortunately, the increase in communication channels brought with it a significant loss of content quality, which stressed cheap, entertaining, and sensationalist-oriented content.[524] In 2007, the Taiwan Normal University conducted a survey on mass media; the results showed that two-thirds of the respondents argued that mass media and the related opportunity for individuals to create and spread news were the leading cause for Taiwan social distrust and disorder.[525] The Taiwanese government perceived the growing distrust toward public service as created by uncontrolled reporting by the citizen media. Therefore, in the same year, the public broadcaster Public Television started a multimedia website focused on citizens' journalism called People's Post (PeoPo).[526] PeoPo focuses citizens' journalism on firsthand reporting rather than on second-hand commentaries on news reports, and supports citizen journalists with sophisticated online training programs that allow individual amateur journalists and social movements to improve their ability to produce and transmit news with a certain degree of quality.[527] The PeoPo example shows how the Taiwanese government has succeeded with a public service initiative in enhancing media diversity by allowing individuals as well as social movements—that otherwise would not have much media attention—to produce and broadcast their own media content. As a result, media diversity has enhanced societal pluralism by facilitating and increasing the quality of the opinion exchanges between people of different social groups.

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523 Hsing, "Social Entrepreneurialism and Social Media in Post-Developmental State Taiwan," 182.

524 Jane Rickards, "Taiwan's Changing Media Landscape," The News Lens, March 31, 2016, https://international.thenewslens.com/article/39104.

525 Hsing, "Social Entrepreneurialism and Social Media in Post-Developmental State Taiwan," 182.

526 Philip Harding, "PeoPo Helps Taiwanese Public Broadcaster to Restore Trust," *The Guardian*, February 15, 2010, https://www.theguardian.com/media/2010/feb/15/citizen-journalism-taiwan.

527 Hsing, "Social Entrepreneurialism and Social Media in Post-Developmental State Taiwan," 183–184.

In the past, the Taiwanese government and its citizens opposed changes in the media landscape that would have undermined its diversity. In 2008, the return of the KMT to the government coincided with the start of an aggressive print and television media acquisition campaign by the Want Want China Times Group, a Taiwanese holding company with massive interests on the mainland.[528] In 2012, the acquisition campaign reached its climax, when a Want Want-led investor group launched an offer to purchase major stocks of the Taiwanese Next Media Company, which would have put about 50 percent of the Taiwanese media under Want Want control.[529] The Next Media acquisition increasingly attracted great attention from the student "anti-media-monopoly" movement that criticized the increasing media monopoly for deteriorating Taiwanese democracy.[530] In addition to the monopoly aspect, Want Want represented other problems. Many Taiwanese perceive the Want Want Group as a strong pro-China corporation; its chairman, Tsai Eng-Meng overtly hopes for reunification and in the past expressed pro-Communist Party thought.[531] Hence, it is not surprising that many Taiwanese feared that behind Mr. Tsai hid Beijing's "long hand." As of the time of this writing, there is no evidence of China's support for Tsai's acquisition plans. Yet numerous professionals in the media environment argue that Mr. Tsai intervened several times in the media of his property to limit the freedom of expression of his journalists.[532] Consequently, the fear of Chinese interference, combined with the willingness to preserve freedom of the press, attracted more than 100,000 Taiwanese citizens, Taiwan's media, and antitrust watchdogs as well as the Taiwanese National Communication Commission and the Free Trade Commission

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528 Ming-Yeh T. Rawnsley and Chien-san Feng, "Anti-Media-Monopoly Policies and Further Democratisation in Taiwan," *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 43, no. 3 (2014): 113–14.

529 Rigger, *Why Taiwan Matters*, 201.

530 Rawnsley and Feng, "Anti-Media-Monopoly Policies and Further Democratisation in Taiwan," 107.

531 Andrew Higgins, "Tycoon Prods Taiwan Closer to China," *The Washington Post*, January 21, 2012, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/tycoon-prods-taiwan-closer-to-china/2012/01/20/gIQAhswmFQ_story.html?utm_term=.22f55efae3cd.

532 Rawnsley and Feng, "Anti-Media-Monopoly Policies and Further Democratisation in Taiwan," 108.

to intervene and to announce their opposition to the acquisition.[533] Finally, the National Communication Commission drafted the "Media Monopolization Prevention and Diversity Act" that defines the conditions under which the commission would not approve deals on media companies' fusions. As a consequence, the Want Want Group and the other investors decided to pull out from the controversial deal.[534] This case demonstrates the government's willingness to prevent the threat of an alleged foreign takeover of Taiwanese media companies by implementing specific media regulations.

C. ANALYSIS

The Taiwan-China HT system shows a complexity degree that can be situated in between the two previous cases (Figure 12). Accordingly, the cross-linking values are an average of the Guatemala and Ukraine cases, demonstrating that despite the presence of a hybrid threat of more extensive proportions than in the Guatemala–U.S. case, in the case of Taiwan–China the hybrid threat is not so robust as in the Ukraine–Russia case. Both China and Taiwan do not exploit vulnerabilities and opportunities completely. Nonetheless, conversely to both previous cases the small state Taiwan exploits more opportunities, and in a more efficient way.[535]

Taiwan exploits most of its opportunities while avoiding those which could trigger an adverse reaction from China. Taipei addresses opportunities and vulnerabilities across the PMESI spectrum. The exploited opportunities generate feedback loops that decrease some of Taiwan's vulnerabilities. As the HT system shows, Taiwan does not engage in *multilateral security arrangement*, arguably for two reasons. First, ROC is *de jure* widely not recognized as a state; hence, a supranational security organization would not recognize Taiwan as a partner. Second, Taipei and other possible partners understand that engaging in this opportunity would trigger an adverse reaction from China toward both Taiwan and

533 Rigger, *Why Taiwan Matters*, 201.

534 Rawnsley and Feng, "Anti-Media-Monopoly Policies and Further Democratisation in Taiwan," 117.

535 See the Taiwan – China Cross-Impact Matrix in the Appendix.

the security partner. In this specific case, there is no evidence of *internal violent conflicts*, neither internally generated (as in the previous cases), nor generated or fueled by the great power (as in the Ukraine case). The absence of *internal violent conflicts* shows, on the one hand, the internal stability of Taiwan, and, on the other, the difficulty or lack of will on the part of Beijing to support this action.

