



Small States in the International System: At Peace and at War

By Neal G. Jesse, John R. Dreyer

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Small States in the International System addresses the little understood foreign policy choices of small states. It outlines a theoretical perspective of small states that starts from the assumption that small states are not just large states writ small. In essence, small states behave differently from larger and more powerful states. As such, this book compares three theories of foreign policy choice: realism (and its emphasis on structural factors), domestic factors, and social constructivism (emphasizing norms and identity) across seven focused case studies from around the world in the 20th Century. Through an examination of the foreign policy choices of Switzerland, Ireland, Finland, Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium, Ethiopia, Somalia, Vietnam, Bolivia and Paraguay, this book concludes that realist theories built on great power politics cannot adequately explain small state behavior in most instances. When small states are threatened by larger, belligerent states, the small state behaves along the predictions of social constructivist theory; when small states threaten each other, they behave along realist predictions.

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Bibliography

- Rank: #4316181 in Books
- Published on: 2016-06-16
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.34" h x .85" w x 6.17" l, .0 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 214 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

John Dreyer and Neal Jesse provide a compelling analysis of security challenges across a diversity of case studies, with remarkable success in engaging Realism (the limits of small state power) and Constructivism (the capacity of the small to seize opportunities and create new norms in IR). I recommend this book to scholars and colleagues seeking to gain a closer perspective of the restrictions and opportunities afforded to the smaller powers. As suggested by Peter Katzenstein, the large states have much to learn from the smaller states in a complex, global world. (Christine Ingebritsen, University of Washington)

Small States in the International System is a welcome contribution to the study of the foreign policy of small states facing threats from other states. Through an examination of several case studies spanning the globe and different time periods, Jesse and Dreyer test various international relations theories to determine which best explains a state's foreign policy and find that the size of the threatening state matters. This book provides a timely analysis of state behavior in a world that is increasingly multipolar and with challenges to international stability from small and large states alike. (Kristen Williams, Clark University)

Neal Jesse and John Dreyer engage in the important and growing debate on small state behavior in the international system and regional sub-systems. The authors provide a rich and compelling discussion of how well the leading comparative foreign policy theories account for small state foreign policy in Europe, Asia, Africa, and South America. (Steven E. Lobell, University of Utah)

About the Author

Neal G. Jesse is professor of political science at Bowling Green State University.

John R. Dreyer is associate professor of political science at South Dakota School of Mines and Technology.

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Erin Chretien:

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