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Security, Profit or Shadow of the Past? Explaining the Alliance Strategies of Micro States

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Abstract

Which factors determine the alliance strategies of micro states? Many micro states are either secluded island states with little need for traditional alliances or tied very closely politically, economically and culturally to a bigger neighbouring 'protector state'.

Therefore, they have had little use for more traditional alliance arrangements. However, alliance patterns have changed as the significance of flexible ad hoc coalition building as

a means to coordinate international interventions has increased. As a consequence, the strategic challenges and opportunities for micro states have been transformed. Focusing on the coalition on Operation Iraqi Freedom, this paper explores three hypotheses on micro states' choice to join international ad hoc coalitions: 1) participation provides increased security; 2) participation provides non-military, typically economic, gains; 3) participation reflects the lessons of past security challenges – and examines the explanatory power of each hypothesis by a comparative case study of 11 Pacific micro states.

1. Introduction

In March 2003, 49 states had officially joined the United States in the coalition on Operation Iraqi Freedom (www.whitehouse.gov 20003/03).¹ From early 2002, the United States had worked systematically to convince its allies that regime change was necessary linking Saddam Hussein's regime to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, and violation of human rights. The United States presented its case against Iraq in the UN, but as it became clear that it was difficult to get a clear mandate to legitimise military action against Iraq through the UN, the Americans decided to act through a 'coalition of the willing' despite strong opposition from both close NATO allies such as Germany and France and great powers like Russia and China. Despite the international controversy surrounding the intervention and the lack of a clear UN mandate five Pacific micro states – the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federal States of Micronesia, Palau, Tonga and the Salomon Islands – joined the coalition.

The participation of micro states in the international coalition is interesting for at least three reasons. First, the participation of micro states in the 'coalition of the willing' was one of the few times any micro states participated in coalitions of the willing in the post-Cold War era, even though it was far from the first time a coalition of the willing was formed.² This adds to the recent evidence of a more active role for micro states in international affairs. Micro states have generally played a passive role in international

¹ The exact number of coalition members is disputed as some states reportedly complained about being on the list, even though they had not accepted membership of the coalition.

relations (cf. Mouritzen 2006). Historically, micro states have often been tied very closely politically, economically and security wise to a neighboring ‘protector’ state or have been secluded islands, so small and insignificant that they have had no strategic security, economical or political importance in international relations. Most micro states have had no or very limited independent foreign policies and even fewer have implemented an independent security policy. However, this foreign policy behaviour of micro states has changed to a considerably more active approach since the end of the Cold War.³

Second, we know relatively little about the foreign and security policy of micro states. They have been marginalized not only in the practice of international relations, but also in academic research. During the Cold War, superpower rivalry was an important reason why most research efforts, not least in the United States, were focused on understanding and explaining the foreign and security policy of great powers and the problems they faced. Although the number of micro states grew rapidly as a consequence of decolonization, the global character of the divides between East and West and North and South meant that theoretical IR debates were often focused on the character of the international system and the great powers, not on seemingly marginal players such as micro states.

Third, none of the five micro states joining the international coalition were subject to any direct threat. Nor were they directly involved in the conflict. In light of the traditional neutral and passive policies of micro states, it is puzzling why the five micro states participated in the coalition. This puzzle becomes even more interesting by the fact that other Pacific micro states chose not to take part in the coalition. Thus, whereas, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federal States of Micronesia, Palau, Tonga and the

² Other ‘coalitions of the willing’ formed to support military interventions in the post-Cold War era are the Gulf War in 1991, Somalia 1993, Haiti 1994, Bosnia 1995, Kosovo 1999 and Afghanistan 2001. Only in the Haiti intervention participation of micro states took place (See Tago 2007: 190).

³ For instance, micro states like Andorra, San Marino, Monaco and Liechtenstein, St Kitts & Nevis and Maldives have been independent states for centuries but only recently only become UN members.

