

## **CHAPTER – I**

### **SMALL STATES IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS :** **A REFLECTION ON CONCEPTUAL AND** **CONTEXTUAL DIMENSIONS**

The Anglo-American tradition which has dominated the discipline of International Relations Studies until recently had an explicit discriminatory bias in favour of the analysis of the foreign policies of powerful and dominant states of the international system. This scholarly orientation has resulted in an impressive corpus of theoretical knowledge on various aspects of the foreign policies of dominant states. However, in the case of small states, such orientation has been considerably weak or inadequate. With the dominant tradition having consciously neglected the study of the foreign policies of small and weak states, there is comparable dearth of theoretical literature on the foreign policies of these states. It can hardly be overemphasized that the absence of a scholarly perspective on the foreign policies of small states in the discipline has led to an inadequate and distorted understanding of international politics in general.

There appears to be four main reasons for this peculiar situation in the discipline. The first reason is that the scholarly rendering of the realist perspective, which has exercised near hegemony over the discipline, is that the course of international politics is determined by those states which possess superior military and economic capability. It virtually undermines, the effectiveness of other instruments in the conduct of external state-craft. As a consequence, studies of international politics dominated by the realist paradigm treat small states as inconsequential actors in the realm of international relations.<sup>1</sup> The second reason, closely related to the first, is that the research institutes and universities on international relations have been located in the major powers. Scholars attached to these institutions are much more concerned

about, and sensitive to the perceptions and problems of their own countries. They theorise keeping in view the national interests of their countries. To a considerable extent the underpinnings of this were supplied by the Cold War. The Cold War ideology reinforced the proclivities of scholars in favour of theorizing and interpreting the behaviour of major powers.<sup>2</sup> Thirdly, the neglect of research on the external behavior of small states has been an outcome of the rise and wide-spread hold of behaviouralism on the discipline especially from the mid-fifties to the early seventies. Behaviouralism's emphasis on exactness of definitions, which can also be easily translatable into empirical terms, placed severe constraints on studies of small states because the latter by their very nature are too varied and diverse and hence, are not amenable to precise specifications of their patterns of actions. Since it was not possible to formulate clearcut definitions of small states capable of being empirically operational, scholars of behavioural persuasion decried the use of small states as an analytic category in the discipline.<sup>3</sup> Finally, even within the small states there is lack of conceptual treatment of their respective foreign policies. Scholars in the small states of Asia, Africa and Latin America, have mainly attempted to examine prevalent foreign policies of their countries chronologically. These studies have been highly descriptive and made little effort to conceptually interpret the foreign policies of their countries. The reason for this state of affairs is that there is no serious study of international relations in these countries. Scholars of these countries were engaged in the study of political development of their countries as there was adequate funds available particularly from the US for obvious reasons. The US was interested in promoting governments which suited its interests in these countries and allocated funds toward understanding the political processes of these countries so as to influence their policies to its own advantage. As a result there were not only a host of American scholars specializing in the politics of third world countries but also, ironically, a number of indigenous scholars studying the politics of their countries who were mainly trained in the US.

Since the late fifties, however, some scholars have begun to theorise the external behaviour of small states, though the bulk of these studies tend to be what might well be characterized as survival oriented, that is, they examine how small states resist the strong pressure of major powers during international crises.<sup>4</sup> Although, the focus of these studies is thus

very narrow, they do sensitize us to the fact that small states are not as helpless as they are made out to be in the dominant realist perspective; and, also, that the international political system does contain the possibility of generating instruments or resources other than economic and military strength for protecting the interests of the states.

Some scholars have equated the concept of 'small states' with the concept of 'weak state.' Although most small states in the contemporary international system are also weak states (as compared to major powers), it would be incorrect to equate the two concepts. The term 'small state' denotes smallness in the capabilities of state, while weak states relate to limitations in the institutional capacities of statehood; the limitations in the capabilities of states structure to achieve the kinds of changes in society that their leaders have sought through state planning, policies and actions. These capabilities include the capacities to penetrate society, regulate social relations, extract resources, and appropriate or use resources in desired ways. Strong states by contrast are characterized by capabilities that enable them to complete these tasks effectively. Weak states are thus at the lower end of a spectrum of capabilities.<sup>5</sup> To give an example India which is not a small state could be taken for a weak state as its institutional structures often floundered in penetrating, and regulating its socio-economic and political processes in the direction desired by its ruling elites. On the other hand, not all small states are weak states. Israel, Cuba, North Korea and South Korea which are all small states have a strong state structure, and cannot be categorized as weak states.

