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Politics and democracy in microstates. A comparative analysis of the effects of size on contestation and inclusiveness

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CHAPTER TWO

From Plato to the Present

The Theoretical Debate on Size and Democracy

1. Introduction: the Influence of Geographical Factors on Politics

The notion that geographical factors have an influence on societies and cultures is broadly accepted in the social sciences. The presence or absence of water, mountains, deserts, forests, and rivers affects the way people live, as does for example the climate zone in which a particular society or civilization evolves. In an article on the sociological impact of insularity, David Pitt for example highlights how geographical boundaries and physical remoteness and isolation influence social dynamics and identities (1980: 1054).¹ The extent to which these factors also affect politics is another issue however, and is the subject of an extensive and ongoing debate. Matters of this sort have generally been dismissed or have not found their way into mainstream political science, perhaps because of the deterministic character of their presumptions and the fact that geographical circumstances are ‘fixed’, in the sense that they do not allow for human modification (Ott 2000: 18-19).

Out of the many geographical factors that can be supposed to impinge on politics, a lot of scholarly attention has been directed toward geographical isolation or remoteness. Although isolation can also result from geographical factors such as mountains and deserts, the geographical barriers caused by water have figured most prominently in the literature, in which insularity (or ‘islandness’) has occasionally and repeatedly been proposed as a feature that affects politics (Dommen 1980; Selwyn 1980; Anckar and Anckar 1995; Clague et al. 2001; Srebrnik 2004). Due to the fact that many of the world’s smallest states are island nations and vice versa, the variable of insularity is often linked to state size, rendering it sometimes hard to disentangle the separate effects of the two variables (Anckar 2008a: 436-437; Gerring and Zarecki 2011: 12). The primary independent variable of the present analysis is state size, but many of the microstates that are investigated in the remainder of this dissertation are indeed

¹ In this article, Pitt points specifically to ‘social islands’, as opposed to natural or geographical islands. In particular, attention is paid to social boundaries on islands, which leads to ethnocentric attitudes and stronger feelings of collectiveness, even though many islands are vulnerable and dependent on external actors (Pitt 1980: 1056).

also island nations.² Furthermore, the political effects of both variables are supposed to be of a largely similar nature, since both political and oceanic boundaries create the social and psychological isolation that is hypothesized to affect politics. Even though the focus of the present analysis is on smallness and not on insularity, it should therefore be kept in mind that the two variables are closely related and interconnected.³

In addition to its influence on politics and - more specifically - democracy, state size has also been hypothesized to explain variations in for example economic development or foreign policy and international relations. Whereas these phenomena are obviously linked to politics and democracy, in the present chapter I will only occasionally touch upon them and focus primarily on the direct political consequences of state size as they are supposed to affect the likelihood and quality of democratic governance. In the next chapter, where the academic literature on the different characteristics of microstate-politics and -democracy is discussed, more attention will be paid to some of the economic, historical, international political and sociological features of this particular group of countries, even though the focus remains explicitly on the political consequences of size.

Although state size is currently not regarded as a major explanatory factor of democracy, the philosophical and academic debate about the relation between the two variables has been going on for centuries, if not millennia. In the present chapter, a largely chronological overview is given of this theoretical debate, which ranges all the way from the ancient Greek philosophers to the present. As this outline reveals, academic thinking about size has been marked by major fluctuations over time. Whereas smallness was broadly deemed to be an asset in some centuries, at other times it was perceived to be a disadvantage or even a threat. Each of the sections in this chapter covers one of such periods, and all sections conclude with a summary of the main theories and expectations that follow from the literature of that time, and their implications for the nature of microstate-democracy. Whether implicitly or explicitly, a large part of the

² Exceptions are the four European microstates (Andorra, Liechtenstein, Monaco, and San Marino).

³ In several publications in which the effects of both insularity and size on democracy are examined, the interconnectedness of these variables is further confirmed (Hadenius 1992; Clague et al. 2001; Congdon Fors 2007). However much the variables are overlapping in terms of either their political effects or the classification of countries, from an analytical and theoretical perspective it however appears practical to keep them separated, especially since large island states or small continental and landlocked countries (i.e. cases in which only one of the two variables is present) might score markedly different from the other cases. In this context, the present study is explicitly focused on state size, and therefore only examines island states that fall within the parameters of the analysis.

literature that is discussed in the current chapter departs from a certain conceptualization and operationalization of the size-variable. In chapter 4, which deals with conceptual and methodological issues, the specific definition of state size that is employed in the present study is outlined and motivated.

2. Small is Good: from Plato to Rousseau

The debate about the influence of state size on politics and government goes all the way back to the ancient Greek philosophers.⁴ Whereas the ancient Greek city-states (the *poleis*) had varying organizational structures, their relative smallness and geographical proximity to each other allowed the Greek thinkers to accurately estimate and theorize about the political effects of size. In light of the ubiquity of small city-states, it is perhaps unsurprising that essentially all sources from this time emphasize the benefits of smallness for the quality of politics. In their writings, Plato and Aristotle highlight the virtues of smallness with regard to effective and high-quality government, and statesmen like Pericles are known to have expressed more or less similar views. Whereas the ancient Greeks had differences of opinion with regard to the desirability of democracy, they generally did agree on the inherent advantages of smallness. In fact, a variety of arguments in favor of smallness can be observed in the writings of Plato and Aristotle, who primarily emphasize the significance of face-to-face contacts between citizens (Plato 1960: 771; Aristotle 1996: 1326b). Plato refers to the presence of “mutual intimate acquaintance and social intercourse of all kinds” as the major advantage of smallness, whereas Aristotle stresses that citizens “must know each other’s characters” in order to judge and to distribute offices by merit (ibid.). According to Aristotle, the election to offices and the decision of lawsuits will go wrong if citizens do not have knowledge of each other, because then these will be settled haphazardly (Aristotle 1996: 1326b).⁵

In the fifth and sixth books of Plato’s renowned dialogue (*The*) *Laws*, several notions with regard to the size of the *polis* are being presented, which according to Plato should be adhered to in order to prevent for an “excessive glut of population” (Plato 1960: 740). With regard to the size of the territory of the state, Plato argues that it should be large enough for the satisfactory conservation of a certain number of men, but not larger (Plato 1960: 737). The adequate population size of a state is, according to Plato, dependent on the territorial size of

⁴ For an extensive discussion of the writings of various philosophers on state size, cf. Dahl and Tufte (1973); chapter one.

⁵ This argument is interesting because, as becomes clear later on, one of the later objections to smallness focuses exactly on the fact that public officials of small states know many citizens in person, as a consequence of which multiple-role relations and conflicts of interest evolve.

a state, and on the characteristics of the neighbors of the state (ibid.). However, Plato mentions the (quite specific) number of 5.040 citizens as an optimal population size.⁶ In any case, he argues, the population should not become too large and should be kept constant; as an ultimate solution to disproportionate population growth Plato proposes the transportation of citizens to colonies (Plato 1960: 737).

In Aristotle's *Politics*, it becomes clear that this philosopher has similar ideas about the proper size of a state as his tutor, since he notes that "experience shows that a very populous city can rarely, if ever, be well governed" (Aristotle 1996: 1326a). Hence, according to Aristotle, there must be an upper limit to the number of inhabitants of a state (or city). Unlike Plato, Aristotle does not mention a specific number as the maximum ceiling of population size, but he does argue that a state must be large enough to be self-sufficient, yet small enough to be capable of constitutional government (Aristotle 1996: 1326b). Aristotle furthermore warns for the risk that strangers and foreigners could acquire the rights of citizens, seeing that in large states, nobody would identify them as strangers (ibid.). The philosopher not only discusses the appropriate population size of a state, but also the size of its territory. In this regard, it is being emphasized that the state must be large enough to be self-sufficient, but also that it must be large enough to "enable the inhabitants to live at once temperately and liberally in the enjoyment of leisure" (Aristotle 1996: 1326b). On the other hand, Aristotle however argues that the territory and the citizens "should be taken in at a single view", because a small and succinct country is easier to defend than a larger and less well-organized one (ibid.).