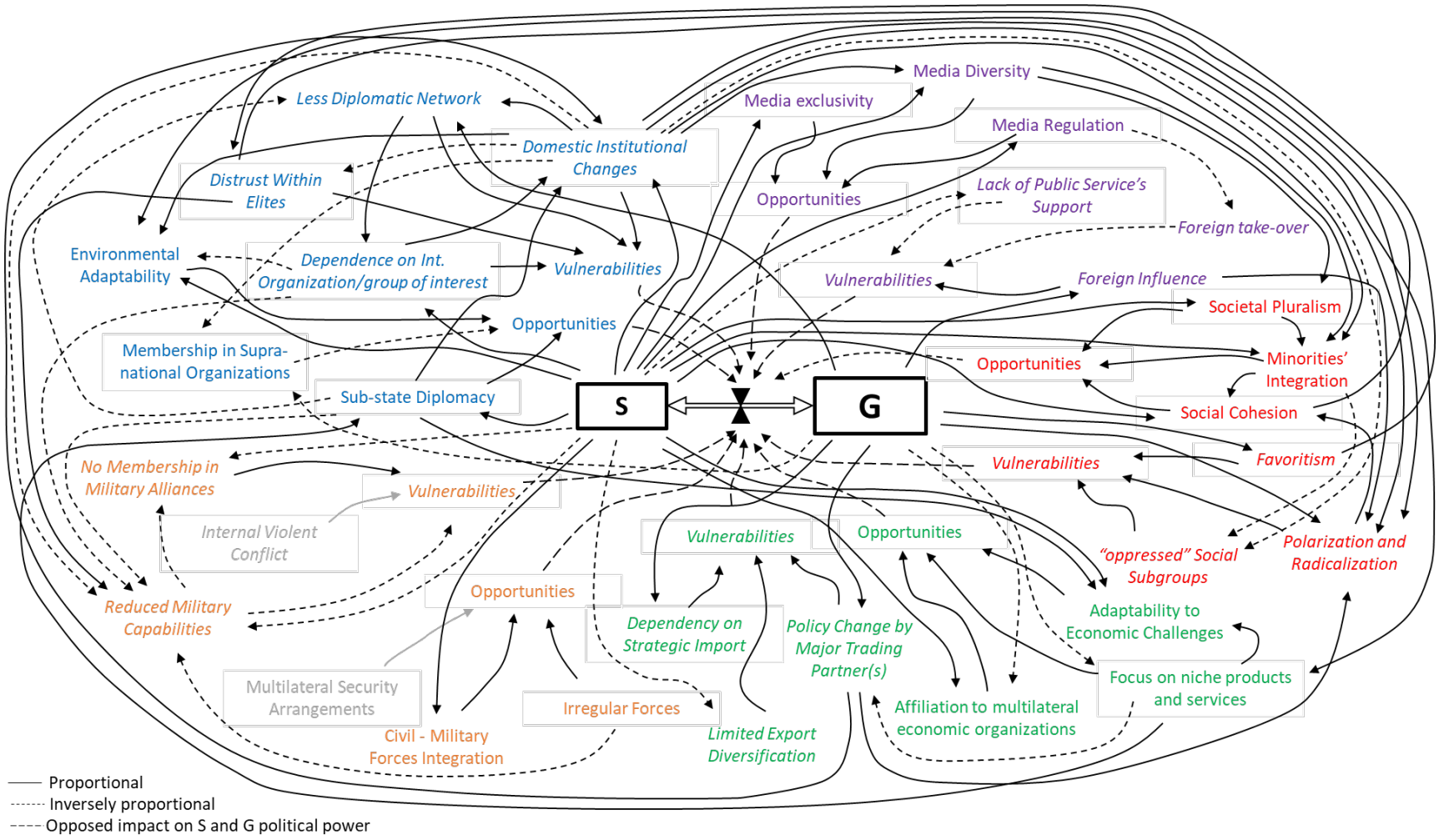

Figure 12. Taiwan–China HT System

Taiwan has the most significant influence on the HT system. In contrast to the previous case, the small state Taiwan with a cross-linking value of 17 has a higher influence value than the great power China with 9. Hence, the small state is able to maintain the balance of power in its favor. The variable with the highest crosslinking value is a vulnerability. However, unlike the previous case, two of the four variables with the second highest value are opportunities that have a significant influence on the system. Conversely, both vulnerabilities with the second highest crosslinking value have a low active influence on the HT system (Table 4). Therefore, opportunities rather than vulnerabilities mostly run this HT system as a whole.

Table 4. Taiwan–China HT System, Top Vulnerabilities and Opportunities[536]

	Crosslink (AS+PS)		Active Sum (AS)		Passive Sum (PS)	
Rank	Vulnerability	Opportunity	Vulnerability	Opportunity	Vulnerability	Opportunity
1	Domestic institutional Changes (15)	Sub-state Diplomacy (9)	Domestic Institutional changes (11)	Sub-state diplomacy (6)	Reduced military capabilities (5)	Minorities integration (6)
2	Reduced Military Capabilities (8)	Minority integration (8)	Dependence on Int. organization (5)	Focus on niche products (5)	Polarization and Radicalization (5)	Environmental adaptability (4)
3	Polarization and Radicalization (8)	Focus on niche products (6)	Distrust within elite (4)	Minority integration / Media diversity (4)	Domestic Institutional changes (4)	Social cohesion / Adaptability to economic challenges (3)

The systems analysis reveals that Taiwan has been able to generate positive effects from its vulnerabilities. *Domestic institutional changes* remains the central variable of the system (highest crosslink) that mostly influence the HT system as a whole (highest AS). The high crosslink value shows that the institutional decisions taken by the Taiwanese government are fundamental in the system dynamic. Furthermore, Taipei exploits this vulnerability in order to ease others and to support opportunities in other domains across

536 See the Taiwan Cross-Impact Matrix in the Appendix. The rank is based on Crosslink, AS, and PS values.

the PMESI spectrum. Hence, Taipei in some ways turns a vulnerability into an opportunity. Taiwan is conscious that its *reduced military capabilities* are a significant vulnerability confronting the PRC that has not yet ruled out armed intervention as a means of imposing reunification.

Nonetheless, the ROC has been able to mitigate this vulnerability by direct intervention, through beneficial effects generated by other opportunities, or even by exploiting other vulnerabilities such as *dependence on international organization/group of interest.* The second most important variable for the system is *sub-state diplomacy*. The opportunity is not only central to the system but also is the opportunity that mostly influences the system itself. Hence, Taiwan's *sub-state diplomacy* is crucial to generating positive effects on the system and, therefore, keeping the balance of power in favor of Taiwan. A further crucial element in the Taiwan-China HT system has been and still is Taiwan's ability to relax internal differences between those who pursue reunification and those who would prefer independence. The two variables *minority integration* and *polarization* are respectively the second opportunity and the third vulnerability most important for the system. The integration between mainlander and islander was a pivotal opportunity to ease increasing social tensions during the first decades of democratization. Over the years the mainlander–pro-reunification and islander–pro-independence connotation have been exploited by local personalities for political purposes, and logically it could have also been exploited by China to fracture the Taiwanese society in order to weaken the government's legitimacy. Yet, the creation of a Taiwanese society that embraces all social groups and goes beyond the two associations described earlier prevented deeper polarization.

The HT system shows the significant influence that a third actor has on the dyadic relationship between Taiwan and China. Although the system is bounded around the relationship between the ROC and PRC, it is possible to appreciate the impact that the United States has on this dynamic. Taiwan dependence on *group of interest* expresses the U.S. influence, which encompasses U.S support to Taiwan. The vulnerability has the second highest active sum (AS) score, and so has a significant influence on the system.

Taiwan purposefully engages in this vulnerability, which has a positive effect in increasing Taiwan's political domain opportunity and decreasing its major military domain vulnerability.

Taiwan's success in maintaining the power balance in its favor depends on its ability to maintain its good governance while strengthening specific opportunities and engaging some vulnerabilities. The ROC intervention variables confirm how crucial it is for Taipei to operationalize sound institutional changes (Figure 13). All the intervention variables in Quadrants I and II are variables that Taipei can control. Hence, Taiwan can continue to maintain the balance of power in its favor.

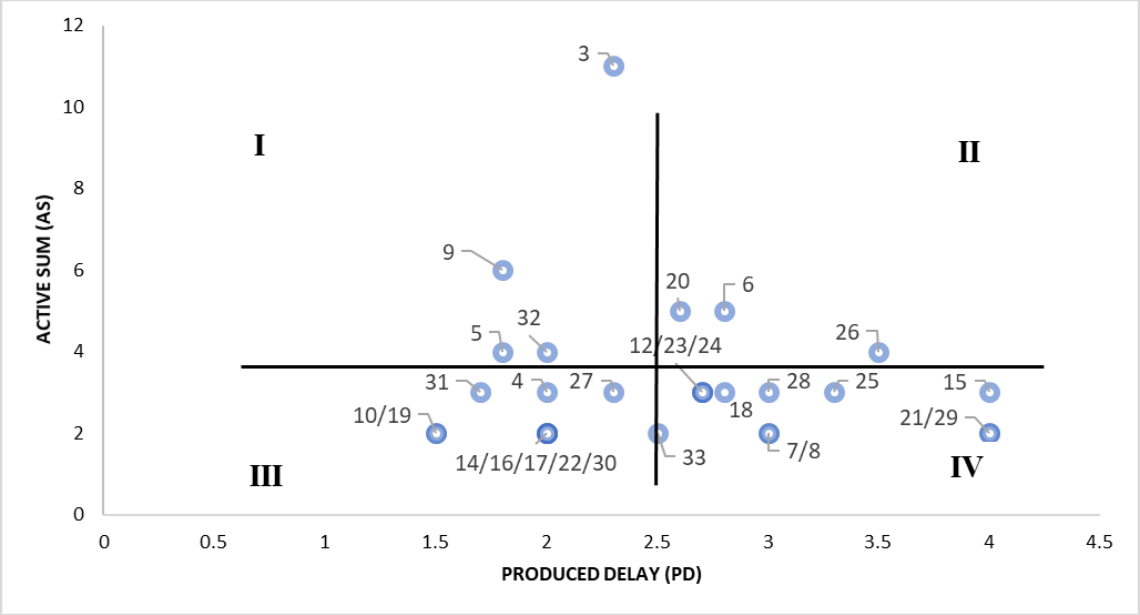

Figure 13. Taiwan Intervention Variables

The crucial intervention variable with the highest effect on the system in the shortest term remains Taiwan's *institutional changes* (3). In the past, sound policy has allowed Taipei to maintain the balance of power with China. Nonetheless, examples show that some of Taipei's poorly informed decisions had rapidly disruptive consequences on the relationship. *Sub-state diplomacy* (9) is an excellent opportunity that can have rapid

positive effects on the system. Taiwan should invest in maintaining this approach in order to fill the gap created by its lesser diplomatic network, which until now, despite China's effort, does not seem to have a very detrimental effect on the balance of power. Although it seems completely trivial, the ability to count on a diverse media landscape enhances Taiwan's resilience to falling victim to Beijing's influence. Therefore, Taiwan should take care of its *media diversity* (32). Relations with China are a central theme for Taiwan, which in the past created distrust among the political elites as well as between the latter and the economic elite. *Distrust within elites* (5) is one of the vulnerabilities that Taiwan should keep an eye on. Two other variables must be taken into foremost consideration by Taiwan. Although they belong to Quadrant II and should have second priority, *dependence on international organizations/group of interest* (6) and *focus on niche product* (20) should be considered priority intervention variables. As previously mentioned, this vulnerability and this opportunity have a high degree of active influence on the system. Therefore, although their effect on the system is more delayed, Taiwan would do better to invest in maintaining a healthy relationship with its group of interest (specifically with the United States) and in preserving its worldwide leadership position in cutting-edge technology.