Some scholars became interested in the foreign policies of small states because of the increase in their number in the international system following the process of decolonization and, also the significant roles played by several of them in international politics after the Second World War. Contrary to the dominant realist paradigm's projection of these states as inconsequential, some of them have actively exploited competition in the international power structure to further their interests and ensured their national security and autonomy. With the two super powers trying to secure their allegiance, these states have exploited the cold war competition to further their own interests. They have also made attempts to exploit the liberal

democratic values, principles, and institutions governing the international system to create for themselves a more conducive international environment. Not surprisingly, therefore, in the post-World War II - decolonized era, several small states have pursued active and constructive foreign policies, instead of being mere objects of the foreign policies of dominant states.

The relatively active and constructive foreign policies of small states have baffled many theorists who, governed as they were by the conventional perspective of power politics, doubted their survival in the competitive and anarchic international system. These theorists had suggested the creation of confederations of various small states to ensure their viability and security.<sup>6</sup> But even without significant changes in the distribution of economic and military capabilities in the international system, the post World War II period has witnessed the proliferation of small states and their significance in international politics. Presently, more than half of the states in the contemporary international system are small by any yardstick and the understanding of their foreign policy concerns and interactions is imperative for any theorization in the field of international relations. Without this intellectual effort, our knowledge of international politics will remain incomplete and distorted.

Likewise, the sub-discipline of comparative foreign policy analysis will have a major gap if theorising is not attempted on the foreign policies of small states. The field of comparative foreign policy analysis, then, will largely be confined to the study of the foreign policies of dominant states. The field cannot have this bias as it aspires to build theories of all categories of states in international politics. If so, how can the serious study of the foreign policies of small states which constitute an overwhelming majority of the international system go unattended?<sup>7</sup>

### SMALL STATES, THE PROBLEMS OF DEFINITION : A CRITICAL SURVEY

Given the salience of 'small states' for a holistic and integrative viewpoint on international relations and the peculiar gaps in the existing literature on the subject, we need to, in the very first instance, come to terms with the notion of 'smallness', that is seen to be the constitutive feature of such states. What then are the characteristics of a 'small state'? While small state studies may not have gained wide popularity among scholars of international relations, there still exists an appreciable body of literature on the subject. Mostly these studies belong to the aforementioned 'survival tradition' relating to the recourse taken by small states to survive against the pressures of dominant states. In these studies small states and small powers are used synonymously. A perusal of the literature underlines the difficulties in identifying the criteria for 'smallness.'<sup>8</sup> While some scholars have attempted to define small state as a separate analytic category, others have sought to locate it within typologies of states in the international system.

### **Small State in the State Typologies**

In the typologies of states, scholars have ranked states in terms of their differing capabilities or patterns of interaction. In this hierarchy of states, small states have been placed in the lowest category. The typologies do not highlight the strategic environment of small states and place them permanently in the lowest category. Thus these types of definitions of small states are quite static.

Keohane assigns the lowest place to the small states in his four-fold classificatory framework based upon state-capability. At the apex are the 'system determining states' (super powers) who through their foreign policies play critical roles in shaping the nature of the international system. The second category consists of the 'system influencing states' (great powers and regional powers) which significantly influence interactions within the international system through their unilateral as well as multilateral actions. But they cannot, individually, or collectively, alter the basic structure of the system. In the third category are the 'system affecting

states' (middle powers) which acting alone cannot affect the system but can exert significant pressures on the system through their collective behavior in international and regional organizations. The last category consists of the 'system ineffectual states' (small states/powers) which neither individually, nor collectively, can influence the international system or inter-state behavior therein.<sup>9</sup>

As far as identification is concerned, in the first category states such as the United States, the erstwhile Soviet Union and possibly China during Mao would figure. The second category would include states like Japan, Germany, France, the UK and India, while the third category would comprise states like Canada, Sweden, Australia and Pakistan. The last, residual, category consists of that large body of states who perforce adjust their foreign policies to the external environment with little or no hope of altering or controlling it.

The problem with Keohane's classification is that it is based on the traditional perspective of the power appeal and, also, eschews assigning any precise meanings to terms like 'critical' roles and 'significant' influence. This makes a theoretical or empirical evaluation of the scheme difficult. Furthermore, it is not easy to agree with Keohane on the perennial 'ineffectiveness' and 'vulnerability' of the small states especially when the international system is characterized by interpolation of varied interests or to borrow another of Keohane's concept, 'complex interdependence.' Empirically, for instance, the cartelization of petroleum products by Arab countries in 1974 undermines his contention that small states are ineffective. The action of the Arab states and the subsequent hikes in the price of petroleum has had a major impact on the international system. Likewise, the sustained struggle by North Vietnam to free South Vietnam from the presence of the United States eventually forcing the latter to withdraw equally disproves Keohane's position that small states merely adjust to their environment. By common reckoning, both the Arab oil-producing states and North Vietnam are small states. Taking the argument further, it can also be suggested that some of the 'system ineffectual' states, especially those located in the competitive sphere of influence of the dominant states, can create international instability, thereby inviting interference or intervention from the competing powers resulting in

mutual adjustments or confrontations with global implications, as was evident in the case of both Indo-China and Lebanon. Such a situation is not merely hypothetical. Political instability in these countries has entailed external interference which has shaped the pattern of external politics in these regions. For these reasons it is difficult to accept the definition of small state put forward by Keohane which is rooted in stasis.