The emphasis of Plato and Aristotle on the desirability of intimate, face-to-face relations between citizens has remained one of the most prominent arguments in the theoretical literature on smallness, and even contemporary authors refer to this advantage in explaining the association between smallness and democracy. Regarding (representative) democracy, in addition to intimate and personal relations between citizens themselves, the opportunity of face-to-face contacts between citizens and public officials is of obvious significance. According to contemporary advocates of smallness, the proximity between

⁶ The main reason Plato has for selecting this specific number is that 5.040 can be divided by all other numbers from 1 to 12, except 11 (Plato 1960: 771). Hence, the citizens and the land of the state could be adequately subdivided into smaller parts. It should be kept in mind that the figure of 5.040 corresponds to the number of heads of households, and that females, slaves, and foreigners are not included in this figure. The number of 5.040 households would correspond to a number of around 50.000 people in the state (Knack and Azfar 2003: 4).

citizens and their representatives generates increased levels of political efficacy, awareness, participation, and, eventually, legitimacy, which in one way or another are all supposed to contribute to democratic government (Dahl and Tufte 1973: 65, 87-88). Furthermore, contemporary analyses on the sub-national level demonstrate that smaller polities and municipalities are indeed marked by higher levels of attitudinal homogeneity (Black 1974; Kasarda and Janowitz 1974; Wilson 1986). At the same time however, as will be discussed later on, intimate face-to-face contacts and homogeneity of attitudes are currently not exclusively regarded as a positive quality, as various scholars now primarily tend to emphasize the democracy-undermining effects of such relationships.

The belief that small state size is a virtue when it comes to the quality of government remained widely embraced well after the ancient Greeks, and is also expressed in the publications of for example Montesquieu and Rousseau. However much politics had changed since the Classic times, city-states were still common political systems in the European Renaissance and Enlightenment-eras, meaning that the advantages and disadvantages of smallness could easily be witnessed and examined in reality. As the main alternative to small city-states, the map of Europe was comprised of several large empires, which without exceptions were ruled as autocracies or monarchies. In addition to reiterating the emphasis of the Greek philosophers on face-to-face contacts, and by contrasting small city-states with some of these larger empires, in their writings Montesquieu and Rousseau add the arguments that smallness fosters liberal government (in which individual rights and liberties are respected), and generates increased political involvement and efficacy of citizens. Moreover, these thinkers emphasize that the limited distance between citizens and their representatives also results in amplified feelings of emotional attachment to the public interest among citizens (Rousseau 1995: II, 101). In light of their significance in relation to politics and democratic governance, it is no wonder that these lines of argument still figure prominently in the literature on the political consequences of size.

In Montesquieu's *De l'Esprit des Lois* it is being argued that a republic, in contrast to a monarchy or a despotic government, has to be small in order to survive (Montesquieu 1949: VIII, 16). The theoretical basis for this supposition is that only in a small republic, citizens will have a good overview and attachment to the public good; in greater republics interests become "particularized" (ibid.). According to Montesquieu, "in a small one [republic, WV], the interest of the public is more obvious, better understood, and more within the reach of every citizen; abuses have been less extent, and, of course, are less protected"

(Montesquieu 1949: VIII, 16).⁷ However, not only is a republic only able to survive when it is small, but smallness also unavoidably leads to a decrease in authoritarianism; a small monarchical state would eventually transform itself into a republic (Montesquieu 1949: VIII, 17). For Montesquieu, the size of the state is therefore directly and inevitably related to the nature of its regime; small states are naturally governed as republics, whereas “a large empire supposes a despotic authority in the person who governs” (1949: VII, 19).

In Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *Du Contrat Social*, Montesquieu’s view that the size of the state is inextricably connected to the nature of its government is confirmed. According to Rousseau, “democratic government suits small states, aristocratic government those of middle size, and monarchy great ones” (Rousseau 1995: II, 108). Just as there is an appropriate size for a human being, there too is a ‘natural’ size for a state, Rousseau argues. In fact, he reiterates Aristotle’s argument that the state must be large enough in order to be sustainable, yet small enough to be adequately governed (Rousseau 1995: II, 88). Additionally, the argument of emotional detachment is introduced, as Rousseau argues that in large states, “the people have less affection for their rulers, whom they never see, for their country, which, to their eyes, seems like the world, and for their fellow-citizens, most of whom are unknown to them” (ibid.). Hence, Rousseau emphasizes that in a democracy citizens should have access to their political leaders, and they should be able to communicate with each other.

Another argument in favor of a small-sized state that Rousseau introduces relates to the extent of influence of individual citizens; in a state with a small number of inhabitants, the political influence of one person is much larger than in a state with a large number of inhabitants (Rousseau 1995: II, 100-101). For Rousseau influence is directly related to freedom, since a small state in which citizens have more influence will also be characterized by a greater degree of liberty (ibid.). Population size is thus invariably associated with liberty, attachment to the public interest, and the nature of government: Rousseau argues that “the less relation the particular wills have to the general will (...), the more should the repressive force be increased. The government, then, to be good, should be proportionately stronger as the size of the population increases”

⁷ Montesquieu specifically discourages large republics, and envisages that people in large states will lose sight of the public interest: “[i]n an extensive republic there are men of large fortunes, and consequently of less moderation; there are trusts too considerable to be placed in any single subject; he has interests of his own; he soon begins to think that he may be happy and glorious, by oppressing his fellow-citizens; and that he may raise himself to grandeur on the ruins of his country. (...) In an extensive republic, the public good is sacrificed to a thousand private views; it is subordinate to exceptions, and depends on accidents” (Montesquieu 1949: VIII: 16).

(Rousseau 1995: II, 101). As a final point, Rousseau also distinguishes between the population size and the territorial size of the state. For a state to be successful the two must be in harmony with each other, which means that the territory can maintain all inhabitants, and that there are as many inhabitants as the territory can provide for (Rousseau 1995: II, 90).

Table 2.1: The Effects of Size According to the Classic Literature

Argument:	Expressed By:	Expectation for Microstates:
Smallness creates increased community cohesion due to face-to-face contacts and intimate personal relations	Plato, Aristotle	Increased cohesiveness and social intimacy among citizens
In small states, citizens have a better notion of the public interest, and are more emotionally attached to it due to direct contact with their leaders	Montesquieu, Rousseau	Increased political awareness and attachment among citizens
Small states are more likely to be governed in a republican, liberal, or democratic manner than larger states, because citizens have greater political influence	Aristotle, Rousseau	Increased liberty, political influence, efficacy, and participation among citizens

The advantages of smallness as they are outlined by Montesquieu and Rousseau can be seen as additions to the points made by Plato and Aristotle. The notion that smallness generates increased attachment to the public good and higher levels of citizen involvement still figures prominently in the more modern academic literature, and the argument that it fosters more liberal forms of government is endorsed by many contemporary scholars as well. It can thus be seen that well into the 18th century, the dominant belief in political thought with regard to state size remained that smallness was to be valued. In table 2.1, the three principal arguments that emerge from this classic literature have been presented, combined with the names of the thinkers that have expressed them. In the third column, the expectations with regard to the characteristics of small states that follow from this literature are summarized.

3. Small is Bad: Nationalism and the Founding Fathers

Whereas the Enlightenment-philosophers still vigorously advocated a limited state size, this position rapidly became less fashionable over the course of the 19th century, as various thinkers now started to emphasize the benefits of largeness. This transformation in political thought was partly a consequence of new ideas and suppositions, but was also in large part fueled by real-life political events. City-states remained common political organizations throughout the Middle-Ages, Renaissance, and Enlightenment, even though larger empires and monarchies existed in these periods as well. Present-day Germany, the Low Countries, Switzerland, and most notably Northern Italy used to be carved up in numerous city-states, principalities, and other petty states, which varied extensively in the extent to which they allowed for the participation of citizens in political affairs. In large part, the writings of especially Rousseau were based on real-time observations in small states like Venice, Corsica, and of course his own birthplace of Geneva.

However, as the French Revolution unfolded and the political ideology of nationalism spread across Europe, many city-states were absorbed into larger political units, culminating in the Italian and German unifications of 1861 and 1871 respectively. On the other side of the Atlantic, the American Revolution and Declaration of Independence had already in 1776 resulted in the creation of a very large, yet republican and liberal state, thereby demonstrating the fallaciousness of the assumption that republicanism and liberty could only exist in small polities. As Lake and O'Mahony demonstrate, the average size of states increased from 1815 onwards, and reached a peak in the late 19th century (2004: 701-703). Around 1880 small city-states had all but disappeared from the European political scene, and among the very few ones that lingered are the contemporary European microstates of San Marino, Monaco, and Liechtenstein.⁸

In conjunction with the practical vanishing of small states, a new theoretical perspective on state size emerged in this period, emphasizing the advantages of largeness instead of smallness. Among the first thinkers to express this new line of opinion were the U.S. Founding Fathers Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison, whose views on size are among others articulated in the Federalist Papers. At the American Constitutional Convention in 1787, state size and decentralization were actually among the most hotly debated issues, and several Founding Fathers closely reappraised and reexamined

⁸ Andorra is also a European microstate, but never was an independent city-state. Instead, it used to be a suzerainty jointly ruled by the President of France and the Bishop of Urgell, and until the adoption and enforcement of a new constitution in 1993 its political status was largely undefined.