The dyadic power relationship between Taipei and Beijing remain in favor of the small state because it was able to generate balancing loops, effectively ameliorating negative effects generated by the great power (Figure 14).

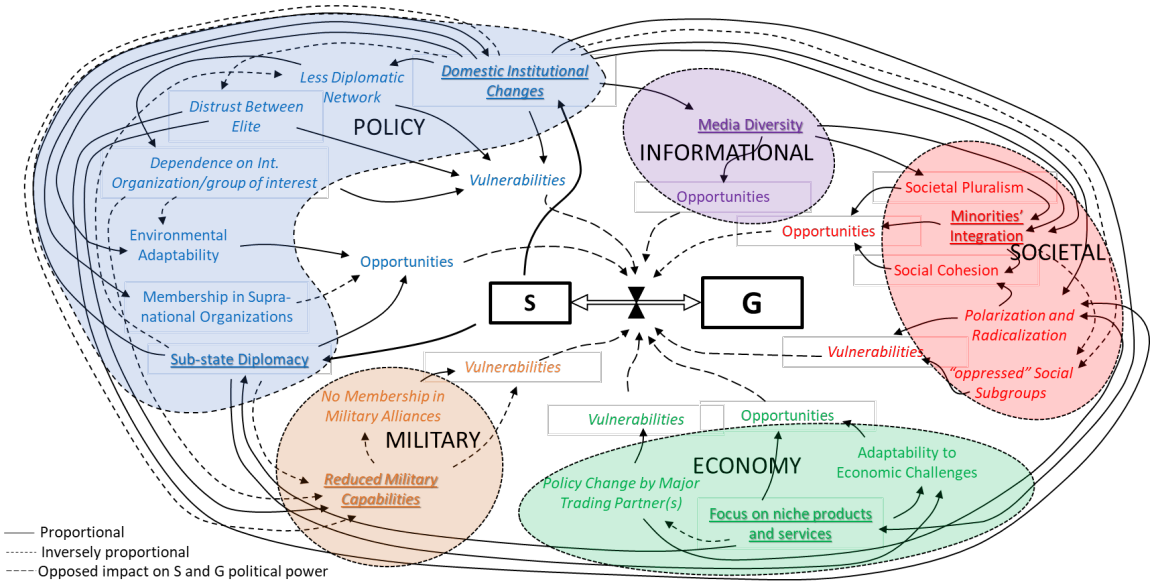

Figure 14. Taiwan's Primary Reinforcing Feedback Loops

Taiwan's reinforcing feedback loops demonstrate that by engaging in opportunities and defusing vulnerabilities, the small state can generate dynamics that influence the balance of power with the great power in a way that the small state would not be able to through a direct confrontation. In the Taiwan–China case, the small state translates the *domestic institutional change* vulnerability into an opportunity, triggering strengthening loops across the entire PMESI spectrum. Furthermore, the great power's successful influence of the *less diplomatic network* vulnerability has pushed the small state to invest in the *sub-state diplomacy* opportunity. The small state choice not only succeeds in filling the gap created by the vulnerability but also allows Taiwan to influence other variables within the HT system with a positive result on the balance of power that goes far beyond simple compensation for the Chinese exploited vulnerability. This fact shows how the complex system's dynamics can benefit the small state in order to counter the great power hybrid threat.

D. DISCUSSION

Even though the confrontation between the PRC and ROC goes back to the 1940s, and the rivalry between Chinese communist and nationalist even to the 1920s, only from

the 1970s did it start to become a conflict between what could be called a small state and a great power. Before its recognition as the only China, the PRC was not able to play a very influential role at the international level, even when its economic potential started to emerge in the 1970s and 1980s. Before the 1970s was Taiwan already a small state *vis-à-vis* China? Before Taiwan's expulsion from the UN, the PRC was the representative of China on the world stage; moreover, given its representation in international organizations and its strong ties with other countries in the Asian area and with the United States, Taiwan was in a stronger position than the PRC. Due to the ROC's extraordinary economic rise between the 1960s and 1990s, it is reasonable to say that at least until the mid-1990s Taiwan was able to compete directly with China in the economic sphere. In the military domain, Taiwan could not rely on the atomic weapon (although Taiwan had pursued the acquisition of one for a certain period), and in the conventional military domain, the PLA already showed in the Korean War its capability to successfully face even a world superpower. Therefore, the asymmetric relationship arguably began to take its form in the 1970s.

It is not correct to state that China is solely responsible for reducing Taiwan to a small state. The decision to marginalize Taiwan from the international political scene was not a decision made unilaterally by the PRC. The United States participated in this process out of its own national interests, and its allies and other countries with growing interests in China have somewhat condescendingly accepted this trend.

China has always sought reunification with Taiwan through a combination of policies aimed at international segregation and economic marginalization. To date, Beijing has focused its measures toward Taipei mainly on international isolation across the PMESI spectrum. The PRC has consistently targeted ROC diplomatic relations, it has prevented Taiwan from entering military alliances, and it has with partial success tried to disrupt ROC international economic ties while increasing its ties with China. On some occasions, the PRC has also tried to exploit societal and informational vulnerabilities. As of the time of this writing, it is possible to recognize the PRC's attempts at achieving specific objectives in a consistent and coordinated way through exploiting multiple instruments of power in

particular in the political, as well as the economic, domain. Therefore, it is possible to deduce that the PRC policies are part of a strategy aimed at limiting Taiwan's political power. Beijing's reticence in fully exploiting the PMESI spectrum, however, may suggest an attitude of strategic patience. Thus, it is not possible to judge how far the PRC policies are synchronized and part of an integrated all-encompassing design.

China's measures exploited some of Taiwan's vulnerabilities and tried to limit the small state's opportunities. Most of Beijing's political and economic measures aimed to generate compliance with Beijing's agenda. In some cases, China applied coercive measures in the military domain, albeit with poor results that only enhanced Taiwan's political power. These adverse effects could be a reason for Beijing's reservedness in using coercive methods toward Taipei. Furthermore, PRC relations with the ROC bring economic advantages for both countries, so the former has an interest in not completely antagonizing the latter. Arguably, the dynamics of the symbiotic economic relationship may be one of the critical elements that could allow the small state of Taiwan to stabilize the balance of power.

China's strategic gradualism constantly tests Taiwanese adaptability. Beijing has applied a salami-slicing approach in reducing Taipei's international diplomatic relations, forcing the later to engage in sub-state diplomacy in order to address the emergent gaps. The Chinese government, arguably to deflect accusations of "bullying behavior" from other members of the international community and defuse negative publicity on Taiwan, tolerates Taipei officials in international organizations in which China is a member, under the conditions of representing a regional actor and not a state. In the economic domain, the PRC actively stimulates bilateral economic relationships with ROC, while hindering the ROC's economic exchange with external partners. This behavior demonstrates a combination of escalation and de-escalation in order to achieve a *fait-accompli* that isolates and marginalizes Taiwan. Nevertheless, the latter has so far been able to adapt its policies and its economic ties, and thus to limit the consequences of the Chinese strategy.