While Keohane has used the conventional perspective on capability to categorise states into four groups, Galtung emphasizes mainly the nature of interactions to rank them. Describing the international system as 'consisting of states ranked according to a number of dimensions such as size, wealth, military power, degree of development, etc.,' he maintains that such ranking has a tendency to be 'concordant.' Thus, in a world divided into 'top dogs,' 'middle level dogs' and 'under dogs' in descending order of capability, Galtung builds his scheme of international stratification which is pinned at the top and prized at the bottom and wherein the interaction pattern is that the 'under dogs' depend on the 'top dogs' but the 'top dogs' inter-depend on each other.<sup>10</sup>

In a subsequent article, Galtung equates 'top dogs' and 'under dogs' with the powerful and the small states, respectively. He remarks that 'international politics... is big power politics and that initiative is concentrated on the big and taken away from the small' because 'if you think it over it is only the USA and the USSR that really count, the other countries are of little or no consequence.'<sup>11</sup>

Although the observations of Galtung provide valuable insights into the structure of the state system, his propositions need more elaboration and also modifications, particularly in relation to the inconsequential and pessimistic roles ascribed to small states. The leaders of small states being well aware of the structural differences that exist between small states and big powers, they tend to minimise the restrictions upon their autonomy and maximise the benefits they may derive from the international system through shrewd foreign policy manoeuvres.

Moreover, the interaction patterns in the contemporary international system are intensely complex. No small state is exclusively dependent on a single great power, whereby inviting unnecessary constraints on its foreign policy autonomy. A small state may depend upon one great power for its security but it diversifies its economic dependence. Finally, Galtung envisaged a static position for small states, that is, once a state is small, it is small for all time to come. An undue emphasis on the size factor is what is behind this view. In this context, Singer's remarks is apt: "Galtung's model sees the power system as essentially static – that is, he assumes implicitly that 'under dogs' in a particular subsystem will remain in that subsystem – (whereas) I see the relationships are constantly changing."<sup>12</sup> His criticism of Galtung's typology makes clear sense. Small states are not permanently dependent on a particular dominant power. Their dependence changes in accordance with changes in their domestic politics as also changes in the existing external environment. With assertive ruling elites most small states attempt to diversify their external dependence. Hence, the multidimensional behavior of states cannot be properly explained by such a scheme and the problem of identifying a small state and hypothesizing on its international behavior still remains an open question.

### **Small State as an Analytic Category**

Developing an independent analytics of small states seems to be a cogent way out of frameworks rooted in assumptions of hierarchy of states. Hence, unlike Keohane and Galtung, some scholars have attempted to define a small state on the basis of quantitative and qualitative variables. Going by the notion of key variables, the analytics of small states can be divided into four groups. However, there is obvious overlapping among definitions, and hence grouping involved in such definitions are not entirely free of subjective elements.

The first group of scholars adopt a highly negative attitude towards formal definition of the concept of small state. The category, in their opinion, defies definition in formal terms. Moreover, they argue that a formal definition is not an essential prerequisite for undertaking



research on the external behavior of small states, and that an instinctive or common sense categorization would suffice the purpose.

The proceedings of the seminar on small territories organized under the auspices of the Institute of Commonwealth Studies in 1962-64, edited by Burton Benedict, concluded on the following note: “it proved impossible for the seminar to decide what smallness means with any precision, it is a comparative and not an absolute idea. Whatever scales of magnitude are employed seemed arbitrary and it is difficult to pick out on them where smallness begins and ends.”<sup>13</sup> Similarly, Annette Baker Fox, the pioneer of contemporary small states’ studies, has ‘viewed small state as a relational concept.’<sup>14</sup> In her study she has avoided defining the concept and allowed herself to be guided by the common sense and conventional usage in the selection of the empirical cases.