Montesquieu's and Rousseau's ideas on this issue. In the *Federalist Papers*, Hamilton and Madison discuss some of the notions of Montesquieu and Rousseau regarding size, but arrive at rather different conclusions. For example, in *The Federalist* number 9, Hamilton sketches a pretty grim picture of the consequences of applying Montesquieu's ideas about state size to the United States;

"If we therefore take his [Montesquieu's, WV] ideas on this point as the criterion of truth, we shall be driven to the alternative either of taking refuge at once in the arms of monarchy, or of splitting ourselves into an infinity of little, jealous, clashing, tumultuous commonwealths, the wretched nurseries of unceasing discord and the miserable objects of universal pity or contempt" (Hamilton 2008: IX, 45-46).

Hamilton's negative interpretation of Montesquieu's arguments seems to relate primarily to stability and peace; small states are deemed more likely to generate conflict and turmoil. According to Hamilton, the advantages of small size and large size can be combined by creating a confederation of states (Hamilton 2008: IX, 46-47). In such a political system, the security of the states would be guaranteed by their (military) cooperation, whereas the states would still be allowed to govern themselves.

In *The Federalist* number 10, James Madison discusses Montesquieu's assertion that smallness leads to less particularized and more homogenous interests and a stronger appreciation of the public good among citizens. Contrary to Montesquieu however, Madison believes that republicanism is enhanced when the interests of the population diverge;

"The smaller the society, the fewer probably will be the distinct parties and interests, the more frequently will a majority be found of the same party; and the smaller the number of individuals composing a majority, and the smaller the compass within which they are placed, the more easily will they concert and execute their plans of oppression. Extend the sphere and you take in a greater variety of parties and interests; you make it less probable that a majority of the whole will have a common motive to invade the rights of other citizens; or is such a common motive exists, it will be more difficult for all who feel it to discover their own strength and to act in unison with each other" (Madison 2008: X, 54).

Whereas Madison thus supports Montesquieu's idea that smallness leads to more homogenous interests, he argues that this is actually a *disadvantage* for a republic, because Madison believes that pluralism will create the conditions for liberalism.⁹ If there are many different interests and factions within society, according to Madison the danger that one faction will attempt to dominate other factions is reduced, since the other factions can join forces to counterbalance the dominating

⁹ In this light, Madison's argument can be translated into the existence of more and stronger checks and balances on executive power, which not only consists of the presence of a political opposition, but also the existence of autonomous institutions like parliament, the judiciary, and the media.

faction. Furthermore, whereas it would be possible that a faction acquires supremacy in one state of the confederation, this influence is according to Madison very unlikely to extend to the other states in the union.

In line with Hamilton and Madison, Thomas Jefferson also advocates a large rather than a small republic, and especially emphasizes the virtues of representative democracy as opposed to direct democracy (cf. Dahl and Tufte 1973: 9). Although Jefferson is especially known for advocating a weak central government in combination with strong state governments, he also believed that representative democracy enables the existence of republican government on a large scale, thereby rendering Montesquieu's reservations about a large state size basically obsolete. In various letters, Jefferson asserted that "democracy is the only pure republic, but impracticable beyond the limits of a town" (Jefferson 1893: 15: 65).¹⁰ Instead of this 'pure' form of democracy, Jefferson believed that representation would be a next-best solution to organize politics in the United States with its vast dimensions.

Madison's and Jefferson's arguments on the advantages of largeness have been opposed by the Anti-Federalists, most notably in Clinton's *Cato*, number 3, where it is argued that a perfect union can never be established in a state with such vast dimensions (Storing 1981: chapter 3). However, the establishment of a democratic political system in the United States of America and its consolidation and achievements in the decennia that followed unmistakably revealed that a republic can exist in (very) large settings as well, albeit in a representative instead of a direct form. In combination with the rise of nationalism and the concept of the nation-state, this development principally led to the demise of the idea that democracy can only exist in small settings. The 19th-century views with regard to state size are also expressed in John Stuart Mill's *Representative Government*:

"When the conditions exist for the formation of efficient and durable Federal Unions, the multiplication of them is always a benefit to the world. (...). By diminishing the number of those petty states which are not equal to their own defense, it weakens the temptations to an aggressive policy, whether working directly by arms, or through the prestige of superior power. It of course puts an end to war and diplomatic quarrels, and usually also to restrictions on commerce, between the States composing the Union; while, in reference to neighboring nations, the increased military strength

¹⁰ Specifically, in his letter to John Taylor Jefferson also wrote that "[i]t must be acknowledged that the term *republic* is of very vague application in every language. (...). Were I to assign to this term a precise and definite idea, it means a government by its citizens in mass, acting directly and personally according to rules established by the majority; and that every other government is more or less republican in proportion as it has in its composition more or less of this ingredient of direct action of the citizens. Such a government is evidently restrained to very narrow limits of space and population. I doubt if it would be practicable beyond the extent of a New England township."

conferred by it is of a kind to be almost exclusively available for defensive, scarcely at all for aggressive, purposes" (Mill 1975: XVII, 398).

Just like Hamilton and Madison, Mill thus also promotes a federation of small states instead of a large number of independent republics. The argument is different however; whereas Madison mainly addresses the benefits of diverging interests in a large state, in line with Hamilton's ideas Mill argues that large (federal) states will generally be less aggressive towards their neighbors, and the temptation to go to war will be diminished.

Table 2.2: The Effects of Size According to the Late 18th and 19th-Century Literature

Argument:	Expressed By:	Expectation for Microstates:
Smallness leads to more homogenous interests among the population	Madison	Increased attitudinal homogeneity among citizens
In small states, a majority of citizens can more easily oppress the minority, due to the decreased number of varying interests and factions	Madison	Decreased number of political alternatives, interests, and factions Decreased liberty for political minorities
Whereas direct democracy is suitable for small states, republicanism on a large scale is facilitated by representative democracy	Jefferson	Increased tendency to forms of direct democracy

Seeing that Hamilton's and Mill's objections to smallness are primarily related to international politics, Madison and Jefferson are the primary ones to challenge the domestic political arguments advanced by Montesquieu and Rousseau. Rather than contradicting their claims however, these Founding Fathers turn them upside down by arguing that face-to-face relations and homogenous interests (regardless of their relation to the public good) are a peril rather than an asset when it comes to liberal government, and by arguing that representative democracy facilitates republicanism on a large scale. Until at least the end of the First World War, when the German, Ottoman, Russian, and Austro-Hungarian Empires collapsed, the European trend with regard to state size was also towards larger instead of smaller countries. Whereas the appearance of many new, smaller states after 1918 may be interpreted as a reversal of this pattern, this phenomenon can be more adequately explained on the basis of the contemporary Wilsonian emphasis on popular self-determination and the nation-

state than as a renaissance in thinking about state size. The two main arguments with regard to the political effects of size that follow from the late 18th and 19th-century literature have been summarized in table 2.2.

4. Small is Vulnerable: the Post-War Perspective

After the two World Wars, academic theorizing about the consequences of state size and smallness shifted to the domain of foreign policy and international relations. Studies of small state-international behavior from the 1950s and 1960s reflect the pessimistic or realist view of international relations at the time, and primarily discuss strategies that small states can pursue in order to guarantee their survival (Fox 1959; Vandenbosch 1964; Rothstein 1966, 1968; Vital 1967; Sveics 1969). It should be noted however, that the small states described and analyzed in these publications would presently not be regarded as very small. In her analysis of small state-behavior during the Second World War, Annette Baker Fox examines the diplomatic strategies pursued by Turkey, Finland, Norway, Sweden, and Spain, and finds that a policy of abstinence and neutrality may be successfully pursued if larger powers can be convinced of the advantages of the neutrality of these states (1959: 180-181). After having analyzed the cases of Czechoslovakia, Israel, and Finland, David Vital reaches similar conclusions, ominously emphasizing that “in an international conflict (...) there can be no simple and straightforward compensation for material weakness” (1967: 129). The best strategy for small state-survival, therefore, is based on cooperation in international organizations (Vital 1967: 129-131). Vital furthermore points to the fact that in small states, the link between domestic and foreign policy is more obvious than in large states.