According to a hybrid approach, the Chinese strategy towards Taiwan, up to now, has avoided military escalation for a reason related to the strategic environment. Most of

the states do not recognize Taiwan as an independent state; neither do they recognize it as an integral part of the PRC. Therefore, Chinese unilateral military action aimed to force reunification would undoubtedly have repercussions at least similar to those that Russia suffered in the case of the Crimean annexation. In case of a Chinese military action, the United States is more committed to intervening in support of Taiwan. Yet, how far the United States will escalate the conflict with China risking a major war to defend Taiwan rest to be seen. However, any measures from the international community to punish the military take-over would be detrimental to China. Furthermore, as mentioned previously, an armed conflict between the mainland and Taiwan would disrupt Taiwanese goods-production on the island with logical consequences for high-tech production on the mainland. Moreover, the U.S. interests in the Indo-Pacific and its relations with Taiwan will probably convince Washington to undertake specific retaliatory measures of some kind toward Beijing. Therefore, the conditions of the strategic environment are not favorable for a threat escalation encompassing a military confrontation.

China combines the deliberate use of proxy with the instrumental exploitation of third parties. China has exploited state-owned companies to influence relations with Taiwan. Through joint ventures and targeted acquisitions, Beijing has partially eroded the technological gap between Taiwanese and Chinese high-tech companies. Some Taiwanese *Taishang* and Taiwanese politicians have been exploited to try to influence Taipei's policies. Furthermore, all the states that over the years have denied Taiwan state recognition or that have avoided engaging in economic ties with Taiwan out of fears for Chinese repercussions, have supported the Chinese strategy, and hence, have behaved in some way as a Chinese proxy.

China represents a hybrid threat for Taiwan; however, so far Taiwan has been able to maintain political power to assert its independence consistently. The conflict between China and Taiwan dates back more than half a century. During this period China has developed a strategy aimed at pursuing the goal of reunification with Taiwan. Nonetheless, the analysis presented in this work, while demonstrating the hybrid nature of the threat, has allowed for an evaluation of the measures taken by Taiwan to avoid the fate of a forced

reunification. The Taiwan-China HT system shows that even the small state can counteract the hybrid threat from a great power successfully.

The systems analysis allows us to deduce specific implications for Taiwan. First, Taiwan should continue to ponder its *domestic institutional changes* in the context of the cross-Strait relationship. This variable is the most important within the HT system; hence, the dynamics that it can trigger can have profound effects on the whole system. Second, Taipei should continue to invest in *sub-state diplomacy* by empowering its political, economic and intellectual elites as "conductors" of such diplomacy. Through them, Taiwan can maintain and develop a network of relationships that would help it avoid being marginalized and isolated. Third, the importance of the *dependence on group of interest* variable demonstrates that the relations that Taiwan has with the United States are central in the HT system. Therefore, it is crucial that Taipei ponder these relationships in the context of growing tension between these two great powers. As a result, Taiwan should carefully consider which type of partnerships with China and the United States would better fit and adapt to the upcoming great-power competition. Fourth, the ROC ability to *focus* its economy *on niche products* has had very beneficial effects in countering the Chinese hybrid threat. For this reason, it is essential that Taiwan manages to maintain this opportunity. Although China is decreasing the high-tech gap, in the past Taiwan has more than once demonstrated the adaptability needed to explore new market niches that allowed it to remain an essential and globally recognized economic partner.

Finally, although the Taiwan–China case shows hybrid threat characteristics, the great power does not yet seem to have wholly exploited the full potential of a comprehensive approach along the PMESI spectrum. China has mostly engaged in political and economic measures and in a lesser way in the military, societal and informational domains. China seems to play on strategic patience. However, if on one hand strategic patience can pay off in the economic sphere by allowing a continuous increase in relations that increasingly link the island to the mainland, on the other hand, strategic patience allows Taiwanese society to develop a self-consciousness of being independent Taiwanese that will be difficult to reconcile with an alleged future reunification. The Taiwan–China case

shows how a great-power hybrid threat can provide chances for the small state that an approach based on military confrontation would not allow.

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VII. CONCLUSION

The previous chapters have explored small-state vulnerabilities and opportunities when facing a great-power hybrid threat. This work aimed to identify small states' favoring conditions across the political, military, economic, social and informational (PMESI) spectrum to defend against the hybrid threat from a more powerful state. The task of this chapter is to discuss the findings and develop the related implications for a small-state security strategy that would allow small states to develop a favorable posture to face this hybrid threat.

A. DISCUSSION

To address the question about favorable posturing for a small state facing a hybrid threat, it is necessary first to consider the characteristic of the subjects of analysis, namely the small state and its relationship with a great power as well as the hybrid threat. As discussed in Chapter II, defining a small state proves to be much more challenging than it might seem. Purely quantitative characteristics are a rudimentary way of defining small states, leading to arbitrary reductionism not suitable for analyzing small state behavior and even less for exploring its relationship to a great power. Qualitative characteristics based on the behavior of the small state allow for a better picture of the overall context. Nevertheless, the shortcoming of a solely qualitative approach lies in its too-broad generalization. The characterization of "smallness" is only possible through a relational perspective. In other words, to be able to evaluate "smallness," it is necessary to relate it to "greatness." A state is not just small *per se* but is "smaller than" another one that proves to be greater. Hence, smallness is a product of at least a dyadic asymmetric relationship, where the small state actor is such because it is incapable on its own of altering the nature or functioning of the relationship with the great one. The case of Guatemala and the United States shows that Guatemala was small in relation to America but not to its neighbor countries. The Taiwan-China case demonstrates that "smallness" is a dynamic concept; Taiwan *became* small in relation to China. Hence, the small-state–great-power asymmetric relationship can evolve.

The modern strategic environment sets limits on great-power exploitation of the asymmetrical relationship with a small state. Competitiveness, volatility, complexity, and interdependencies characterize the modern strategic environment, creating a dynamic international arena that blurs the distinction between forms of competition and conflict. These characteristics generate both opportunities and restraints for assertive great powers. Interdependence allows such great powers to engage various means of statecraft to exploit small state dependencies and achieve their political goals or downgrade the interventionist intent of third states. All three case studies show that the great power has exploited in different degrees various means of statecraft to influence the small states in the attempt to achieve their political goals. Yet, interdependency also restrains the great power from using coercive military means to achieve its political goals because of the possible sanctions or even armed responses from third states or the international community. For instance, the United States avoided a direct armed intervention in Guatemala in order to also avoid the adverse effects this would have on its image internationally. The U.S. willingness to prevent Chinese unilateral armed actions toward Taiwan is arguably one factor that prevents Beijing from engaging in violent reunification with Taiwan. Russia—like the United States sixty years earlier—engaged in armed confrontation mainly by proxy in order to ensure plausible deniability.

Assertive great powers highlight and support the international norm system when it proves to be advantageous and serves their interests, while they interpret, bend or even ignore international and national norms in pursuit of their purposes. For instance, on different occasions, the United States exploited its position in international organizations to directly influence Guatemala or other organization members to be in favor of the U.S. goals for the Árbenz government. Russia exploited WTO rules to enforce Ukrainian compliance with loans and energy-related contracts. Furthermore, Moscow membership in the Minsk negotiators team allowed Russia to assure favorable conditions for the Ukrainian separatists while disregarding OSCE rules on troop movement along the eastern Ukrainian border. Since its entry into the United Nations, China has taken advantage of its position on the international stage as the exclusive China representative to marginalize and isolate Taiwan in the political and economic domains. The pressures of conforming to

international standards did not prevent Beijing, as in the mid-1990s, from undertaking military maneuvers in contravention of international maritime traffic regulations. Nonetheless, the international norms system can still rein-in assertive great powers. In 1954, John Foster Dulles ultimately failed to achieve U.S. goals at the Inter-American Conference in Caracas, because other South American states successfully compelled the United States to change the final conference resolution. The unilateral annexation of Crimea by Russia, again in contravention of international norms, caused and continues to cause international sanctions to be cast on Russia. Taiwan legislation prevented pro-China investors from taking control of significant Taiwanese mass media assets.

Interests of peers and near-peers are a further element that shapes the strategic environment of assertive great powers. The interests of other great-power actors can be exploited for their purposes, or they can prove to be limits that the assertive great power must take into consideration. The Soviet Union's alleged influence in Guatemala pushed the United States to plan a coup against the Árbenz government; ironically, the United States' misperception about peer interests in Guatemala not only caused a dismissal of a democratically elected government and its replacement with a military dictatorship, but it laid the ground for the disastrous U.S. intervention in Cuba years later. The second case study also shows how peer interests can affect great-power actions. When Moscow was concerned over increasing ties between the EU and Ukraine, it leveraged EU interests in consistent and reliable gas transport through Ukraine to put pressure on the latter. Similarly, Beijing exploited the United States' interest in bilateral relations with China to get the Chinese UN seat and expel Taiwan from the United Nations. On the other hand, the United States' ambiguous support for Taiwan prevents China from engaging in too-extreme unilateral measures toward Taipei. Moreover, since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the United States has assumed a hegemonic position on the international stage, pushing assertive great powers to apply more indirect methods to achieve their goals. Consequently, as the case studies demonstrate, the great power mixes direct and indirect approaches according to the strategic environment, combining and fusing different ways and means to influence the dyadic asymmetric power relationship with the small state, generating a hybrid threat.