Salomon Islands joined the coalition, Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Nauru did not. Only one of these – Fiji – have previously joined an international coalition.⁴

The aim of this paper is to explore the explanatory potential of three hypotheses on the alliance strategies of micro states: 1) participation provides increased security; 2) participation provides non-military, typically economic, gains; 3) participation reflects the lessons of past security challenges. We are interested in alliance formation, i.e. whether or not states choose to join a particular alliance, rather than alliance management or cohesion, i.e. how states behave once they have become members of an alliance. We understand an alliance as ‘a formal or informal arrangement for security cooperation between two or more sovereign states’ (Walt 1987: 12). In particular we focus on the alliance strategies that constitute the basis for micro states’ choice to join international ad hoc-coalitions ‘that are forged with the sole purpose of fighting a specific war’ (Weitsman 2003: 80).⁵ There is widespread agreement among contemporary students of alliances that the importance of ad hoc coalitions has increased in recent years (Oest 2007: 9). Our research strategy is to conduct a comparative case study of the alliance strategy of 11 Pacific micro states, five of which who joined the Operation Iraqi Freedom, and six of which who did not.

Our theoretical point of departure is realism. In accordance with this perspective, we assume states to be the primary actors in world politics, and we expect the nature of the international system to heavily influence the range of foreign policy options available to each state (cf. Waltz 1979: 121-22; Mearsheimer 2001: 35-36). The absence of a legitimate monopoly of violence leads every state to focus primarily on its own security, because each state is ultimately responsible for its own survival: ‘in anarchy there is no overarching authority to prevent others from using violence, or the threat of violence, to dominate or even destroy them’ (Grieco 1990: 38). For this reason, each state worries about its relative power vis-à-vis other states and power politics becomes the most important characteristic of international relations (cf. Doyle 1997: 43). Although we acknowledge the importance of the structure of the international system for state action,

⁴ Fiji in 1983 joined the U.S.-led coalition, The Suez International Force (Tago 2007: 1990)

⁵ Thus, we understand coalitions as a subcategory of alliances. For a discussion, see Oest (2007: 19-21)

we agree with most contemporary realists that ‘anarchy is a permissive condition rather than an independent causal force’ (Walt 2002: 211). Systemic structure allows us to explain ‘the constraints that confine all states’ (Waltz 1979: 122), but in order to explain the particular choices of specific states we need to include the ‘complex domestic political processes’ which ‘act as transmission belts that channel, mediate and (re)direct policy outputs in response to external forces (primarily changes in relative power)’ (Schweller 2004: 164).

We proceed as follows. First, we discuss how to define micro states arguing that a relational definition allows us to avoid some of the most dangerous pitfalls of more conventional definitions when analysing their alliance strategies. Second, we explore the explanatory potential of our three hypotheses on 11 Pacific micro states. Finally, we sum up our findings and discuss the implications for the alliance policy of micro states.

2. What is a micro state? Why does it matter?

In order to study the alliance strategies of micro states, we need to know what a micro state is.⁶ Although it may seem self-evident that micro states are very ‘small’ and/or very ‘weak’ states - e.g. Andorra is a small state and the United States is not - there is no consensus definition of micro states and the borderlines between such categories as ‘micro state’, ‘small state’ and ‘middle power’ are usually blurred and arbitrary (cf. Gstöhl and Neumann 2006: 6).⁷ In order to differentiate between the categories and achieve a useful definition of micro states when analyzing alliance strategies - and in accordance with our realist point of departure - we distinguish between two criteria for defining micro states and other types of states: power possession and power projection.⁸

⁶ Some definitions of micro states include assumptions about the (questionable) sovereignty of these states (cf. Neumann and Gstöhl 2006: 6). The states discussed in this paper all fulfill the criteria for sovereign statehood set up in Article 1 of the Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States: a permanent population, defined territorial boundaries, a government, and the ability to enter into agreements with other states.

⁷ Very little research has been done on the concept of micro states, but fortunately the challenge of defining this type of states is closely coupled to the study of power in international relations in general and the discussions of great powers and small states in particular. Thus, our argument will draw on this literature.