Taking the lessons of Fox and Vital to the Cold War-context, Robert Rothstein argues that a position of non-alignment is sometimes tactically viable for small states, but only in the case of a bipolar power structure (Rothstein 1966: 404-405; 1968: 32-37). Rothstein further mentions the fact that small states are highly supportive of international organizations, and explains this by the fact that these organizations are generally based on equality between their member-states (Rothstein 1968: 39-41). This conclusion is shared by Amry Vandenbosch, who argues that the UN Security Council was actually created by large states because “their interests ran the risk of being swamped by the multiplicity of small states” (1964: 299). According to these authors, the UN can be seen as “a great boon” for small states, and the fear that they would dominate international organizations has been expressed by other contemporary scholars as well (Rapoport 1968; Mendelson 1972). Vilnis Sveics, finally, makes a link with domestic politics by

emphasizing that small states must rely on their socio-political strength resulting from the fact that they are close-knit communities (1969: 39). Small states can pursue a strategy of 'national resistance', which essentially entails resistance to the aggressor on the basis of 'the spiritual strength of the community' (Sveics 1969: 69). This argument traces back to the earlier mentioned ideas of Aristotle, Montesquieu, and Rousseau, as it relates to the increased community cohesion and attachment to the public interest among small state-citizens.

Whereas the military disadvantages of smallness were emphasized in later publications as well (Schou and Brundtland 1971; Plischke 1977; Harden 1985; Espíndola 1987), the pessimism of the early postwar period also gave way to thinking in terms of opportunities (East 1973; Warrington 1998; Ingebritsen et al. 2006; Oest and Wivel 2008). The most recent publications in the field, which are regularly less theoretical and more based on real-world observations, indicate that microstates can actually use their sovereignty as a bargaining tool in international relations (e.g. Carney 1989; Sutton and Payne 1993; Stringer 2006). As these authors argue, the earlier mentioned equal position of small states in international organizations can for example be exploited by exchanging one's vote for military and economic gains.¹¹ In any case, it should be emphasized that the literature on smallness in relation to international relations, security, and foreign policy practically always conceptualizes state size in terms of military capacity. This choice is most straightforwardly articulated by Vandenbosch, who answers the question how size should be defined as follows: "obviously size alone, whether of population or area, is not a conclusive test. (...) The test has been military power, both actual and potential" (1964: 293).

In addition to the consequences of smallness with regard to foreign policy, in the postwar decades many scholars began to examine the effect of state size on economic development and performance. Like the discussion on foreign policy, initially this strand of research generally entailed a fairly pessimistic view on small state-development, emphasizing the lack of natural and human resources, capital, and the inherently small domestic markets of microstates (Robinson 1960; Knox 1967; Selwyn 1975; Dolman 1985; Payne 1987). Furthermore, these studies have highlighted the dependence of small states on a single export commodity, as a result of which fluctuations in the world market can have detrimental effects on their economies (Benedict 1967a: 2-3; Knox 1967: 35-38; Khalaf 1976: 423-424; Payne 1987: 52-53). A comparative study by Simon

¹¹ Carney and Sutton and Payne refer to this kind of small state-political behavior as 'international patron-client relationships', and more attention will be devoted to this term in the next chapter (# 3).

Kuznets demonstrates that the share of foreign trade in small state-economies is generally higher, and that many small states concentrate their trade on one larger state, resulting in what this author calls a “satellitic” position of small states vis-à-vis their larger neighbors (1960: 22-23). The literature on small state-economies also shares the deterministic outlook of the early authors on smallness and international relations, in stressing the fixed disadvantages of small states when it comes to economic development. According to Knox, the only advantage of small states vis-à-vis their larger counterparts is the fact that their greater levels of social cohesiveness allows for swift economic readjustments if these are necessary (1967: 44). In terms of its relevance for small state (domestic) politics, the notions that follow from this literature are therefore again to be found in greater attachment to the public good, increased levels of social cohesion, and vulnerability and dependency on external actors.

Over the course of the 1960s and 1970s, the negativity with concern to small-state development gave way to a more ambiguous view, in which both advantages and disadvantages of smallness were highlighted. This transformation was primarily due to real-world observations, according to which small states were found to perform no worse, or even better than larger states in terms of economic development (Schumacher 1973; Khalaf 1976, 1979; Kohr 1977; Katzenstein 1985; Baldacchino 1993; Streeten 1993; Armstrong et al. 1998; Armstrong and Read 2000, 2003; Easterly and Kraay 2000; Alesina and Spolaore 2005). In his renowned book with the indicative title *Small Is Beautiful*, economist Ernest Schumacher argues that small size may be an advantage to economic development, as “there is a tremendous longing and striving to profit, if at all possible, from the convenience, humanity, and manageability of smallness” (Schumacher 1973: 59). According to Schumacher, the contemporary “idolatry of gigantism” is unjustifiable, since “man is small, and therefore, small is beautiful” (1973: 61).

Later publications have found empirical support for Schumacher’s arguments, and among the most prominent of these is Peter Katzenstein’s *Small States in World Markets* (1985), in which the economic success of smaller European states is explained on the basis of their corporatist political and economic arrangements. According to Katzenstein, small European states have been marked by greater degrees of consensus, proportional representation, centralization, and cohesion (1985: 87-94). These political factors are hypothesized to result from the vulnerability associated with smallness, which creates “an ideology of social partnership” (Katzenstein 2003: 11). Although these observations are only made for Western European small states like the

Netherlands, Belgium, Sweden, Switzerland, and Austria, Katzenstein emphasizes that the political arrangements of these countries are in large part the result of their size, which suggests that the arguments should also be valid for other small states (Katzenstein 1985: 80).

In line with Katzenstein's observations, the most recent scholarly works on the issue tend to find that small state size may actually be an advantage when it comes to economic growth. Easterly and Kraay, for example, find that per capita income levels are higher in small states than in large states, even though economic volatility and trade shocks are also more pervasive (2000: 15). According to these authors, the main economic advantage of small states is that their economies are generally more open, as a consequence of which they have much higher trade shares (Easterly and Kraay 2000: 8-10). In various publications, Harvey Armstrong and his colleagues argue that the group of microstates is too diverse to draw any universally valid conclusions about the influence of size on economic performance (Armstrong et al. 1998: 654; Armstrong and Read 2000). Differences in economic performance are found to be principally related to region, natural resources, and opportunities for the development of a tourism-industry.

Another study that reaches more neutral conclusions about state size and economic development is Alesina and Spolaore's *The Size of Nations* (2005). The main argument of these authors is that the association between size and economic growth is marked by a trade-off between the benefits of largeness and the costs of heterogeneity (Alesina and Spolaore 2005: 6-7, 217). Whereas a larger population size implies a greater market and better conditions for trade, it also implies a more heterogeneous and less harmonious population, and less favorable conditions for democracy. Furthermore, the authors find that economic success is primarily related to the nature of the trade regime, in the sense that small states generally fare better in a free-market environment, whereas trade restrictions seriously hamper their opportunities for economic growth (Alesina and Spolaore 2005: 172-173). Scholars studying the association between state size and economic performance generally conceptualize size according to population figures. The limited domestic market and workforce of microstates, which many scholars believe to obstruct economic development, are of course directly related to population, and not to for example territorial or military size. The economic flexibility which according to for example Knox and Alesina and Spolaore results from amplified social cohesion in microstates, is also principally connected with population size.

Although the postwar literature is primarily oriented towards the international political and economic consequences of size, either implicitly or

explicitly most of these analyses do express a number of assumptions and suppositions with regard to the (domestic) political effects of smallness. Whereas some of these theories are in line with the views that were expressed by earlier thinkers, others are new, and are more often based on real-world evidence and observations. In any case, it is remarkable that whereas this literature generally regards smallness as an obstacle to economic and military capacities, its expectations with regard to politics are much more positive. The supposed homogeneity of interests in smaller settings is assumed to prevent internal divisions and conflicts, which in turn is believed to benefit the efficiency, flexibility, and stability of government. Since the average state size had been declining again since at least the First World War (Lake and O'Mahony 2004: 703), these expectations could often be buttressed by empirical observations. In table 2.3, the main arguments and theories that follow from the postwar literature on the effects of state size have been summarized.