The second chapter demonstrates the suitability of the term "hybrid" to designate a threat that blurs the continuum between peace and war by applying direct and indirect ways of strategic gradualism and a synchronized design of multiple instruments of statecraft to target physical and psychological vulnerabilities while also employing proxies. The adjective "hybrid" better fits the threat whose five primary characteristics are illustrated in Chapter II: first, an integrated design of simultaneous, synchronized and adaptive uses of multiple instruments of power along the PMESI spectrum; second, the targeting of specific physical and psychological vulnerabilities across the full spectrum of societal functions, generating ambiguity, compulsion, and coercion; third, the application of strategic gradualism of escalation and de-escalation; fourth, the adoption of military measures only when the strategic environment allows it; and fifth, the mix or combination of endogenous and exogenous state or non-state entities as proxies. The analyzed case studies indicate that many elements characterizing the hybrid threat are not new. In the 1950s, the United States applied different means of statecraft; it targeted physical and psychological targets in Guatemalan society and exploited private companies, third states, media, and armed groups as proxies. Even so, U.S. action in Guatemala does not show all the characteristics of a hybrid threat. The reason the modern strategic environment generates more favorable conditions for the exploitation by hybrid threats lies in the modern environment's greater complexity, which offers new and more options to mix or combine strategies, ways, and means. The resulting complex and dynamic system of interconnected variables is what generates the hybrid threat.

The third chapter analyzed small-state literature in order to determine opportunities and vulnerabilities across the PMESI spectrum. The generated framework of opportunities and vulnerabilities allows analyzing the hybrid threat dynamic in the context of the small-state–great-power relationship. The list of opportunities and vulnerabilities examined in this thesis and used as variables in the HT system analysis, does not aspire to be conclusive. The author is aware that every state may reflect different opportunities and vulnerabilities. Nonetheless, in the light of the cases analyzed, the list proved to be adequate, as all the opportunities or vulnerabilities were observed in one or more cases. Furthermore, it was possible to determine the dynamics that emerged between the opportunities and

vulnerabilities. Consequently, the proposed list can be a valid starting point to analyze the suitability of such opportunities and vulnerabilities more deeply, and to explore further ones.

The case analysis conducted in this thesis reveals that the result of the great-power hybrid threat may not be solely the product of a deliberate strategy. The hybrid threat generated by a great power is neither a silver bullet nor a *Wunderwaffe*. The analyzed cases show that the hybrid threat takes time to influence the great-power–small-state relationship. In all three cases, the great power had to spend time and resources on generating influence over the small state's vulnerabilities and opportunities. To an external observer, the success of a hybrid approach may appear swift and deliberate; however, as the case studies indicate neither the great powers nor the small states were fully aware of all the variables that influenced their relationship. The dynamics of the hybrid threat system suggest that opportunities and vulnerabilities may emerge from the interaction without the great power or the small state being fully aware of it; logically, it follows that the first actor to realize the emergence of a new opportunity or vulnerability can exploit it to influence the dyadic relationship. The United States did not realize how its economic ties with Guatemala prevented Washington from engaging in successful punitive economic measures. Similarly, Russia wrongly believed the situation in eastern Ukraine to be like the Crimean one. China did not realize that the Taiwanese democratization process degraded the Taiwanese desire for reunification. On the other hand, the Árbenz government did not realize the significant impact of its policies on U.S. perception, Ukraine seriously underestimated the polarization and radicalization of its society, and Taiwan does not seem to be concerned about the dangers of further increasing economic ties with China.

The systemic interaction of opportunities and vulnerabilities can have unexpected effects on the small-state–great-power relationship. Opportunity and vulnerability interact with each other; this interaction may generate counterintuitive second- and third-order effects. An opportunity may have a negative second- or third-order effect, while a vulnerability can turn into having a positive one. In Guatemala and Ukraine, the *domestic institutional changes* vulnerability negatively influenced the *minorities integration* and

societal cohesion opportunities, which turned out to harm the dyadic power relationship; conversely, in the Taiwan case, the same vulnerability had positive effects on the same opportunities. The Ukrainian approach to NATO, despite representing an opportunity, fueled vulnerabilities, for instance, Russia's trading policy change. Taiwan's dependence on U.S. military armament increases one of Taipei's vulnerabilities in the political domain (*dependence on a group of interest*); however, it has a positive effect on reducing another vulnerability in the military domain (*reduced military capabilities*). These and other examples in the three analyzed case studies illustrate the meaning of second- and third-order effects. Moreover, the exemplified dynamics highlight the inappropriateness of strategies focused on single PMESI domains. For instance, hybrid threat policies focused only on military strategies address just one of the PMESI domains, representing a single point of failure. Furthermore, the addressed opportunities or vulnerabilities may have positive effects on some countries while having negative effects in others. Moreover, the generated positive first-order effect may trigger a negative second- or third-order effect in other domains. Consequently, every single country must develop, address, and assess strategies from its specific perspective. A comprehensive interdisciplinary strategy in countering a hybrid threat, based on a "whole of government" and even "whole of society" approach, is not only preferable but necessary. The presented HT system is, in reality, a system-of-systems that embraces the political, military, economic, societal, and informational systems of the small state.

B. IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SMALL STATE NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY

The analysis and discussions carried out in this thesis allow us to deduce some implications and, accordingly, to formulate some recommendations for a small state national security strategy. As stated previously, state "smallness" is a feature that arises from the relationship between at least two state actors, which is why the following recommendations should be applied in the context of a relationship in which a state that considers itself to be in an asymmetric position of "smallness." The asymmetric

relationship may evolve; hence, the small state needs to monitor the relationship with the great power.

1. Monitor, Assess and Exploit the Interdependence with the Great Power and the Related Vulnerabilities and Opportunities

In the small-state–great-power dyadic relationship, "smallness" and "greatness" are a continuum. The small state needs to monitor and assess its interdependence with the great power across the PMESI spectrum in order to evaluate in which of the domains (politic, military, economic, societal, informational) the small state may have stronger ties with the great power than in others. Moreover, the small state may be able to recognize great-power proxies acting in and across these domains. Hence, to understand and evaluate how successfully the great power hybrid threat may or may not affect the small state, it is necessary to consider the threat in the context of the relationship and the HT system being examined.

Because geography matters, a state must take into consideration its geostrategic position and "locatedness"; the state will be able to assess its "smallness" in relation to regional and global "greater" powers by monitoring and assessing the regional and global power dynamics. Proximity to a great power can have positive or negative effects; for this reason, it is necessary for the small state to monitor and assess the relationship and its interdependence with the great power. Furthermore, as illustrated by the case studies, while exploiting the entire PMESI spectrum, different great powers demonstrate specific preferences in their *modus operandi*: for instance, emphasizing propaganda, paramilitary groups, economic or political measures over others.

Monitoring and assessment allow the small state to perceive changes in the relationship dynamics in the different domains that may suggest the rise of a hybrid threat. The small state can assess the emergence of opportunities or vulnerabilities that could positively or negatively influence the relationship with the great power. Furthermore, the effect of strategic gradualism may be anticipated or at least contained, recognizing in advance areas of application of salami-slicing tactics or *faits accomplis*. Moreover, monitoring and assessment of the interdependence allows the small state to evaluate the

relationships between the different opportunities and vulnerabilities, their feedback loops and delay, making possible the simulation of second- and third-order effects in order to anticipate relationship dynamics.

The small state needs to develop the capability to determine, track, and if necessary, capitalize on both opportunities and vulnerabilities across the PMESI spectrum in order to successfully counter the great power's hybrid threat. The Guatemala and Ukraine cases illustrate how ignorance about one's own vulnerabilities or failure to consider them can have costly results and finally catalyze malicious dynamics that help the great power to achieve its political goals. The same examples highlight the consequences for a small state lacking the ability or willingness to leverage its opportunities. Conversely, Taiwan demonstrates a certain level of awareness about its own opportunities and vulnerabilities that positively influence the relationship, increasing its resilience to the great power hybrid threat.