Although David Vital adheres to some extent to the Benedict-Fox school, he has nonetheless attempted what may be called a indentificatory definition of small state on the basis of two major variables: population and level of economic development. In this scheme, states with developed economies and a population not exceeding 15 million, and states having underdeveloped economies with a population of 20 million can be considered as small states.<sup>15</sup>

In his subsequent work, Vital has found the above criteria inadequate, and has underlined the fact that the small state is one ‘which in long term, in itself and as a satellite or client or close ally i.e. as a non-autonomous participant in international politics – can constitute no more than a dispensable and non-decisive increment to primary state’s total array of political and military resources, regardless of whatever short-term, contingent weight as an auxiliary (or obstacle) to the primary power it may have in certain circumstances.’<sup>16</sup>

Vital is not clear on the differentiation of middle powers from small states. There are several middle powers who as allies of the super powers would not significantly contribute to their capability in the long-run. Pakistan, Indonesia, and Egypt could be readily cited as examples here. Should these countries then be treated as small states? It would be quite absurd to consider either of these three countries as a small state. Further, Vital indirectly subscribes to the view that small states are ineffective in international politics, though in the empirical part of his work he has disputed this idea.

Unlike the modified definition of Vital where the attempt is to define small states in terms of relative capability, a second group of scholars represented by Reid, Barston, Azar and Rapaport attempt to define small states in objective terms. For Reid, the major determinant of small state is size;<sup>17</sup> for Azar it is GNP,<sup>18</sup> and a combination of both the factors forms the core of the definition provided by Barston, according to whom, small states should have a population ranging between 10-15 million and GNP equivalent to one billion US dollars.<sup>19</sup> To GNP and population Rapaport adds a third variable, the size of the state, to define smallness.<sup>20</sup>

The highly mechanistic basis of such quantitative definitions prevent them from serving the purpose of explicating the external behavior of small states. As an illustration of the mechanistic quality of these definitions, we may think of Norway whose population of close to 5 million qualifies it for small state status, but its GNP does not. Likewise Sweden with a population of 9 million, and Kuwait with populations of less than a 2.5 million, but with a GNP of US \$ 275 billion and close to US \$ 60 billion, respectively, fall out of the definitional frame of small state. Similarly, countries like Bangladesh and Malaysia do not qualify for small state status because of their huge populations. Yet these two states are by no means middle powers. Such mechanistic definitions also ignore the economic-technological capability dimension of the state.

These lacunae have been taken note of by some of the scholars forming the third group who maintain that small state and big state differentiation cannot be explained by quantitative factors exclusively. Instead they maintain that various other parameters like international power structure, geographical location, and character of polity of a country should also be considered in deciding its place in the international stratification. Bjøl suggests that the small states should be defined, firstly, through their relative disparity in capability vis-à-vis the middle and great powers and secondly, through the limited range of their national interests. He also stresses the fact that adequate importance should be given to geographical factors.<sup>21</sup> However, he does not attempt to elucidate the term capability nor does he specify the interests of small states and the constraints on them.

Such constraints have been taken note of by Rothstein who defines a small state as ‘one which recognises that it cannot obtain security primarily by use of its own capability, (and) must rely fundamentally on the aid of other states, institutional processes and developments; small powers’ general inability must be recognized by other states involved in the system.’<sup>22</sup> While Rothstein’s stress on the perceptual dimension is worth appreciating, his emphasis on the dependence of small states on others as a major definitional attribute is quite antiquated because in the contemporary international system there are only a few states that can take care of their own security all alone. Rothstein, also, deserves appreciation for introducing the military capability factor into the discourse, though he has not been able to articulate it properly.

The fourth group consists of a lone scholar from Scandinavia, Raimo Vayrynen. He attempts to integrate various approaches to the definition of small state and suggests a classificatory scheme consisting of five different dimensions: (i) low rank measured either by hard data or by perceptual data; (ii) high degree of external penetration; (iii) specific types of behavior; (iv) specific interests of small states compared with other states; and (v) specific role conceptions of the decision makers of small states.<sup>23</sup>

Vayrynen does not find the five dimensions to be of equal importance and is inclined to regard rank and role element as the basic definitional elements and considers the interest approach very promising but to a large extent unexplored. Although Vayrynen's effort to formulate an integrative definition overcomes many of the shortcomings in the definition of small state, while in the absence of systematic data on the specific roles and interests of small states, a Vayrynenian definition cannot be formulated at the present juncture. When there is systematic and reliable information on the international roles and interests of small states then only such a definition can be attempted. What is required at the moment is systematic accumulation of data on the international roles and interests of small states. It is only then that one can attempt a Vayrynenian definition of 'small' which of course will be both identificatory and explanatory in nature.

Although the task of defining small state has proved extremely difficult at present, it should not deter scholars from researching on the foreign policies of small states. It cannot be denied that small states exist in the international system and their foreign policy interests, behavior and roles in international relations are different from the middle and great powers. It is for this very reason that small states need to be studied, however, vague may be the conceptualization of small state as an analytic category at the present juncture.