Table 2.3: The Effects of Size According to the Post-War Literature

Argument:	Expressed By:	Expectation for Microstates:
External threats pressures entail that small state-societies are necessarily more cohesive and close-knit	Sveics, Knox, Katzenstein	Increased social cohesion among citizens
Due to vulnerability, small states are marked by greater degrees of centralization, which stimulates democratic development	Sveics, Knox, Katzenstein, Alesina and Spolaore	Increased political consensus and uniformity
Small states have greater levels of homogeneity and consensus, increasing the chance of democracy	Alesina and Spolaore	Increased homogeneity of interests Increased chance of democratic government

5. Small is Personal: Sociological Consequences of Smallness

Whereas international relations and economic development thus take the spotlight in the postwar small-state literature, scholarly interest in *domestic* political and societal characteristics of microstates resurfaced in the late 1960s and early 1970s. This new academic attention and curiosity can be linked to the momentous process of decolonization that had already started in the early postwar years in Asia, but culminated in the early 1960s in Africa. As a

consequence of decolonization, the number of small states in the world rose rapidly, especially after many Caribbean, African, and Pacific island states gained independence over the course of the 1970s and 1980s. As a direct outcome of this development, on behalf of the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, Burton Benedict and others published the edited volume *Problems of Smaller Territories* (1967a), in which attention is paid to demographic, political, economic, and sociological aspects of small states.¹² Whereas the negative and pessimistic tone of the early postwar publications on smallness is certainly reiterated in the volume, a number of new insights that deserve further discussion come up as well.

In addition to the problems associated with economy and foreign policy, Benedict and his coauthors identify small state-obstacles in the fields of public administration, ethnic diversity, emigration, and multiple-role relationships (Benedict 1967a: 6-9).¹³ In a chapter on political aspects and consequences of smallness, D.P.J. Wood repeats the problems of small territories related to economy and foreign policy, but eventually affirms that “perhaps the gravest disadvantage of being small lies in the field of human relations” (Wood 1967: 33). According to Wood, in small societies roles of kinship are unavoidably ensnared with roles of office, and personal relationship therefore have a profound influence on public affairs; “the political decisions are left squarely with those who have known each other since childhood” (Wood 1967: 34). As a result, Wood argues, “[p]rivate roles of kinship and obligation are entangled with public roles of office”, with conflicts of interest as the obvious consequence (1967: 33). Whereas the development of intimate personal relationships and an increased sense of community has constituted one of the main arguments of the in favor of small societies from the ancient Greeks until the 1960s, for Wood the consequences of smallness in relation to personal relationships are chiefly negative.

In the fourth chapter of the volume, which deals with some sociological aspects of smallness, Benedict discusses the question whether community cohesion, which was until then always seen as one of the major assets of small states, is an advantage or a disadvantage for a society. The answer is largely negative; the author emphasizes that the outcome of social cohesiveness is not necessarily constructive, since evidence suggests that small communities

¹² In addition, four chapters are devoted to case studies on Honduras, Luxembourg, Polynesia, and Swaziland.

¹³ Specifically, Benedict argues that in small territories, the costs of administration will absorb a relatively great proportion of the national income, ethnic heterogeneity will cause greater political problems than in larger territories, citizens are more likely to emigrate due to a lack of economical and educational opportunities (resulting in a brain drain), and problems of patronage and clientelism that stem from multiple-role relationships. The latter pattern is also hypothesized to limit the impartiality and neutrality of the judiciary and the civil service (Benedict 1967a: 3-8).

sometimes experience deep personal antagonisms and animosity between different persons or social groups, which certainly do not benefit the political system (Benedict 1967b: 49). A second political aspect of smallness that Benedict describes is the omnipresence and omnipotence of government (Benedict 1967b: 53-54). Since the society of small states is so diminutive, the political elite is likely to dominate and be active in every section of the community, and the pervasiveness of government is assumed to result in clientelism and social dependency (ibid.). As a consequence, Benedict concludes, the development of a political opposition in small societies is likely to be undermined. The belief that smallness fosters particularistic relations between citizens and their representatives was earlier articulated in *The Social System* by the renowned sociologist Talcott Parsons (1951). In the volume, Parsons argues that “[s]maller and simpler organizations are typically managed with a high degree of particularism in the relations of persons in authority to their subordinates” (1951: 508).

The issue of government supremacy is also discussed in the last chapter of the volume, which deals with executive-legislative relations in small territories. The author of the chapter, A.W. Singham, observes that at least for the British West Indian territories, legislatures are habitually subordinate to the executive (Singham 1967: 135). Additionally, it is found that “small societies (...) present real difficulties in the development of harmonious relationships between the political executive and the civil service” (Singham 1967: 148). In small societies, Singham concludes, the executive, the legislature, and the administration do not cooperate on the basis of an equal relationship, but instead the executive dominates the other two institutions. Regarding the public administration, Singham finally notes that its costs are likely to constitute an excessive burden on the budgets of small states. In addition, it is noted that the civil service of small states is often highly politicized as a consequence of particularism, and that changes in government often coincide with large turnovers in the public administration, thereby undermining the quality and experience of the civil service (Singham 1967: 137-139).

The edited volume *States, Microstates, and Islands* by Edward Dommen and Philippe Hein (1985) constitutes a second publication in which sociological consequences of smallness are highlighted. Of particular interest is François Doumenge’s chapter on the viability of small tropical islands, in which a range of issues leading from climatologic and geological characteristics to anthropological and political features are discussed. In terms of sociology, Doumenge highlights ethnic and linguistic fragmentation and heterogeneity as major threats to stability

in island states, since insularity increases attitudes of group identity (1985: 87-90, 102-103). According to the author, “[i]slanders are never happier with their insularity than when asserting that they are completely different from their neighbors”, which augments the risks of fragmentation and ethnic tensions (Doumenge 1985: 102, 113). In short, Doumenge not only challenges the conventional idea that small states have more homogenous and consensus-oriented societies, but also asserts that heterogeneity may present additional risks and setbacks for small island states.

Many of the issues discussed in *Problems of Smaller Territories and States, Microstates, and Islands* resurface in the edited volume *Politics, Security, and Development in Small States* (1987) that is published by Colin Clarke and Anthony Payne. In addition to eight case studies,¹⁴ several chapters in this volume devote attention to political, social, economic, and security issues in small states. Scholarly interest in the effects of smallness was reinvigorated in the 1980s not only as a consequence of the emergence of many new, sovereign microstates, but also due to the 1983-US invasion of Grenada (Operation *Urgent Fury*). In a first chapter on the political aspects of smallness, Paul Sutton examines a number of factors in both the domestic and the international contexts of small states. On the domestic level, Sutton distinguishes five political characteristics that he believes to be related to small population size; 1) institutional fidelity, 2) governmental pervasiveness, 3) exaggerated personalism, 4) concerted political harmony, and 5) pragmatic conservatism (Sutton 1987: 8).

With regard to the political institutions of small states, Sutton demonstrates how many small states that are former British colonies (which represent the bulk of small states) have retained the Westminster-Whitehall system of government after gaining independence (Sutton 1987: 9-12). As an explanation for this pattern, Sutton points to the relatively increased length and intensity of colonization in microstates, as a result of which the people in this former colonies have come to regard these political institutions as autochthonous (Sutton 1987: 8-9). As the second and third points, Sutton points to the phenomena of governmental pervasiveness and exaggerated personalism in small settings. According to Sutton, in small states,

“[g]overnment is said to dominate, since it seeks on the one hand to duplicate the range of services offered in the larger states, and on the other is subject to fewer constraints from countervailing sectors, pressure groups, or non-governmental institutional activity” (Sutton 1987: 12).

¹⁴ Of Grenada, Antigua and Barbuda, Fiji, Mauritius, the Gambia, Swaziland, Malta, and Cyprus.

Just like Benedict and Singham, Sutton also highlights the consequences of governmental dominance for the impartiality of the civil service and the judiciary. With regard to the increased personalism of small-state politics, Sutton points out that smallness may generate negative effects such as a greater concentration of power in the hands of a few individuals, decreased functional specialization, and a tendency towards authoritarianism or even dictatorship (Sutton 1987: 15-16). Political leaders of small states are also found to be in office for comparatively longer periods of time than leaders of other, larger states.

On the issue of political harmony, Sutton finds that small states are on the whole more liberal, more democratic, and less instable than larger states (Sutton 1987: 17). This increased stability is mainly attributed to increased attitudinal homogeneity among the inhabitants of smaller states, which creates better foundations for the implementation of representative democracy, and is also assumed to foster political participation. On average, smallness is furthermore linked to political centrism or conservatism, which is according to Sutton an effect of the homogeneity of interests in small states, and results in the absence of a strong political opposition. In a later publication with largely the same content, Sutton emphasizes that “government patronage is (...) an important and ubiquitous part of the political system” in small states (2007a: 203). Furthermore, it is being argued that the influence of the civil society is generally less important than in larger states, and that there is a tendency to confuse local interests with national interests (a phenomenon that is labeled as 'parochialism'; Sutton 2007a: 211).