Small-state policy makers can use the opportunities and vulnerabilities framework developed in this thesis as a starting point to create a specific framework that takes into consideration a state's peculiarities as well as the specific characteristics of its relationship with the considered great power. The application of the framework in the three analyzed cases allows highlighting some opportunities and vulnerabilities that seem to have a more significant influence on the system. Nevertheless, the small state's choice on which and how to reinforce opportunities and mitigate vulnerabilities remains a political choice of the individual small states.

In the policy domain, the small state should ponder the impact of its *domestic institutional changes* on the relationship of the great power. All three cases show how this vulnerability is central to catalyzing and influencing the hybrid threat. *The less diplomatic network* is a vulnerability that the small state can successfully address through *sub-state diplomacy*. The small state should engage in maintaining a reasonable level of *trust within* its *elites*, not to achieve an elite homogeneous point of view, but rather to enhance the reciprocal predictability about the other's expected behavior, skills, or intentions. The *dependence on international organizations or group of interests* (including single states)

and the *membership in supranational organizations* are both variables that can have positive and negative effects on the relationship with the great power. Hence, it is necessary for the small state to consider both variables and to be able to assess the influence of the great power *in* and *on* the organizations and group of interests relevant for the small state.

In the military domain, the small state should limit its *reduced military capabilities*, compensating with other variables or by direct interventions, in order to maintain the ability to deter the great power by significantly influencing the latter's expected calculus of military intervention or support for violent proxies. *Civil-military forces integration* and *irregular forces* are two opportunities that can positively influence military vulnerability. A sound integration of civilian and military security forces backed by a well-organized irregular force could allow the small state to maintain the readiness to preserve the monopoly of force across the peace and war continuum. Considering a hybrid approach, the *non-membership in a military alliance* is not an essential vulnerability. The Taiwan case shows that despite the impossibility of participating in a military alliance or *multilateral security arrangements*, a small state can still successfully counter the great-power hybrid threat. *Violent internal conflicts* can become fertile soil for a great-power hybrid threat, so in the case that such internal conflicts arise, the small state should monitor and assess whether a great power is exploiting it for its own purposes.

In the economic domain, the small state should monitor and assess its vulnerabilities based on the influence that the great power has or can have on the state. The great power can successfully leverage economic vulnerabilities if the small state is unable or unwilling to receive external economic support from third partners or through its ties with the world economy; in that case, the great-power hybrid threat is less successful. Thus, the small state must reduce its economic exposure to the great power and diversify its economic ties. If the economic vulnerabilities with the great power cannot be directly mitigated, the small state must try to influence these vulnerabilities with economic opportunities or with opportunities from other domains. While in the analyzed cases the *dependency on strategic import* from the great power proved to be the most critical vulnerability, the *focus on niche products and service* and the *adaptability to economic*

challenges demonstrate essential opportunities for the small state to relax its dependency on the great power.

In the societal domain, the small state should invest in avoiding or decreasing the *polarization and radicalization* of its society. The small state needs to address the arguments and needs of "*oppressed" societal groups* and avoid *favoritism* that can negatively affect other variables across the PMESI spectrum. Sound policies focused on *minorities integration* should allow increasing the *social cohesion* that demonstrates in the analyzed cases to be a significant opportunity to counter the hybrid threat. The *societal pluralism* remains an opportunity that the small state can leverage positively; nevertheless, the analyzed cases do not demonstrate a high influence of this variable on the hybrid threat system.

In the informational domain, the small state should develop the appropriate means to counter the great power's *foreign influence*. A sound *media regulation* supported by policies focused on enhancing *media diversity* allows a small state not only to counteract great-power influence but also to avoid a mass media *takeover* by the great power or its proxies. An alternative method for avoiding or decreasing the danger of *foreign takeover* is a reliable *support to public service*. A solid public service allows the small state to counter great-power propaganda and at the same time to leverage *media exclusivity* and maintain the information advantage over the great power.

The monitoring, evaluation, and exploitation of opportunities and vulnerabilities are central processes that the small state should master to counter a great-power hybrid threat successfully. The process should be focused not only on the opportunities and vulnerabilities as such, but most importantly on the feedback loops generated between the vulnerabilities and opportunities. The small state's awareness of the feedback loops and their dynamics may help it to restore balance in the dyadic relationship after significant great-power malicious actions. To successfully monitor, assess, and exploit its opportunities and vulnerabilities, the small state should leverage its "smallness." The "smallness" could represent a favorable condition for achieving a higher degree of adaptability, which in turn allows the small state to implement and influence its

opportunities and vulnerabilities more quickly and significantly than the great power, because of its "greatness," is able or willing to do.

2. Evaluate and Exploit International Norms

In its relationship with the great power, the small state cannot count on fairness and rightfulness alone; even if the international community may support the small state when threatened by a great power, it is in no way a security assurance. The probability that the great power has a greater influence on the dynamics related to international norms is higher than it is for small states. Nonetheless, international norms may prove to be an unexpected source of support for small states, especially when their violation by the great power can create a precedent that other great powers may exploit toward their own interests in the future. Hence, the small state needs to analyze its opportunities and vulnerabilities while considering the international norms system across the statecraft domains.

The small state should evaluate which international norm may have an impact on its opportunities and vulnerabilities. The linking of vulnerabilities and opportunities with international norms allows the small state to achieve two objectives. First, it allows the small state to assess which international norm could be exploited by the great power to empower its strategic gradualism and to influence small state vulnerabilities and opportunities. Second, it allows the small states to assess which international norm it could exploit in order to reverse the great power's strategic gradualism, to target the great power proxies, and to enhance the small state's opportunities while mitigating its vulnerabilities.

The small state should support the development of international norms that can prevent the unilateral malicious actions of great powers. Numerous examples discussed in this thesis indicate the power of international norms in restraining great powers' unilateral malicious actions. Consequently, the small state should preventively and preemptively support the enactment and application of initiatives aimed at limiting and sanctioning malicious actions between states.

3. Appraise the Interests of the Great Power and Its (Near) Peers

For the purposes of this thesis, the great-power hybrid threat is neatly bounded by the small-state–great-power dyadic relationship; however, the reality is that often a small state is caught between the interests of various great powers. Small state actions may, even unintentionally, collide with some great power's interest. In this case, the great power may react in a way that achieves *status quo ante* the small state's action. For this reason, it is imperative for the small state to be able to understand and assess great-power interests, not necessarily to avoid the action that can trigger a great-power reaction, but to be able to predict this reaction and, in the case where the small state decides to pursue its initial action, to develop appropriate strategies to limit the great power's reaction.

Interests of the great power that should be evaluated are divided mainly into three categories: the interests related to the small state; the interests related to the geostrategic context (regional and global); and the interests related to its peers. The categories are related and influence each other. Thus, they can be exploited by the small state to influence the dyadic relationship with the great power. The support that the small state can provide to the great power to reach its interests at the regional or global level can be used as a bargaining chip with interests that the great power has toward the small state, but that does not coincide with the interests of the latter. Through this dynamic, the small state may avoid or reduce the great-power hybrid threat. Similarly, small-state support for a great power's peer can induce the latter to assist the small state in countering the great-power hybrid threat. The use of this strategy may prove to be a double-edged sword; in fact, it would place the small state within the great-power competition, increasing the risk of becoming a simple pawn in a bigger game.

4. Apply a Dynamic Systems Thinking Approach to Counter the Hybrid Threat

The small state options to counter a great-power hybrid threat are not limited strictly to a choice of bandwagoning, balancing, aligning, or non-aligning. The "multimodality" of the modern strategic environment progressively jeopardizes the ability of great powers to control the smaller one's behavior unilaterally. Accordingly, the latter may be less prone

to submit to the will of greater powers or refrain from any intervention in international relations. Consequently, small states can improve their resilience to the hybrid threat by exploiting the system's dynamics across the PMESI spectrum.

The application of a systems thinking approach to develop strategies to counter a great-power hybrid threat suggests numerous advantages. A systems thinking approach helps to reveal and better understand how the hybrid threat is perpetuated. The small state can better monitor and analyze the dynamics behind the great-power hybrid threat across the PMESI spectrum and the related second- and third-order effects. In a systems thinking approach, the primary focus is not predictive; nonetheless, it allows the small state to develop preventive strategies to attenuate recognized malicious positive loops and enhance its resilience even in periods without apparent confrontation. Moreover, a systems thinking approach allows for observing a hybrid threat's adaptation across time. The hybrid threat's complexity raises opportunities for the small state to develop strategies that lie beyond the direct asymmetric relationship that the small state, because of its "smallness," would otherwise not be able to influence decisively. The complexity of the system would allow the small state to entangle the great power in a game that the great power cannot easily foresee.