Guided by the above reasoning, an attempt has been made here to formulate a working definition of the term small state. To begin with, it must be taken note that small state is a relational term, that is, it is small vis-à-vis the middle, great and super powers. It must also be taken note of the fact that small state cannot be meaningfully defined in quantitative terms exclusively, because of the existence of complex differences among states which are neither middle, great nor super powers. Furthermore, it must also be recognized that the structural and contextual differences among small states, that is to say some small states that are in relative terms economically and technologically more developed than other small developed and developing states. Finally, the definition must take note of the specific nature of the interests of small states in international politics and also the limitation of their economic and military

capabilities. Of course, there is some problem in the generalization that small states have limited economic capability with regard to the small states of the Middle East. These states because of their possession of oil, an energy resource on which the vast majority of international state actors are dependent, have acquired some economic capability. However, at this juncture of small state studies it will be reasonable to keep such subtle dimensions out of the purview of the working definition, but without in the least suggesting that these aspects are inconsequential. They are being bypassed at this juncture of small states' studies in the hope that they will be accounted for in the future when the field gains a sound conceptual foundation.

In the light of the above reasoning the definition of small state put forth by Singer is useful. Adopting a sociological rather than political perspective on the notion of power, he defines it in terms of 'wealth' (material and human), 'organization' (formal and informal), 'status' (ascribed and acquired) and 'will' (conscious and unconscious). The small states are deficient in all these four components of power according to Singer.<sup>24</sup> The deficiency of the small states in the component of wealth indicates their low economic and military capability which is further corroborated by their paucity in the 'organizational' and 'status' components. Moreover, limited size of the 'organizational' component of small states also suggests the smallness of their economy and size, without fixing any arbitrary quantitative criteria. Their lowness in the 'will' component reflects the limitedness of, as well as enormous limitations on, their international interests. Thus Singer presents a relatively flexible definition to identify small states and thereby overcomes the shortcomings of the rigid objective definitions based on quantitative criteria.

However, Singer does not delve into the differences between small developed states and small developing states on the one hand, and the distinction between small states and micro states on the other hand. The first problem can be resolved within the definitional scheme of Singer. Those small states which stand relatively favourably in the components of 'wealth' and 'organization' are developed, but they share with the small developing states the deficiencies in 'status' and 'will' components. Consequently while there are differences between the small

developed states and small developing states in their interests, international behavioural patterns and foreign policy roles because of the differences in their levels of socio-economic and political developments, there is considerable commonality in their international behavior because of their shared smallness in the 'status' and 'will' components.

Although Singer has successfully overcome some of the problems in the definition of small state, his definition is quite unclear on the differentiation of small developing states from large developing and under-developed states. This type of shortcoming can be overcome by supplementing Singer's definition with the perceptual attribute emphasized by Rothstein. This would provide a good working definition of small state, having identificatory as well as explanatory capabilities.

Thus, small state viewed in relational terms can be defined as one which lacks in all components of power, that is, 'wealth,' 'organization,' 'status,' and 'will' and its smallness being recognized by members of its own subsystem and that of others as well as by its own decision makers. This would be a dynamic definition. It does not place small states permanently in the small state category. Their position would change in the hierarchy with augmentation in specific areas of their power, in turn bringing about corresponding changes in the perceptual attributes.

Many of the small states are rich in one resource or the other. But their needs for other items, particularly basic commodities, is acute. While basic needs production is below consumption level, many of them are faced with the problem of high demographic ratio. They are also faced with the problem of mobilization of human and material resources in the implementation of their state and nation building goals. Their weak organizational network further incapacitates them in achieving these goals so far as 'will' of small state is concerned, their socio-economic and ethnic cleavages pose severe challenges to their political system. Thus enormous internal and external constraints operate on the small states. Externally, they have to ensure their security and autonomy. Internally, they have to ensure stability and economic

development. These constraints impel them to depend upon the international system, with the accompanying fear of their autonomy and independence being compromised. Thus these states adopt divergent foreign policy strategies to overcome their dilemma.

### **Choice of an Analytical Framework for the Analysis of Small States' Foreign Policies**

What analytical framework, then should be adopted to study the foreign policies of small states? The answer to this question should take note of the fact that the objective of research on small states is formulation of explanatory generalizations of their foreign policies. To achieve this objective, empirical analyses of foreign policies of small states should be carried out systematically so that analyses of several small states' foreign policies will be rendered comparable. This exercise in turn will make it feasible to identify the significant determinants of, as well as the main patterns in, their foreign policy behaviour and roles. Consequently, generalized explanations can be formulated on the foreign policies of small states. Accumulation of systematic knowledge along these lines will facilitate formulation of theories on foreign policies of small states.