Regarding sociological aspects, which constitute the main topic of the second chapter, David Lowenthal notes tendencies towards 1) conservatism and tradition, 2) intimacy, and 3) “obsessive” autonomism. The natural propensity towards conservatism and tradition in small states stems from the fragile and vulnerable nature of these states, in which small changes can have very strong consequences (Lowenthal 1987: 36). Especially with regard to demographic, economic, and ecological features, small states are highly vulnerable, and “any major change comes at the risk of catastrophic loss” (Lowenthal 1987: 37). In line with many earlier studies, Lowenthal points to the high degree of intimacy and personal contact in small states. Whether or not they like each other, inhabitants of small states will generally know each other very well, and will have to deal with each other in multiple occasions and while fulfilling different societal roles (Lowenthal 1987: 38-39). If a society is very small, there is a great chance that bonds of family will also have an influence on public affairs, thereby increasing the likelihood of nepotism. Moreover, in line with Doumenge Lowenthal argues that

smallness may serve to reinforce ethnic tensions, which tend to be more stringent and more likely to result in violence in smaller states (Lowenthal 1987: 40-41).

Table 2.4: The Effects of Size According to the Sociological Literature

Argument:	Expressed By:	Expectations for Microstates:
Smallness leads to more intimate societies in which people combine societal roles, as a result of which conflicts of interest emerge	Wood, Lowenthal, Farrugia	Increased tendency to the development of multiple-role relations and conflicts of interests
Small-state politics is driven by personal relations, and social cohesion can generate intense personal antagonisms and feuds, especially in the case of ethnic tensions	Benedict, Sutton, Doumenge, Lowenthal, Farrugia, Baldacchino	Predisposition toward personalistic forms of contestation and person-oriented polarization
Smallness leads to the absence or weakness of counterbalancing institutions, as a result of which government occupies a supremely powerful position in small states, leading to particularism and a weak political opposition	Benedict, Singham, Sutton, Sutton and Payne, Baldacchino	Increased tendency to executive dominance versus other institutions Increased likelihood of particularism
Political leaders of small states remain in office for a comparatively longer period of time	Sutton, Sutton and Payne	Decrease in the frequency of government alternation
As a consequence of the fact that small states are comparatively prone to lengthy and intensive colonization, they are more likely to maintain the institutions of their former colonizers	Sutton, Farrugia	Inclination to retain (democratic) political structure of colonizer
Small state-politics are marked by conservatism and democracy, due to the vulnerable nature of these states	Sutton, Lowenthal	Increased likelihood of democratic government; tendency to political centrism & conservatism
Due to homogeneity, small states are more harmonious and liberal than large states, and offer greater opportunities for the participation of citizens	Sutton	Increased liberty and harmony Increased political participation

In more recent publications on small state-societies, the aforementioned effects of smallness are confirmed and further examined (Farrugia 1993; Sutton and Payne 1993; Sutton 2007a; Baldacchino 2012). In an article that essentially focuses on foreign policy and security features of small states, Sutton and Payne also underscore a number of negative sociological and political consequences of smallness, such as patron-client relations, the lack of a political opposition, the personalization of politics, and the domination of the system by a handful of individuals (Sutton and Payne 1993: 587).¹⁵ These findings are confirmed in a publication of Charles Farrugia on the challenges of administration in small states, in which the blurring of institutional boundaries due to multiple-role relations is emphasized (Farrugia 1993: 224). In addition, Farrugia points to the sharp personal polarization that can beset small state-politics, and it is highlighted that the interference of public and private roles creates problems in the policy-making process (Farrugia 1993: 223). In a recent publication by Godfrey Baldacchino, the authoritarian and personalistic tendencies of small-state politics are reconfirmed (2012). In table 2.4, the main arguments with regard to the effects of size that follow from the late 20th-century sociological literature are summarized.

6. Small is Democratic: Optimism Rediscovered

After economic, international, and sociological small-state features had been examined in the 1950s and 1960s, Robert Dahl and Edward Tufte's seminal work *Size and Democracy* (1973) represents a primary and pioneering attempt to empirically investigate the relation between smallness and democracy. Regarding their conception of size, it can be noted that the authors look at population, territory, population density, and socio-economic characteristics, and conclude by saying that each variable may influence democracy, which means that they will all be employed in the study (Dahl and Tufte 1973: 17-20). With regard to democracy, the authors distinguish two main criteria: *citizen effectiveness* and

¹⁵ Specifically, the authors argue that "[i]n small states the role of the individual takes on great significance. Politics can and usually does focus on personality. Political mobilization is organized around the individual so that factions and patron-client networks abound. In the hands of assertive or charismatic leaders, these platforms can easily be transformed into mechanisms for the domination of the political system. This is especially worrying when the pervasiveness of politics in small states is taken into account. (...). Would-be dictators, in short, have little to stop them once they are in office. The public service can easily be intimidated or corrupted and the opposition silenced or cowed. Power becomes centered in one person (and his or her immediate circle) who come to regard any challenge to their position as a threat to the security of the state. Change from within becomes almost impossible to organize openly or peacefully. In such circumstances, a temptation to resort to assassination, coup, or invasion almost naturally follows" (Sutton and Payne 1993: 587).

system capacity (Dahl and Tufte 1973: 29). Whereas citizen effectiveness refers to the opportunities of citizens to participate in their political system, system capacity alludes to the capacity of states to respond to the preferences of their citizens. Dahl and Tufte assume that there is a trade-off between the two criteria; in small polities citizen effectiveness and participation should be high, but system capacity can be expected to be low. Conversely, in a larger polity citizen effectiveness should be lower, and system capacity is hypothesized to be higher (1973: 23-24).

A first test that the authors carry out reveals that the policy-making process in small states is much less complex than in larger states, which is primarily caused by the greater number of social organizations and groups in larger states (Dahl and Tufte 1973: 40). Regarding political efficacy and participation, the authors test two contrasting hypotheses; one posits on the basis of Rousseau's theories that levels of efficacy and participation are higher in small polities due to the amplified political influence of single citizens in small societies (cf. Riker and Ordeshook 1968), but the other one expects diminished efficacy and participation due to the scarcity of differing political viewpoints, factions, and political alternatives (which relates to Madison's arguments). On the basis of existing data on political participation in smaller and larger European democracies and the United States, Dahl and Tufte find that "political participation and sense of effectiveness among citizens do not depend to any significant degree on the size of a country" (Dahl and Tufte 1973: 65).

In the fifth chapter of their volume, Dahl and Tufte examine the opportunities for communication between leaders and citizens, and the various mechanisms of citizen control of government in small and large democracies. With regard to communication between leaders and citizens, Dahl and Tufte find some notable differences between small and large democracies; in smaller settings direct, reciprocal communication between leaders and citizens is possible and occurs frequently, which results in a better perception of the preferences of citizens among leaders, which in turn enhances the prospects and quality of responsiveness (Dahl and Tufte 1973: 87). In addition to improved communication between politicians and citizens, Dahl and Tufte also observe that communication between political leaders occurs more frequently and more directly in small societies. Finally, the notion of Benedict and Wood with regard to multiple-role relationships is confirmed by Dahl and Tufte, who argue that political leaders of small states are generally less specialized, and often perform other professions or roles in addition to their political function (Dahl and Tufte 1973: 87).

The subsequent chapter in the volume deals with the extent to which smallness affects political competition and political conflict. With regard to this subject, the authors depart from the hypothesis that political competition is stronger in large settings, due to the presence of more diverse interests. As an effect, the likelihood of the existence of a formal opposition in large states is greater, and mechanisms for dealing with political conflict are expected to be more institutionalized (Dahl and Tufte 1973: 92-93). Furthermore, in small states the authors expect less conflict between political groups, but when they occur, group conflicts are assumed to be more personal, more explosive, and more likely to polarize every part of society (ibid.). On the basis of data from Swedish and Dutch communities and Swiss cantons, Dahl and Tufte are able to accept most of their hypotheses.

As the findings and conclusions from the chapters on participation, communication, and competition are combined, the authors are able to construct a model in which they detect a trade-off between the *costs of participation* and the *costs of dissent*; in societies with small numbers of inhabitants it is more difficult to oppose the majority view because it will be less easy to find allies and there will be less opportunities to participate in institutions that do not concur with the dominant political ideas (Dahl and Tufte 1973: 108). On the other hand, in societies with more inhabitants, the possibility of reciprocal communication between leaders and citizens diminishes, and citizens will be less inclined to participate in politics because the effects of participation are reduced. With regard to the aspect of citizen effectiveness, therefore, the authors conclude that there is no 'optimal' size of a polity. The final two chapters of *Size and Democracy* deal with Dahl and Tufte's other aspect of democracy: system capacity. By comparing small and large democracies on the occurrence and frequency of internal conflict, economic capacities, cultural capacities, and the capacity for independence and autonomy, the authors find that small countries are more dependent on international trade and imports, but that with regard to the other three features, no significant differences exist between large and small countries.