⁸ An alternative criterion for defining micro states may be the foreign policy makers’ perception of their state’s role in international affairs as diminutive. Thus, Keohane defines small states as ‘a state whose

No doubt the most frequently applied criteria for defining micro states is the possession of power resources in absolute or relative terms, i.e. absolute or relative measures of capabilities such as population, territory or GDP. For instance Mohamed argues that a micro state should be defined as a state with less than 1.5 million inhabitants (Mohamed 2002: 1), whereas Plischke argues sets the bar at 300,000 (Plischke 1977: 21). Absolute power is the criteria used most often when defining micro states in the practice of international affairs, where the micro state is characterized by ‘a size so diminutive as to invite comment’ (Warrington 1998: 102). For instance both the United Nations and Commonwealth define a micro state as a state with less than one million inhabitants. Alternatively we may use relative criteria for defining micro states. Thus, Kenneth Waltz argues that ‘power has to be defined in terms of the distribution of capabilities’ (Waltz 1979: 192) and that states’ ‘rank depends on how they score on *all* of the following items: size of population and territory, resource endowment, economic capability, military strength, political stability and competence’ (Waltz 1979: 131). Relative criteria have been applied in a large number of studies, in particular in attempts to define great powers (e.g. Hansen, Toft and Wivel 2008; Pastor 1999; Wohlforth 1999). Relative criteria are also used in the practice of international affairs when distinguishing between states of different sizes. For instance, even though all member states have a vote in the UN General Assembly, the five great powers with permanent membership of the UN Security Council – the United States, Russia, China, France and the United Kingdom – are allowed to prevent the adoption of a proposal by vetoing it. The current discussions of expanding the number of permanent members are primarily focused on the inclusion of new great powers such as Brazil and India. Another example is the Council of the

leaders consider that it can never, acting alone or in a small group, make a significant impact on the system’ (Keohane 1969: 296; cf. Knudsen 1996b: 5; Gärtner, 1993: 303). However, this definition collapses the distinction between micro states, small states and middle powers thereby leaving us unable to identify the particular choices, challenges and opportunities related to the alliance strategies of micro states. Moreover, from our realist point of departure, we would argue that except for the American superpower, no state in the current international system is able to make a ‘significant impact’ on international affairs without acting through a larger group. In fact, this ‘go-it-alone power’ is a defining characteristic of the unipole (cf. Gruber 2000). Occasionally, definitions based subjective factors, i.e. the perception of power, such as Keohane’s are combined with objective factors, i.e. the material, quantifiable aspects of power, cf. Archer and Nugent (2002: 2-3) and Warrington (1998: 102).

European Union, where the number of votes that each state is allocated is based primarily on the state's population size relative to other member states.⁹

Using power possession as a starting point for defining micro states entails a number of problems. Power it is difficult to measure and its effects are almost impossible to distinguish from the calculations and perceptions of policy makers. Thus measuring, for instance, a state's defence spending or GDP does not necessarily tell us a lot about how this state will behave, what influence it will get and how it is perceived by other states. It might not even tell us very much about the military or economic power of the state. During the Cold War Iceland had no defence budget, but its geopolitical location in the North Atlantic ensured an important role in the conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union and, therefore, protection by the Americans: 'if armed conflict had broken out, the US military base at Keflavik in Iceland would have played a key role in NATO defences [...]' (Thorhallsson and Vignisson 2004: 103). Likewise, the GDPs of Luxemburg and Cyprus are both only a very small fraction of the EU's total, but the two countries economic challenges and ability to influence other European states differ in many respects (cf. Brown 2000: 13-14). The differences become even bigger if we compare the two states with African micro states such as Cape Verde or Equatorial Guinea, which face very different challenges in regard to almost every policy area. Thus, power possession, in absolute or relative terms, tells us only little about state behavior. Moreover, taking one's point of departure in the possession of relative or absolute power seems to reify rather than solve the problem of blurred and arbitrary borderlines between micro states and other types of states, because it is impossible to reach consensus among those who use absolute or relative criteria of what constitutes a micro state:¹⁰ '[w]hatever unit of measurement is used, a cut-off point is chosen on the scale. In relative terms, the cut-off point between great and small powers may be set at the top-10 in the world, or the

⁹ As noted by Brown, 'the most common yardstick by which magnitude is measured is that of populations' (Brown 2000: 13). Thus, Malta has only three votes and Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Luxembourg and Slovenia only four votes each in the Council of the European Union compared to the seven votes each of Denmark and Ireland, conventionally defined as small states and the 27 votes each awarded to France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom usually regarded the as the great power of the EU.