The analytical framework adopted for studying small states' foreign policies is required to possess adequate descriptive and explanatory capacity. There are several contending analytical frameworks in the field of comparative foreign policy analysis which claim to possess these characteristics. The existence of a plethora of analytical frameworks makes the task of choosing an appropriate framework relatively complicated in the sense that one is required to justify one's preference for a particular analytical framework, and rejection of the others. This calls for a brief critical evaluation of descriptive and explanatory capacities of the contending analytical frameworks.<sup>25</sup>

### **The Contending Framework for Foreign Policy Analysis : A Schematic Appraisal**

The contending frameworks can be categorized on the basis of their principal explanatory perspective into four generic groups. This four-fold categorization obviously involves unavoidable oversimplification of the conceptual intricacies of these frameworks. The four analytical approaches are (i) idiosyncratic; (ii) governmental; (iii) societal; and (iv) systemic.

### **The Idiosyncratic Approach**

This perspective has a vast body of literature depicting sophistication in conceptualization and rich innovation in technique for data collection and analysis which it has attained over the years. It contends that foreign policy is the product of the perceptions and responses of the leadership or foreign policy decision-makers.<sup>26</sup> The foreign policy decisions are based on the perceptions of the decision-makers of the international environment as well as the goals of the states. The decision-makers' perceptions are formed by their world view, ideology and personality and the like. Therefore, this perspective explains foreign policy by analyzing the mindsets of the main actors in the foreign policy making edifice.

The idiosyncratic perspective has the merit of systematically drawing attention of the students of foreign policy to the important role played by the decision-makers in the formulation and conduct of foreign policy. This has been ignored by the realist approach because of its assumptions that states in the international context are unitary rational actors. Notwithstanding this merit, the idiosyncratic perspective because of its exclusive emphasis on psychological aspects suffers from the drawback of making foreign policy appear to be an erratic and irrational activity.<sup>27</sup> It suggests this picture of foreign policy because it neglects the domestic, regional and international contexts, which not only shape the foreign policy agenda and options but also play down considerably on the autonomy for individual eccentricities in foreign policy making and implementations. In other words, the internal and external determinants have a major bearing on encouraging or discouraging idiosyncrasies of decision-makers in foreign policy-making and



conduct. Furthermore, this perspective does not provide analytical categories and schemes for conceptualizing foreign policy strategies and foreign relations. Thus, the idiosyncratic perspective as an independent approach has very limited explanatory and descriptive capacity. It needs to be situated within the domestic and external contexts of foreign policy for providing meaningful explanations.

### **The Governmental Approach**

This perspective has a relatively limited body of literature which is of course steadily increasing, reflecting its growing popularity among scholars. Like the idiosyncratic perspective, the governmental approach, or bureaucratic politics model as it is also referred to, is an effort to correct the shortcomings of the realist approach. It refutes the claim of realism that state is a unitary actor in the international context and also foreign policy is an act of ‘rational’ choice. Instead, it contends that foreign policy is a political resultant of a ‘complex bargaining process’ involving different government departments, military services, and subdivisions thereof.<sup>28</sup> The political resultant which receives the greatest consensus, and support of the main participants, becomes the foreign policy decision. In other words, the bureaucratic politics model explains foreign policy by analyzing the foreign policy-making organizational structure and processes therein.

This perspective does not emphasize the psychological dimension of the decision-makers but stresses that they are guided by their own career and departmental interests while participating in the making of foreign policy. The decision-makers try to influence foreign policy making in such manner and direction which would maximize their own and their departments’ involvement and influence. This perspective is also appreciated for its empirical relevance.

Yet it suffers from a number of shortcomings. Firstly, it ignores the influence of domestic and external sources of foreign policy. Secondly, it overemphasizes the significance of inter- and intra-bureaucratic interests and interactions, and underplays the role of the leadership. Some recent studies on the relationship between leadership and bureaucracy have shown that the ultimate say is with the former. Finally, it does not offer much help for the conceptualization of foreign policy strategies and relations.

### **The Societal Approach**

This is a relatively recent approach though its philosophical antecedents are old. It explains foreign policy by considering the socio-economic, cultural and political structures and processes within the state. It focuses on factors such as size, location, resource endowments, culture, socio-economic structure, class and elite structures, socio-economic development, economic and military capability, political institutions and processes and the like.<sup>29</sup> Depending upon the ideological underpinnings of their frameworks, scholars have alternately argued that a state's foreign policy behavior is meant to strengthen and stabilize the ruling-elite or the ruling classes in addition to protecting the territorial integrity and independence of the country.