As a whole, the study of Dahl and Tufte is very much hampered by data deficiencies, as a consequence of which many of the formulated hypotheses cannot be subjected to empirical testing. In addition, it is worth noting Dahl and Tufte's conceptualization of smallness; some of the countries they examine, such as Austria, Sweden, and the Netherlands, would not be classified as 'small' countries by most (contemporary) standards. As a final remark, it should be mentioned that the most interesting findings of the study are not obtained from comparisons at the national level, but at the local (or cantonal) level. The

generalizability of their findings to comparisons at the inter-national level is therefore in question.

Whereas Dahl and Tufte are by and large inconclusive about the relation between size and democracy, subsequent publications mainly highlight the positive effects of smallness with regard to democratic development. This is in large part due to a number of statistical analyses in which size is seemingly almost accidentally found to significantly affect levels of democracy, even though these analyses do not pay attention to the causal mechanism that could underpin this association (Hadenius 1992: 125; Stepan and Skach 1993: 11-13; Diamond and Tsalik 1999: 118-119; Clague et al. 2001: 26).¹⁶ Already in advance to these publications however, Arend Lijphart examines the relationship between state size and his concept of consociational democracy, and notes that all European consociational democracies are in fact small countries (Lijphart 1977: 65). On the nature of this link, Lijphart argues:

“What is the explanation of this strong empirical relationship? Small size has both *direct* and *indirect* effects on the probability that consociational democracy will be established and will be successful: it directly enhances a spirit of cooperativeness and accommodation, and it indirectly increases the chances of consociational democracy by reducing the burdens of decision-making and thus rendering the country easier to govern” (Lijphart 1977: 65).

Lijphart thus repeats Dahl and Tufte’s idea of enhanced cooperation and communication in smaller societies, and argues that the people and the political elite will generally know each other better when the number of citizens is lower. In fact, Lijphart directly dismisses homogeneity as the reason for democratic success, which he contributes solely to “more closely linked elites” (1977: 66). The author also repeats Aristotle’s argument of governability; he believes small states to be better governable because they are less complex, and “the number and variety of groups and individuals whose interests and attitudes have to be taken into consideration are fewer” (Lijphart 1977: 68). Moreover, since small states only seldom play a significant role internationally, they tend to refrain from developing an active foreign policy, which decreases the chance that they are

¹⁶ Axel Hadenius appears to be the first one to discover this statistical association, and reports that “it appears, if we consider the size of the population, that the real micro-states, with a population of less than 100,000, have surprisingly high values for democracy” (Hadenius 1992: 125). In similar fashion, Larry Diamond and Svetlana Tsalik find that: “[o]ne of the most striking features of the distribution of democracies (liberal and otherwise) around the world is also, curiously, one of its least discussed theoretically: its significantly greater incidence in very small countries, with populations of less than about one million inhabitants” (Diamond and Tsalik 1999: 117). While these scholars find evidence for the existence of a statistical relation, they do not really present any empirical explanations for this link.

involved in international conflicts, which in turn promotes the chances of democracy (Lijphart 1977: 69).

The most elaborate study on size and democracy that was written after *Size and Democracy* is most likely Dana Ott's *Small Is Democratic* (2000). The leading hypothesis of Ott's book, which is the published version of her doctoral dissertation, is that "small states are more likely to become democratic than large states", but in addition Ott also investigates the consequences of smallness for democratic consolidation, access to information, political instability, and political violence (Ott 2000: 111). In the analysis, Ott employs a composite measure of smallness that involves both population size (less than one and a half million inhabitants is regarded as small), and population density (Ott 2000: 18). In total, 237 countries¹⁷ are included in the study, which is longitudinal in character and examines data that were collected for the period between 1973 and 1995 (Ott 2000: 109). In conceptualizing democracy, Ott makes use of the Freedom House scores and the Coppedge-Reinicke Polyarchy scale. After the statistical part of the study, Ott presents the results of her fieldwork in two small countries, the Gambia and Trinidad and Tobago,¹⁸ in order to illustrate the effects of smallness on political systems in practice.

The results of Ott's analysis reveal that small states are much more likely to be democratic than larger states (Ott 2000: 118). The presentation of the descriptive statistics alone already demonstrates that small states have over the years always been more democratic than larger states:

"In 1973, while 27% of large states received the rating "Free", 47.7% of small states received this ranking. In 1983, 27.3% of large states were considered democratic, while 44.4% of small states were so rated. In 1993, 28.7% of large states received the highest freedom ranking, while **67.4%** of small states received this ranking" (Ott 2000: 115).

These descriptive statistics are later on supported by a regression analysis, in which a dummy variable for small countries turns out to have a highly significant effect on the likelihood of a democratic political system (Ott 2000: 120). Furthermore, the relationship is found to be consistent when controlling for the effects of GDP per capita. In testing the influence of size on the preservation of democracy, Ott confirms the notion that small states are more likely to remain

¹⁷ This figure also includes a number of semi-independent territories, dependencies, and colonies.

¹⁸ It may be remarked that the countries that Ott has selected for her field research are not very small; although both meet Ott's selection criteria for small states, both the Gambia and Trinidad and Tobago have more than one million inhabitants, and it is unclear whether the effects of size on politics in these states are representative for the microstates that are examined in this dissertation.

democratic than large states, seeing that “[w]hile large states were democratic for 27.3% of the period where Freedom House data was reported, 55.9% of small states were democratic for this period” (Ott 2000: 121-122).

The qualitative part of Ott’s study, in which the outcomes of case studies in the Gambia and Trinidad and Tobago are reported, largely supports the findings of the quantitative analysis. In both countries, the existence of multiple-role relationships, easy and open access to political leaders, increased opportunities for political participation, and the continuing support of the political elite for the democratic political system have according to Ott contributed to the development of democracy, even though democracy was abolished in the Gambia after a military coup in 1994. In Ott’s view, the size of the population has thus had a profound impact on the politics of these two states, and the effects of size have been largely positive. However, in the conclusion the author points out, in rather vague terms, that smallness does not inevitably generate democracy, but that it creates “an environment in which positive developments may or may not occur” (Ott 2000: 188-190).

Whereas Ott succeeds in demonstrating the association between smallness and democracy, unfortunately the analysis largely falls short in explaining this connection. On closer inspection the two case studies could equally well be used as evidence for a *negative* relation between smallness and democracy. For example, Ott asserts that most citizens of the Gambia believe that there is only a very weak political opposition in this country (Ott 2000: 141-142, 153-154). In addition, Ott points to the increased power of political elites in small states, and argues that in the Gambia, there is a lack of alternative sources of information since the only noteworthy newspaper is owned by the government (Ott 2000: 144-145, 149). Finally, Ott describes how the main political party of the Gambia (which has been in government since independence) dominates the bureaucracy and uses state resources in election campaigns (Ott 2000: 155). Whereas the situation concerning access to diverse information is better in Trinidad and Tobago, here the government has used state resources in election campaigns as well (Ott 2000: 181). Moreover, “in both the Gambia and Trinidad and Tobago, opposition has proved to be a difficult endeavor” (Ott 2000: 182). The differences can in part be explained by the procedural and formalistic definition of democracy that is employed in the statistical part of the book, as a consequence of which more informal aspects of politics are largely left out of the large-N analysis.

Subsequent to Ott’s analysis, research on politics and democracy in microstates has primarily been conducted by Dag and Carsten Anckar. In a series

of publications, these authors study small-state parliaments (1996), political parties (1997; 2000), popular heterogeneity (1999), direct democracy instruments (2004a), and the statistical association between smallness, insularity, and democracy in general (1995; 2002a, 2002b, 2006; 2008a; 2008b). On the issue of homogeneity, in several papers it is found that there is little evidence for increased categorical homogeneity in small settings, whereas levels of attitudinal homogeneity are indeed found to be higher (Anckar 1999: 42-43). Regarding direct democracy mechanisms, it is found that despite the facilitating environment that is created by size, instruments of direct democracy are not more often used in microstates than in other states (Anckar 2004a: 386-387). Finally, in a more recent article Anckar finds that microstates are especially prone to majoritarian democracy, but that they often adopt consensus-oriented features within this framework (Anckar 2008c: 81-82).