¹⁰ For instance, '[t]he European micro-states have frequently been defined as having a population of less than 100,000 inhabitants (Andorra, Lichtenstein, Monaco, San Marino, Vatican) or one million people (thus including Iceland, Cyprus, Malta, and Luxemburg)' (Gstöhl and Neumann 2006: 6).

top-5 in Europe, according to one of the above measurements. However, both absolute and relative criteria are *arbitrary* (Mouritzen and Wivel 2005: 3). As summed up by Neumann and Gstöhl, ‘smallness is a comparative concept: micro-states are smaller than small states, and small states are smaller than middle or great powers, but with regard to what and how much?’ (Neumann and Gstöhl 2006: 6).

One potential solution to this problem is to move our focus from the power that states possess to the power they exercise. Thus we might argue that being a great power, a middle power, a small state or a micro state only makes sense within a particular spatio-temporal context: it is not a general characteristic of the state, which can be deduced from (absolute or relative) quantitative criteria. A state may be weak in one relation, but simultaneously powerful in another. As argued by Mouritzen and Wivel, ‘[p]ower is exercised in relationships between one or more poles and the state, whose behaviour we wish to explain’ (Mouritzen and Wivel 2005: 3-4). Thus, what matters for the specific alliance choice of the micro state is which state (or which states) is able to project power onto its own territory.

From this point of departure we can define micro states as placed at one end of a continuum with superpowers at the other end. A superpower is a state, which is never the weak part in an asymmetric relationship when interacting with another state at the global, regional or sub-regional level. A middle power is a state, which is always the weak state in an asymmetric relationship at the global level but typically the strong state in an asymmetric relationship at the regional and sub-regional level. A small state is a state, which is the weak state in an asymmetric relationship at the global and regional levels but typically the stronger state at the sub-regional level. A micro state is a state, which is always the weak state in an asymmetric relationship when interacting with another state at the global, regional or sub-regional levels unless dealing with other micro states. Thus, using micro states as an analytical category is justified by the assumption that these states are permanently stuck as the weak part in asymmetrical relationships internationally and therefore forced to adopt strategies, which cope with this permanency of weakness. They *share* this permanency of weakness as basic *condition* in their foreign policy, but they

may *respond* with *different* strategies depending on the exact spatio-temporal context of the power asymmetry they are stuck in. As summed up by Warrington ‘[t]he micro-state’s apparent vulnerability to contingencies arising in the outside world is *the* defining characteristic of its external relations’ (Warrington 1998: 102).¹¹ Thus, in contrast to definitions based on absolute or relative power we expect micro states to share fundamental challenges, but not necessarily to respond in the same way across space and time.

3. The Hypotheses

We assess three different hypotheses on which alliance strategies that constitute the basis for micro states’ choice to join international ad hoc coalitions - 1) participation provides increased security; 2) participation provides non-military, typically economic, gains; 3) participation reflects the lessons of past security challenges.

These hypotheses are not mutually exclusive. A state may increase its security and at the same time receive economic benefits from alliance participation and participating in the alliance may even fit with the lessons that the foreign policy makers and/or the population have learned from past experience. In accordance with our realist starting point we expect short term security and survival to take precedence over economics and lessons of the past when the probability of conflict is high.¹² Facing a high probability of conflict, states focus on security rather than economics, because they cannot afford the luxury of focusing on the long term when facing an immediate threat to their security and survival. They focus on the military power of the present, rather than ‘latent power’ power resources, which may provide the basis for security on the future (cf. Mearsheimer 2001: 55-57). Also when the probability of conflict is high, there are fewer policy options and states are more likely to respond directly to the external threat. Typically, the

¹¹ As noted by Warrington, the implications are not always purely negative: ‘it is both a bleak reality and a useful device for gaining leverage with external partners’ (Warrington 1998: 102).