The great power's choice to apply a hybrid approach can be an opportunity for the small state. The hybrid threat system allows both the great power *and* the small state to continuously leverage the opportunities, vulnerabilities and their related dynamics, enabling the adaptation of existing measures and the development of new ones to maintain the power relationship in balance. Both actors are in the position to contemplate defensive and offensive measures. Furthermore, the hybrid threat system does not merely provide a single designed course of action, rather a spectrum of convergent strategies, ways, and means to achieve multiple desired outcomes. The analysis of the case studies has highlighted both negative and positive examples of how the small state takes advantage of its opportunities and vulnerabilities. Furthermore, the small state, through active and passive behavior, can trigger virtuous or vicious system dynamics leading to balanced or unbalanced power relations with the great power. Thus, a small state's consciousness about

its opportunities and vulnerabilities and the related system dynamics as well as the exploitation of its "smallness" to increase adaptability and elasticity could allow the small state both to increase its resilience toward the great-power hybrid threat and to influence the dyadic relationship beyond its expected capacity.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE WORK

The increasing complexity of the modern strategic environment promotes what has come to be called the "hybrid threat." Assertive great powers have made a virtue of necessity, applying a hybrid approach to achieve their political goals in relation to small states. This thesis explored the phenomenon, namely the relationship between small states and great powers, focusing on the opportunities and vulnerabilities of a small state confronted with a hybrid threat perpetrated by a great power. Analysis shows that the hybrid approach is indeed a threat a small state must confront; it also revealed that the dynamics arising from this threat are complex and that consequently, they can bring about unexpected phenomena, revealing themselves as double-edged swords for both actors involved. The small state has the opportunity to assume a favorable posture to counter the great-power hybrid threat. Thus, the analysis of the case studies has allowed formulating some implications and recommendations regarding the small state national security strategy.

This thesis does not aspire to reach a definitive conclusion, but rather, begin a discourse. The use of a systems thinking approach has proved to be a valid study method for analyzing the hybrid threat and the small-state–great-power relationship; future studies could further deepen and expand its application. Moreover, future analyses could also explore further agent-based vulnerabilities and opportunities specific to the relationship between a small state and great power. This thesis has mainly focused on how a small state can defend itself against the great-power hybrid threat; future studies could explore the opposite way, namely how a small state can exploit the opportunities and vulnerabilities of a great power to influence the dyadic relationship in favor of the small state. In conclusion, this thesis has demonstrated that in order to tie down the amorphous giant, Lilliputians

must be better aware of both their vulnerabilities and opportunities, as well as able to exploit their adaptability and the increasing complexity of the multimodal world.

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VIII. APPENDIX

A. GUATEMALA CROSS-IMPACT MATRIX

In the cross-impact matrix, the value is positive (1) if the variable in the horizontal row reacts proportional to a shift in the vertical column's variable. Conversely, the value is negative (-1) if the variable in the horizontal row react inversely proportional to a shift in the vertical column's variable. AS (Active Sum), PS (Passive Sum).

	Name	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	AS
1	S political power			1					1					1		1																1			5
2	G political power												1	-1			1			-1			1						1	1					7
3	*Domestic institutional changes*	-1	1		1	1							1											1	1		-1								8
4	*Less diplomatic network*	-1	1						1																										3
5	*Distrust between elite*	-1	1												-1																				3
6	*Dependence on int. organizations*	-1	1																																2
7	Environmental adaptability	-1	1																																2
8	Membership Supranational Organizations	1	-1																																2
9	Sub-state diplomacy																																		
10	*No membership in Mil alliances*	-1	1										1																						3
11	*Internal violent conflict*	-1	1										1																						3
12	*Reduced military capabilities*	-1	1			1									-1																				4
13	Multilateral Security agreements	1	-1																																2

14	Civil-military forces integration	-1	1																																		2
15	Irregular forces					1																				-1											2
16	*Dependency on strategic import*	-1	1															1																			3
17	*Limited export Diversification*	-1	1																		1																3
18	*Policy Change by major trading partner*	-1	1																																		2
19	Affiliation to multilateral economic org.	1	-1																																		2
20	Focus on niche products and services	1	-1																-1																		2
21	Adaptability to economic challenges																																				
22	*"oppressed" societal groups*	-1	1																				1														3
23	*Polarization and radicalization*	-1	1									1														-1											4
24	*Favoritism*	-1	1			1																	1														3
25	Social cohesion	-1	1																																		2
26	Minorities integration	-1	1																																		2
27	Societal pluralism																																				
28	*Foreign influence*	-1	1			1									-1											-1										5
29	*Foreign take-over*	-1	1			1																															3
30	*Lack of public service support*	-1	1																																		2
31	Media regulation	-1	1																				1														3
32	Media diversity																																				
33	Media exclusivity																																				
PS		25	25	1	1	6	0	0	2		0	1	4	2	3	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	4	1	3	1		1	1	0	1				
Cross-linking (AS+PS)		30	32	9	4	9	2	2	4		3	4	8	4	5	3	4	4	3	3	3		4	8	4	5	3		6	4	2	4				

B. GUATEMALA CROSS-TIME MATRIX

In the cross-time matrix, delay values are assumed as follow: short-term = 1 (< 1 month); mid-term = 2 (1 month–1 year); long-term = 4 (> 1 year).

	Name	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	PD
1	S political power			2					4					4		2																2			2.8
2	G political power												2	2			2			2			2						1	2					1.8
3	*Domestic institutional changes*	2	2		1	1							4											1	2		2								1.9
4	*Less diplomatic network*	2	2						4																										2.7
5	*Distrust between elite*	1	1												2																				1.3
6	*Dependence on int. organizations*	2	2																																2
7	Environmental adaptability	1	1																																1
8	Membership Supranational Organizations	2	2																																2
9	Sub-state diplomacy																																		
10	*No membership in Mil alliances*	2	2										2																						3
11	*Internal violent conflict*	1	2										2																						1.6
12	*Reduced military capabilities*	2	2			2									2																				2
13	Multilateral Security agreements	2	2																																2
14	Civil-military forces integration	1	2																																1.5
15	Irregular forces					1																				2									1.5
16	*Dependency on strategic import*	1	2															4																	2.3
17	*Limited export Diversification*	2	2																		4														2.7

18	*Policy Change by major trading partner*	2	1																																	1.5
19	Affiliation to multilateral economic org.	2	2																																	2
20	Focus on niche products and services	4	2																4																	3.4
21	Adaptability to economic challenges																																			
22	*"oppressed" societal groups*	4	2																					2												3.4
23	*Polarization and radicalization*	2	2									2														1										1.8
24	*Favoritism*	1	1			2																		2												1.5
25	Social cohesion	1	1																																	1
26	Minorities integration	4	2																																	3
27	Societal pluralism																																			
28	*Foreign influence*	1	1			1									2											2									1.4
29	*Foreign take-over*	1	2			1																														1.4
30	*Lack of public service support*	2	2																																	2
31	Media regulation	1	1																					2												1.4
32	Media diversity																																			
33	Media exclusivity																																			
RD		1.8	1.7	1	1	1.3	0	0	4		0	2	2.5	3	2	2	2	4	4	2	4		2	1.8	2	1.7	2		1	2	0	2			

C. UKRAINE CROSS-IMPACT MATRIX

	Name	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	AS
1	S political power			1			1	1	1				1	1		1				1		1	1	1	1		-1				-1	-1	-1		16
2	G political power			1			1			-1		1	1			1	1		1		-1	-1	1	1	1	-1			1	1			-1		17
3	*Domestic institutional changes*	-1	1			1			1			1										-1		1	1									8
4	*Less diplomatic network*	-1	1																																2
5	*Distrust between elite*	-1	1																					1		-1	-1								5
6	*Dependence on int. organizations*	-1	1						-1		1		1											1			-1								7
7	Environmental adaptability	-1	1			1																		1											4
8	Membership Supranational Organizations	-1	1				1																	1											4
9	Sub-state diplomacy	-1	1																																2
10	*No membership in Mil alliances*	-1	1									1	1																						4
11	*Internal violent conflict*	-1	1	1					-1		1						1																		6
12	*Reduced military capabilities*	-1	1	1								1																							4
13	Multilateral Security agreements	1	-1			1					-1		1						1																6
14	Civil-military forces integration	-1	1																																2
15	Irregular forces	-1	1	1								1	1											1											6
16	*Dependency on strategic import*	-1	1	1			1		-1		1		1									-1													8
17	*Limited export Diversification*	-1	1																			-1													3
18	*Policy Change by major trading partner*	-1	1	1													1	1				-1													6