Some students of foreign policy have argued that this perspective provides better understanding of the foreign policies of third world countries than the realist approach which explains their foreign policy in terms of protection of national security only. The exponents of this perspective have argued that foreign policies of developing countries have three major objectives, namely defence of the nation's independence from a perceived threat, mobilization of external resources for its socio-economic development and achievement of domestic socio-political stability and leadership legitimacy.<sup>30</sup>

The societal perspective is, no doubt, an improvement on realism which neglects the domestic structure in the explanation of foreign policy. However, the societal approach suffers from the reverse shortcoming of neglecting the role of the external factors.

### **The Systemic Approach**

This is the oldest and most enduring approach to foreign policy analysis. It has undergone several modifications and refinements over the years. Earlier it was called realism but with the inclusion of terms and categories from system theory, it is now called systemic perspective. It views foreign policy as a function of the conditions that prevail outside the country. The international system lacking a central political authority is anarchic. It is a self-help system where all states have to protect their security and independence from encroachment by other actors. In addition to building military capability, states resort to foreign policy to mitigate the perceived threats and expand the sphere of their independence. For this purpose, states adopt various foreign policy strategies such as alignment, non-alignment, neutralism or isolationism, which guide their external interactions. The foreign policy strategy and ensuing interactions are mainly shaped by the distribution of power in the international system, or what is referred to as the international system structure.<sup>31</sup>

There is no denying the fact that external power realities in the anarchic international system are important determinants of foreign policy. However, explaining foreign policy exclusively in terms of international power structure would be myopic. More specifically, the systemic perspective is wanting in two respects. Firstly, it excludes international institutions, laws, and normative processes such as ideological and political movements. Secondly, it underplays the domestic sources of foreign policy. These omissions have severely limited the explanatory capacity of the systemic perspective including being responsible for its inability to provide explanation of the assertive foreign policies of small and weak states.

This brief review of the contending approaches clearly indicates that none of the approaches can provide comprehensive explanation of foreign policy, and also there is the need to integrate them for acquiring adequate and holistic explanation.

### **Towards an Integrative Framework**

Some scholars recognizing the partial explanatory character of these approaches have attempted to formulate overarching frameworks which integrate the insights of the various perspectives discussed earlier. While it cannot be denied that there are differences between these overarching frameworks it can also be easily recognized that there are not many substantial conceptual differences between them, at least in their general construction.<sup>32</sup> Based upon the realist assumption that international system is anarchic and states are the principal actors in international relations, these frameworks divide foreign policy activity into five inter-related analytical categories: (i) motivations; (ii) determinants; (iii) strategy and objectives; (iv) decision-making structure; and (v) foreign policy behavior constituting of interactions and roles. This five-fold categorization is self-explanatory, requiring no detailed clarification.

It will suffice to briefly state the denotation and connotation of these terms. Motivation describes the desires of states in the international system. These desires are shaped by the international system structure, the capability of the states, and their history, traditions and ideology. Determinants indicate the factors and forces both internal and external, which shape foreign policy. Foreign policy objectives refer to the specific goals which a state pursues in the international system, and the term 'strategy' means the line of action or the general orientation a state adopts to actualize its foreign policy goals. Thus foreign policy strategy shapes the external behaviours, and roles of states. Both objectives and strategy are shaped by the interactions between the motivation which are relatively abstract and the determinants which are substantial factors and forces.

Foreign policy decision-making structure includes the formal organization for foreign policy making and implementation as well as the processes that go within it, including influences from outside which have bearing on the processes. It includes interactions between the leadership and official as well as non-official foreign policy elites. The foreign policy motivations and determinants are mediated by the decision-making system to formulate the foreign policy objectives and strategy. Likewise, it translate the interactions between foreign policy objectives and strategy and the changing internal and international settings into specific foreign policy actions and roles. Although the structure of the decision-making system and processes therein significantly shape the nature of the mediation of the decision-making system between foreign policy motivations and determinants as well as strategy and the changing domestic and international environment, its mediatory role is considerably constrained by the strategy once it has been clearly spelt out.

In the background of the conceptual and analytical appraisals of the category of small state, and approaches to foreign policy study, an analysis of Sri Lanka's foreign policy between 1948-88 will be attempted within the confines of the integrated analytical framework. The reasons for adopting this time-frame are two fold. At the domestic level, it limits the study to the end of J.R. Jayewardene's Presidency and at the international level it limits the study to the pre-globalization era. After 1989, the international system marked a drastic change signaled by the breakdown of the Soviet Union culminating in a paradigm shift in international politics with global consequences. The proposed study will not account for the post 1988 period as it will make the research project unwieldy both in its focus and its scope pertaining to the range of significant issues involved. Indisputably, Sri Lanka is a small state. It is small in both material and human aspects of 'wealth.' It has a low G.N.P. and is predominantly a dependent plantation economy, specialized in the export of tea, rubber and coconut. Sri Lanka has limited military capability in comparison to the military might of India, which is its immediate neighbour.