¹² Our argument about the effect of the probability of conflict on micro state strategy builds on the general discussion in Brooks (1997). The argument that states’ foreign and security policies vary with external threats is found widely in the international relations literature, see e.g. Wolfers who argues that an important reason ‘why nations must be expected not to act uniformly is that they are not all or constantly faced with the same degree of danger’ (Wolfers 1962: 152).

decision making process is centralised and allows little room for debate over policy options (cf. Mouritzen 1997). For this reason, arguments about lessons of the past may be marginalized. Thus, just like the individuals inside a burning house will run toward the exits because of ‘[g]eneral fears of losing the cherished possession of life, coupled with the stark external threat to life’, foreign policy decision makers facing ‘a dire and unmistakable threat to national survival [...] would rush to enhance or maximize national power’ (Wolfers 1962: 13, 14). These arguments are even more important for micro states than for other states, because power asymmetry usually makes them dependent on the actions of other states and leaves them unable to defend themselves. Thus, we would expect them to face severe threats to their security more often than other states and at the same time be less able to face the threats on their own. In sum, for states facing a high probability of conflict we expect security concerns to override economic concerns and only allow little room for lessons of the past. Conversely, states facing a low probability of conflict will tend to focus more on long term economic benefits and allows more debate on foreign policy decisions thereby leaving room for a greater role for lessons of the past.

Hypothesis 1: Alliance participation provides increased security

Based on our realist point of departure we argue that states primarily participate in alliances to increase security¹³ and thereby survival. Due to the explorative approach of this paper we adopt a relatively wide basis for the predictions of potential increased security gains on micro states decision to participate in international US-led ad hoc coalitions. Generally states can gain security by balancing internally with arms build-up or externally by allying.¹⁴ We have defined a micro state as always being the weak state in an asymmetric relationship when interacting with another state at the global, regional or sub-regional level. It follows from this definition that micro states are unable to defend themselves against any enemy. The majority of micro states have a very limited or no

¹³ We define security in the traditional sense of the term as ‘the ability of a state to defend its territory and political autonomy from domination, attack, invasion, conquest, and destruction by foreign powers’ (cf. Art 2005: 402).

¹⁴ Waltz sees alliances as a defensive means to survival and writes that “in the quest for security, alliances may have to be made” (Waltz 1979:166).

defence. Thus, substantial internal balancing is impossible for micro states, and therefore external balancing in alliances is essential for the survival of micro states.

Our realist point of departure leads us to two predictions. First, we assume that micro states primarily choose alliance strategies based on external security threats at the global, regional and sub-regional level. Following Walt, we see the level of external threat as a function of four factors: distribution of capabilities, geographic proximity, offensive capabilities and perceived aggression intentions (Walt 1987: 22).¹⁵ The level of global threat is assessed by focusing on the sole superpower, the US and the threat from the conflict partner, Iraq. The US threat is defined as fear of US actions, which can influence the security of a micro state. This can be removal or increase of US provided military aid and training, building of new permanent military bases or removal of current bases. Political or diplomatically the US can also withdraw from its role as a state's key strategic international protector. As none of the eleven micro states studied was subject to any direct threat from Iraq the threat from Iraq is defined in terms of indirect threat of participating, because of increased risk of international terrorism in the state. When dealing with these relatively small and strategically insignificant states, it is only likely that they would be a potential target for international terrorism as a consequence of participation in the Iraq coalition, if they have a) American targets such as embassies or American military bases or b) a considerable tourism industry. The level of regional threat is assessed by focusing on regional conflicts and their relation to the micro states. The level of sub-regional threats is assessed by studying armed conflicts or violent tensions with neighbouring states.

Second, we assume that when the probability of conflict is low a micro state will potentially omnibalance i.e. balance internal threats by external bandwagoning. The leaders rationally calculate which outside power is the most likely to keep them in power

¹⁵ Walt aims to specify which variables triggers alliance formation arguing that states ally to balance against threats rather than against power alone, thus the main threat does not necessarily come from the strongest power as argued by Waltz (Waltz 1979: 127). We apply Walt's notion of threat and not Waltz because the aim here is to analyze the foreign policy strategies of states i.e. why they participate or not and not systemic outcomes i.e. why coalitions form.