19	Affiliation to multilateral economic org.	1	-1	1																																	3
20	Focus on niche products and services	-1	1														1																				3
21	Adaptability to economic challenges	-1	1																																		2
22	*"oppressed" societal groups*	-1	1									1												1		-1											5
23	*Polarization and radicalization*	-1	1	1								1			-1											-1											6
24	*Favoritism*	-1	1			1							1		-1		1									-1							-1				8
25	Social cohesion	-1	1																									-1									3
26	Minorities integration	-1	1																					1													3
27	Societal pluralism	-1	1																																		2
28	*Foreign influence*	-1	1									1												1	1												5
29	*Foreign take-over*	-1	1																						1					1							4
30	*Lack of public service support*	-1	1																																		2
31	Media regulation	-1	1																																		2
32	Media diversity	-1	1																														1				3
33	Media exclusivity	1	-1																											1							3
PS		31	31	9	0	4	4	1	5	1	4	8	8	1	2	2	5	1	2	1	1	6	3	12	3	5	3	2	3	1	2	1	3	0		
Cross-linking (AS+PS)		47	48	17	2	9	11	5	9	3	8	14	12	7	4	8	13	4	8	4	4	8	8	18	11	8	6	4	8	5	4	3	6	3		

D. UKRAINE CROSS-TIME MATRIX

	Name	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	PD
1	S political power			2			2	4	4				2	4		2				2		4	2	2	2		2				2	1	1		2.8
2	G political power			1			2			1		1	2			1	1		1		2	2	2	2	1	2			1	2			1		1.5
3	*Domestic institutional changes*	1	1			1			4			1										2		2	2									1.8
4	*Less diplomatic network*	2	2																																2
5	*Distrust between elite*	4	1																					2		2	4								2.6
6	*Dependence on int. organizations*	2	2						2		2		2											1			2								1.9
7	Environmental adaptability	4	1			1																		1											1.8
8	Membership Supranational Organizations	2	2				2																	1											1.8
9	Sub-state diplomacy	1	1																																1
10	*No membership in Mil alliances*	4	2									1	2																						2.3
11	*Internal violent conflict*	2	2	1					2		2						1																		1.7
12	*Reduced military capabilities*	2	2	2								1																							1.8
13	Multilateral Security agreements	2	2			2					2		1						1																1.7
14	Civil-military forces integration	4	2																																3
15	Irregular forces	1	1	1								1	2											1											1.2
16	*Dependency on strategic import*	1	2	2			2		2		2		2									2													1.9
17	*Limited export Diversification*	2	2																			2													2
18	*Policy Change by major trading partner*	1	1	2													1	2				2													1.5

19	Affiliation to multilateral economic org.	2	2	2																															2
20	Focus on niche products and services	4	2														4																		3.3
21	Adaptability to economic challenges	4	2																																3
22	*"oppressed" societal groups*	2	2									1												1		2									1.6
23	*Polarization and radicalization*	2	2	2								2			2											4									2.3
24	*Favoritism*	1	1			2							4		4		2									2							2		2.3
25	Social cohesion	2	2																									4							2.7
26	Minorities integration	4	4																					2											3.3
27	Societal pluralism	4	4																																4
28	*Foreign influence*	1	2									1											1	1											1.2
29	*Foreign take-over*	2	4																					2					1						2.3
30	*Lack of public service support*	2	2																																2
31	Media regulation	1	1																																1
32	Media diversity	2	2																												2				2
33	Media exclusivity	2	1																										2						1.7
RD		2.2	1.9	1.7	0	1.5	2	4	2.8	1	2	1.3	2.1	4	3	1.5	1.8	2	1	2	2	2.3	1.7	1.5	1.7	2.4	2.7	4	1.3	2	2	1	1.3	0	

E. TAIWAN CROSS-IMPACT MATRIX

	Name	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	AS
1	S political power			1			1	1		1	-1		-1		1			-1		1		1				1	1	1			-1	1	1	1	17
2	G political power				1				-1								1		1	-1	1			1	1				1						9
3	*Domestic institutional changes*	-1	1		1	-1		1	-1				-1										-1	1			1						1		11
4	*Less diplomatic network*	-1	1				1																												3
5	*Distrust between elite*	-1	1										1											1											4
6	*Dependence on int. organizations*	-1	1	1				-1					-1																						5
7	Environmental adaptability	1	-1																																2
8	Membership Supranational Organizations	-1	1																																2
9	Sub-state diplomacy	1	-1	1	-1								-1									1													6
10	*No membership in Mil alliances*	-1	1																																2
11	*Internal violent conflict*																																		
12	*Reduced military capabilities*	1	-1								1																								3
13	Multilateral Security agreements																																		
14	Civil-military forces integration	1	-1																																2
15	Irregular forces	1	-1								1																								3
16	*Dependency on strategic import*	-1	1																																2
17	*Limited export Diversification*	-1	1																																2
18	*Policy Change by major trading partner*	-1	1	1																				1											3

19	Affiliation to multilateral economic org.	1	-1																																										2
20	Focus on niche products and services	1	-1							1										-1			1																							5
21	Adaptability to economic challenges	1	-1																																										2
22	*"oppressed" societal groups*	-1	1																																										2
23	*Polarization and radicalization*	1	-1																										1																
24	*Favoritism*	-1	1			1																																						3
25	Social cohesion	1	-1					1																																				3
26	Minorities integration	1	-1																					-1			1																	4
27	Societal pluralism	1	-1																									1																3
28	*Foreign influence*	-1	1																						1																				3
29	*Foreign take-over*	1	-1																																										2
30	*Lack of public service support*	1	-1																																										2
31	Media regulation	1	-1																																	1								3
32	Media diversity	1	-1																									1	1															4
33	Media exclusivity	1	-1																																										2
PS		29	29	4	3	2	2	4	2	2	3		5		1	0	1	1	2	2	1	3	2	5	1	3	4	2	1	1	1	1	2	1										
Cross-linking (AS+PS)		46	38	15	6	6	7	6	4	8	5		8		3	3	3	3	5	4	6	5	4	8	4	6	8	5	4	3	3	4	6	3										

F. TAIWAN CROSS-TIME MATRIX

	Name	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	PD
1	S political power			2			2	4		1	4		2		1			4		2		4				2	2	4			2	2	2	1	2.4
2	G political power				2				2								1		1	2	2			2	1				1						1.6
3	*Domestic institutional changes*	2	2		2	2		4	2				2										4	1			2						2		2.3
4	*Less diplomatic network*	2	2				2																												2
5	*Distrust between elite*	2	2										2											1											1.8
6	*Dependence on int. organizations*	2	2	2				4					4																						2.8
7	Environmental adaptability	4	2																																3
8	Membership Supranational Organizations	4	2																																3
9	Sub-state diplomacy	2	2	2	1								2									2													1.8
10	*No membership in Mil alliances*	2	1																																1.5
11	*Internal violent conflict*																																		
12	*Reduced military capabilities*	2	2								4																								2.7
13	Multilateral Security agreements																																		
14	Civil-military forces integration	2	2																																2
15	Irregular forces	4	4								4																								4
16	*Dependency on strategic import*	2	2																																2
17	*Limited export Diversification*	2	2																																2
18	*Policy Change by major trading partner*	4	4	2																				1											2.8

19	Affiliation to multilateral economic org.	2	1																																								1.5
20	Focus on niche products and services	2	4							2										1			4																				2.6
21	Adaptability to economic challenges	4	4																																								4
22	*"oppressed" societal groups*	2	2																																								2
23	*Polarization and radicalization*	2	4																									2															2.7
24	*Favoritism*	2	4			2																																					2.7
25	Social cohesion	2	4					4																																			3.3
26	Minorities integration	4	4																					4			2																3.5
27	Societal pluralism	1	4																										2													2.3
28	*Foreign influence*	4	4																						1																	3
29	*Foreign take-over*	4	4																																								4
30	*Lack of public service support*	2	2																																								2
31	Media regulation	1	2																																2							1.7
32	Media diversity	2	2																										2	2												2
33	Media exclusivity	1	4																																								2.5
RD		2.4	2.8	2	1.7	2	2	4	2	1.5	4		2.4		1	0	1	4	2	2	2	3.3	4	1.2	1	2	2	3	1	2	2	2	2	1							

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