Whereas the plethora of published articles by the Anckars are valuable in the sense that they provide information and data on (previously unstudied) microstate-political institutions, just like Ott's book they are less successful when it comes to accounting for the relation between smallness and democracy. Although several hypotheses with regard to this relation are rejected, and others are presented and formulated, the analyses do not result in a convincing argument or theory on microstate-democracy (Diamond and Tsalik 1999: 117-118; cf. Srebrnik 2004: 339). In a reviewing article, Anckar arrives at the conclusion that, despite the many publications in the last decades, "the mechanisms that link small size and democracy remain under-researched" (Anckar 2008b: 81). Whereas it can be concluded that a large variety of suppositions and hypotheses with regard to the link between smallness and democracy have been formulated over time, the contemporary academic literature largely fails to uncover or empirically test their significance.

Although the wide majority of publications confirm the negative association between size and democracy, some scholars have found evidence against this relationship (Barro 1999; Gerring and Zarecki 2011). According to Gerring and Zarecki, democracy works better in larger settings due to 1) dispersal of power among a larger number of institutions, 2) better opportunities for conflict mitigation, 3) stronger democracy-supporting institutions, and 4) more institutionalized procedures of rule (2011: 8-10). Whereas the absence of these circumstances in small states was also noted in part of the sociological literature on smallness (e.g. Benedict 1967b; Lowenthal 1987), Gerring and Zarecki explicitly link them to the functioning of democracy. In this respect, the authors essentially build upon Madison's arguments against smallness, and also find

empirical evidence for their hypotheses in their subsequent quantitative analysis (Gerring and Zarecki 2011: 12-15).

Table 2.5: The Effects of Size According to the Size & Democracy Literature

Argument:	Expressed By:	Expectations for Microstates:
Policy-making in small states is less complex due to a decreased number of actors and potential veto-players involved	Dahl and Tufte	Increased executive dominance Decreased number of veto-players
In small states, reciprocal communication between citizens and politicians is possible and occurs frequently, leading to increased responsiveness	Dahl and Tufte Ott	Increased accessibility of politicians, and increased communication between citizens and politicians Increased political responsiveness
As a result of homogenous interests, there is less political competition in small states, which decreases the chance of a strong political opposition	Dahl and Tufte	Decreased political competition Decreased opposition
Smallness leads to a spirit of accommodation among the political elite, which increases the chances of democracy	Lijphart	Increased political consensus on elite-level Greater likelihood of democratic government
Small countries are more likely to be democratic due to increased opportunities for participation, and elite support for democracy	Ott	Increased political participation of citizens Increased support for democracy among elite
Small countries are less likely to be democratic due to the absence of strong institutions and institutionalized forms of rule	Gerring and Zarecki	Weak institutions; institutions ignored or circumvented

In table 2.5, the main theoretical arguments about the influence of size on politics - and in this case especially democracy - as they follow from the size and democracy-literature have been presented. Seeing that a large part of this

literature is positive about the consequences of smallness for democratic development, many of these arguments relate to those expressed by the Classic and Enlightenment-philosophers. The open access and reciprocal communication between politicians and citizens that are highlighted by Dahl and Tufte and Ott are for instance directly borrowed from earlier writings of Montesquieu and Rousseau, which indicates that this literature continues to be relevant. By contrast, the arguments of Gerring and Zarecki are closely connected to both Madison's arguments and the sociological literature on size, as these scholars essentially reiterate the arguments of Benedict, Lowenthal, Sutton, and Farrugia. This shows that the Classic ideas about the effects of size on politics have all but lost their appeal, and are – with some modifications and adjustments – still dominant in the literature. Now that the chronological overview of the literature on the political effects of size is completed, the main expectations and conclusions that follow from this literature are discussed in the conclusion.

7. Conclusion: the Expectations that Follow from the Literature

The global tendency towards smaller states that started after 1918 is at present still ongoing. In recent decades, large states like the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia have fragmented, separatist regions like Eritrea, Timor-Leste, and South Sudan have become autonomous states, and small dependencies and overseas territories like Palau have acquired independence and statehood.¹⁹ Whereas presupposed economic and international political drawbacks used to be seen as major arguments against smallness, more recent empirical studies call these theories into question. By contrast, the sociological and socio-political literature on size remains rather discouraging, and the findings that follow from this literature can generally be interpreted as democracy-undermining. On the other hand, as can be seen in the introduction contemporary statistics appear to suggest the existence of a strong association between smallness and democracy, although satisfactory explanations for this pattern remain lacking. In short, due to these contradictory theories at present the effects of size on politics and democracy are largely uncertain and ambiguous, and in some ways a disparity between theories and empirics can be observed; whereas theorizing about the (socio-) political effects of smallness remains mostly pessimistic, in practice most empirical analyses do point to a greater incidence of democracy in small settings.

¹⁹ In addition, several of the remaining overseas territories and dependencies appear to be increasingly pursuing autonomy and statehood. In the Danish autonomous country of Greenland a 2008 referendum has opened the way for future independence, and the French overseas territory of New Caledonia will organize a referendum on independence within the next five years.

On the basis of the philosophical and academic literature on the relation between size and politics, a great number of expectations and theories can be listed. On closer inspection, many of the hypothesized positive and negative consequences of smallness can however be classified into four aspects or sub-dimensions of democracy.²⁰ In table 2.6, these four sub-dimensions have been listed in the first column, followed by the positive and negative expectations with regard to the presence and development of democracy in the second and third columns. In this way, it can be observed how the expectations with regard to the influence of smallness on the presence of political alternatives, the horizontal balance of power between institutions, the relations between citizens and politicians, and the extent of citizen participation diverge, which also illustrates the continuing indeterminacy of the academic debate.

Table 2.6: The Expected Consequences of Smallness for Democratic Development

Sub-dimension of democracy	Democracy-Stimulating Consequences of Smallness	Democracy-Undermining Consequences of Smallness
Presence of alternatives and an opposition	- Tendency to consensus, stability, and harmony - Increased liberty and republicanism - Greater homogeneity of interests	- Decreased number of factions and interests - Less political competition, weakened political opposition - Personalistic politics; strong person-based polarization
Horizontal balance of power between institutions	- More effective and efficient government	- Executive dominance in relation to other institutions - Infrequent alternation of power - Circumvention or ignorance of institutions
Relations between citizens and politicians	- Increased accessibility of politicians; more (direct) contact - Increased responsiveness - Increased social cohesion and attachment to the public good	- Conflicts of interest due to multiple-role relations - Prevalence of clientelism, patronage, and nepotism
Political participation of citizens	- Increased political efficacy - Increased political awareness - Increased political participation and involvement; more direct democracy	- Decreased political role for minorities and opposition (supporters)

²⁰ These four sub-dimensions will be used as the conceptual framework of democracy on the basis of which the analytical part of this dissertation is conducted. For further discussion, see section 3 of chapter 4.

In academic publications that are not or only indirectly focused on small states, some of the characteristics and effects that are presented in table 2.6 have been confirmed. For example, the notion that smaller settings are more homogenous has been examined by comparing US municipalities of different sizes (Black 1974; Wilson 1986), and the idea that political participation is stronger in smaller settings has been analyzed by studies on turnout (Hansen et al. 1987; Blais and Carty 1990; Blais and Dobrzynska 1998: 242-243; Blais 2000: 24-29; Franklin 2002: 158-159; Gaarsted Frandsen 2002; Veenendaal 2009; Remmer 2010) and party membership (Mair and van Biezen 2001: 10; Weldon 2006). Most of these publications are not specifically focused on microstates however, which is probably at least partially an effect of data deficiencies. In this sense, the case study-analysis in chapters to come will shed more light on the applicability of these findings to this particular, under-researched set of cases.

The main conclusion that follows from this discussion of the theoretical literature on size is that the influence of smallness of politics as of yet remains largely unclear. Whereas various empirical studies have observed a statistical link between size and democracy, it has turned out to be very difficult to find theoretical explanations in support of this evidence. As a result, it appears that at this point, statistical analyses will not be able to offer new insights into this relationship, and instead a different, more qualitative approach now seems to be the most fruitful way forward. In this respect, a first step that could be taken is to examine the relatively extensive case study-literature on microstates, which remarkably until now has hardly ever been compared to the more theoretical literature. In the next chapter therefore, an overview is given of the more case-oriented, empirical literature on microstates. On the basis of this discussion, it can be examined in how far the theories and suppositions that follow from the present chapter materialize in the real-world practice.