(David 1991a:6).¹⁶ Internal threats include assassination attempts, coups, civil war, secessionist movements, opposition leaders and parties.¹⁷

In sum, the specific expectation derived from this hypothesis is that micro states' choice of participation in the coalition against Iraq in 2003 was based on *potential gains in security*. The five states that participated in the coalition did it because they were threatened and/or could expect increased security gains, whereas the six that did not participate could not expect this or did not face the same threat level.

The majority of the eleven micro states are protected by a large neighboring state. Protection is usually formalized in a defence agreement such as the Compact of Free Association, CFA. The CFA is an agreement the US has with three of the Pacific Island states – Republic of Marshall Islands, Federal States of Micronesia and Palau. In the CFA the US has full authority and responsibility for security and defence, while the participating Pacific Island states are free to conduct own foreign relations. However, the states are obliged to do so under the terms of the compact agreement and refrain from taking actions that would be incompatible with the US' security and responsibilities. The other states have formal or informal agreements with mainly New Zealand and/or Australia. Only Tonga and Fiji has their own however somewhat small defence force.¹⁸

¹⁶ David agrees with Walt that threats will be countered but further also includes internal threats in an omnibalancing model. Miller and Toritsyn (2005) have applied David's omnibalancing model to Commonwealth of Independent States, CIS. Miller and Toritsyn further develops David's omnibalancing model by adding the internal cognitive condition of fear of galvanizing opposition and revolutionary tide (Miller & Toritsyn 2005: 334-335).

¹⁷ David argues that external alliances not necessarily are formed as a response to an increasing threat from other states or an increase in their relative capabilities but often as a response to domestic group's increase in power and challenge of the elite (David 1991b: 233). David's study is based on alignment and realignment in the third world, defining third world states as including all states except the U.S., Russia, Canada, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, EU, China based on seven characteristics (David 1991: 238, note 17). For other discussions of why internal threats are so common in the Third World see Ayoob (1983-84: 378-85) or Harknett and Van Den Berg (1997: 120-28).

¹⁸ Tonga has the Tonga Defense Service, TDS. This is a 450-person force with headquarters, platoon and a light infantry and a coastal naval unit. Their mission is assist in maintenance of public order to patrol coastal waters and fishing zones, engage in civic action and national development projects. TDS is supported by coop with New Zealand and Australia. The U.S. provides training to the TDS and conducts humanitarian civic action projects. Fiji has a force that contributes to UN peacekeeping with about 600 soldiers and police overseas with MFO Sinai in the Middle East, East Timor, and Iraq.

In relation to the formation of the coalition of Operation Iraqi Freedom none of the micro states focused on here faced a direct security threat from any of the conflict parties; Iraq or the US. US actions which could influence the security of the micro states such as repercussions or benefits from the US if the states did not participate was relevant in relation to the Federal States of Micronesia, Republic of Marshall Islands, Solomon Islands and Palau who participated and Vanuatu who did not participate as US provided military aid and training to these and had military bases in the two first states. Further whether any of the states faced an indirect threat from e.g. terrorism if they joined the coalition could be discussed. About half of the micro states that participated in the coalition faced this risk of a potential indirect threat as they hosted American embassies, military bases and/or a considerable tourist industry. While only a couple of the non-participating states faced this risk.