Organizationally, Sri Lanka has a democratic polity with a plural party system. But the multi-party system is not an asset in the mobilization of human and material resources in a

desired direction. Furthermore, the island has a fractured political culture in the sense it is confronted with the conflict between the Sinhalese and Tamil sub-nationalisms. While the Sinhalese endeavour to create a homogenized Sinhalese national state, the Tamils, who are next in strength to the Sinhalese, have expounds separatist aspirations. Status-wise it is a small state in its region as well as in the world. Its 'will' is limited to the protection of its territorial integrity, maintenance of stability within its polity and promotion of its independence and autonomy in the international system. It has no ambition to be recognized as a power to be reckoned with, within the regional and global contexts.

In this thesis, an analytical study of Sri Lanka's foreign policy will be made to test certain propositions which may also be of relevance to foreign policies of other small states. These propositions are as follows:

1. The smaller the state is in terms of power – wealth, organization, status and will – the greater are the constraints on its national autonomy;
2. The greater the constraints on its national autonomy, the higher may be its dependence on the external environment for support. Such dependence may circumscribe its active initiatives in international politics;
3. Generally speaking, participation of small states tends to focus at two levels – the international and the regional spheres:
  - (a) At the international level, small states manifest a marked desire to refrain from actions which would necessarily antagonize the dominant powers but they are seriously concerned with international peace and social justice which they try to achieve through multilateral actions in international institutions and organizations; and
  - (b) In the regional sphere, small states attempt to assert greater autonomy *vis-à-vis* the powerful regional powers through strategies which create balance of power situations; they may; (i) adopt nonaligned strategy to exploit their geopolitical, historical and economic attributes as well as the regional and global power distribution to catapult themselves to a relatively advantageous position; (ii) form regional organization or join

international organization which would help them to gain confidence and at the same time act as restraint on the regionally powerful states; and (iii) become an ally of a powerful state, thereby borrowing power for themselves. These three strategies are not mutually exclusive and can operate in conjunction with each other; and

4. Dependence of small states is more acute in the economic sphere but generally there is an urge to diversify such dependence. Effectiveness of this objective depends as much upon domestic factors as international. If the state is located within the competitive zone of a number of powerful states and, or, offers better opportunities in terms of cost-benefit calculations for investments, it may have more options for such diversification.

The examination of Sri Lanka's foreign policy within the integrative framework will facilitate systematic description and analysis of the subject. It will render Sri Lanka's foreign policy comparable to the foreign policies of other small states which have been similarly processed and analyzed systematically.

The next chapter discusses Sri Lanka's foreign policy motivations, determinants, objectives and strategy.

## NOTES

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3. Wilhelm Christmas Moller, "Some Thoughts on the Scientific Applicability of the Small State Concept : A Research History and a Discussion" in Otmar Holl (ed.), *Small States in Europe and Dependence*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1983) pp.54-68.
4. Most classic example of this type of work is A.B. Fox, no.1. Also see David Vital, *The Survival of Small States : Studies in Small Power/Great Power Conflict*, (London: OUP, 1971).
5. J.S. Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States : State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 4-5.
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14. Fox, no.1, p. 6. Also see Fox's article "Small State Diplomacy" in Stephen D. Kertesz, et.al., (eds.), *Diplomacy in a Changing World*, (Notre Dame: Vanderbilt, 1959), pp. 339-64.
15. David Vital, *The Inequality of States : A Study of Small Power in International Relations*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p.8.
16. Vital, no.1, p.9.
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19. Ronald P. Barston, (ed.), *The Other Powers : Studies in the Foreign Policies of Small States*, (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1973), pp. 7-8.
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22. Robert L. Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), pp. 23-30.
23. Raimo Vayrynen, "On the Definition and Measurement of Small Power Status," *Cooperation and Conflict*, Vol.2, no.1, 1971, pp.91-102.
24. Singer, no.12, pp.54-63. In this book he deals with only three components, 'Wealth,' 'Organization,' and 'Will' dimensions. See his article "Foreign Policies of Small Developing Countries" in J.N. Rosanau, et.al., (eds.), *World Politics: An Introduction*, (New York: Free Press, 1976), pp.263-299.
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29. For a comprehensive survey of this literature, see Michael P. Sullivan, *International Relations : Theories and Evidence*, (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1976), Chapter 4, "National Attribute Theory : Domestic Sources of Foreign Policy, pp.102-142.
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32. For example, see, K.J. Holsti, *International Politics : A Framework for Analysis*, (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1988) and Dessouki and Korany, no.27.