Therefore, we focus specifically on the potential regional external and internal threats that the micro states face, and whether they could expect this to be balanced by improved cooperation with the US, and thus security gains. The external threat to the Pacific micro states focused on here was in the period of the formation of the coalition in 2002/2003 generally low both regionally and sub-regionally. Regionally potential conflicts included tension on the Korean peninsula and the Taiwan Issue. It is however unlikely that these conflicts would spill over and directly threaten the security of any of the 11 micro states. A more indirect security consequence could be a potential use of the American military bases in the states in an active conflict. This is only relevant for two of the states – Federal states of Micronesia and Republic of Marshall Islands. However, all of the states have taken a clear stand on the Taiwan Issue by either cooperating with Taiwan or China. Arguably it is striking that six of the 11 micro states are among the only around two dozen nations having diplomatic relations with Taiwan. Furthermore, one of the only four embassies that the Marshall Islands maintain is in Taiwan,¹⁹ and Taiwan is the only resident embassy in Tuvalu and one out of a total of two diplomatic missions in Nauru. Tonga, Kiribati and Nauru have shifted between having ties to China and diplomatic recognition of Taiwan in attempts to achieve better benefits and aid. However, it is not

¹⁹ The other three are situated in the U.S., Fiji and Japan.

possible to deter a trend towards that states, which participated in the coalition on Operation Iraqi Freedom had ties with Taiwan while states, which did not participate had ties with China. Potentially China could also constitute the largest regional threat due to its close geographical proximity, relative large amount of capabilities including offensive capabilities. Therefore, the micro states might be expected to balance China by improving cooperation and ties with the US. This does not seem to have been the case as there is no consistency in whether states with close ties with China have been more willing to cooperate with the US or not. Sub-regionally, only one of the 11 states, the Solomon Islands, have been involved in recent armed tensions with neighbouring states.²⁰

Balancing internal threats by external bandwagoning with improved cooperation with the US could seem highly plausible as many of the states have faced political instability e.g. assassination attempts, coups, secessionist movements and domestic fragmentation. For instance among the participating states, Tonga faced economical and social problems which led to riots 2005-2007, state of emergency was repeatedly called. While the Solomon Islands 1998-2003 faced economical and social problems, which led to lawlessness, extortion, ineffective police, country bankrupt, capital in chaos.²¹ Among the non-participants Fiji's political situation has been termed 'coup cycle' with coups and riots in the 1980s and in 2000s. In Vanua, the internal divide is along linguistic--French and English--lines. From 1995-2004 government leadership changed frequently due to unstable coalitions. In Nauru, turmoil have in recent decades grown over Nauru's uncertain future and economic failures and no-confidence votes that spurred changes of government became commonplace.²² However both states participating and states not participating in the coalition have faced these problems. Thus, there is no clear indication

²⁰ Sub-regional level relations with Papua New Guinea have been tense due to attacks on the northern islands of the Solomon Islands by elements pursuing Bougainvillean rebels. A peace accord was confirmed in 1998 and removed the armed threat and in 2004 border operations were regularized.

²¹ In 1998 there were fighting between two rivalling militias, in 2000 an attempted coup, the prime minister was taken hostage and forced to resign, in 2000 a broad peace agreement treaty brokered by Australia and unarmed peacekeepers from Australia and New Zealand were deployed, in 2001 the Marau peace agreement was signed, in 2001 a murder of prominent rebel leader, in 2002 economic and social problem worsened, some peace monitors withdrew, lawlessness rose, a government minister was shot dead, in 2003 a formal request by the Solomon Islands Government for help from outside - mainly Australia and New Zealand - was made.

²² In 1997 Nauru had four different presidents in as many months.

that omnibalancing played a decisive role in the micro states' decision whether or not to join the coalition.

In sum, all CFA states – for whom the US has the full responsibility for security and defence – participated in the coalition. This indicates that US security and defence guarantees played a decisive role in the Pacific micro states' decision whether or not to join the coalition. In contrast, omnibalancing, response to indirect threat from Iraq and regional or sub-regional threat balancing played only marginal roles in the decision.

Hypothesis 2: Alliance participation provides economic gains

States participating in post-Cold War ad hoc coalitions have at times been convinced to participate by economic means (Hansen 2000: 153). For instance, the US has used economic carrots: 'some states were persuaded, some "bought" or convinced by economic or political gains' (Hansen 2000: 15 on the formation of the international coalition in Kuwait 1990/91). In 1990/91 China was convinced partly by economic means, in particular promises of renewal of long-term development aid in exchange for not vetoing the UNSC resolution 678 authorizing the Gulf War in 1991. Yemen did vote against in the UNSC resolution 678 in 1991 and shortly after the US abolished aid to Yemen. Alliances have often been a source of military and economical resources for the participants. Thus, states do not only participate in alliances as a response to external security threats but also as a means to secure scarce resources to national needs (Levy and Barnett 1991: 373ff).²³ Political economical variables play a particularly important role in relation to the trade-off between internal balancing and external balancing (Levy and

²³ Threats are defined as external or internal and external security and is like in Waltz' neorealism argued to be the most important goal of states in the sense that territory and integrity is a prerequisite for achievement of all other important objectives. External threats are threats of territorial eradication. Internal threats are threats to social welfare and political stability, stability and survival of governments and regime stability (Levy & Barnett 1991: 373-374). Levy and Barnett argue like David that state survival is seldom threatened today whereas the survival of governments often is threatened in third world states (Levy and Barnett 1991: 373). This is compatible with micro states as the survival of micro states in the post-Cold War era have been positive as more states have emerged while the political stability in some of the micro states have been threatened. They therefore have some of the same characteristics as third world states (are they third world states) with scarce national resources and political fragility. Levy and Barnett combines realism with a liberalist economical perspective.

Barnett 1991: 373-74).²⁴ When explaining why Pacific Islands micro states cooperate with the US it is obvious to argue that economic resources and not only security is of essence when determining who to ally with or whether to ally at all, as these states have a relatively low GDP level and fragile economies. Furthermore, the substantial size of the American economy provides for a convincing tool to pressure poor micro states. According to our realist framework the primary goal of states is to survive and thus maximise security, further states are cost-benefit sensitive and rational. Micro states often have limited resources in general and all the Pacific Island states have limited economic resources. Economic gains are important for the survival of microstates and they are thus very sensitive to potential economic gains.

As mentioned earlier security and survival has precedence over economy. We thus expect that alliance participation is not only motivated by security but that there also is an influence from national economy (Levy and Barnett 1991).²⁵ We operationalize this economical motivation by national economic stability, trade, and foreign aid. First, the level of economic stability, i.e. risks of national financial crisis or bankruptcy, level of GDP per capita and growth rate in the time period. Second, whether the US is a major trade partner and whether there are ongoing renegotiations of trade and investment agreements with the US. Failure to support US foreign policy could jeopardise these negotiations or support could result in better deals.²⁶ The US also has a precedence of using trade sanctions against nations that oppose US foreign policy.²⁷ Further, pledges of placement of American military bases are also of importance here. There are several

²⁴ A states economical and political limit can prevent the state from mobilizing internal resources to maintaining the external security and thereby provide an incitement to formation of international alliances (Levy & Barnett 1991: 375-76). For more on the relations between alliances, peace, conflict and economical gains such as trade specifically see Long (2003), Mansfield (1994), Powers (2004), Dorussen 1999.

²⁵ Levy and Barnett have in their argument further developed Waltz' argument on balance of power by including a focus on economical developments and third world states (Levy and Barnett 1991).

²⁶ For instance it could be argued to be plausible that the US administration's prolonging of the Congressional approval of the American bilateral negotiation on NAFTA inclusion with Chile from 2002 to 2003 was not coincidental. Chile was a non-permanent member of UNSC and had not confirmed position on an invasion of Iraq.

²⁷ The U.S. for instance stopped the economic sanctions on Pakistan - invoked after Pakistan's nuclear tests in 1998 and military coup in 1999 - after Pakistan supported the US offensive against Taliban after 9/11 and committed more than a billion dollars in US assistance (Kronstadt 2002).

economical incentives of hosting American military bases for foreign states.²⁸ Finally, foreign aid is a powerful lever for participation of poor states. The US is the only state with veto power in World Bank and IMF and the US has often used aid as a political instrument to reward allies and punish states.²⁹

The expectation derived based on this hypothesis is that micro states' choice of participation in the coalition against Iraq in 2003 was based on *national political and economical incentives*. The five states that participated in the coalition did it because they could expect considerable political or economical gains, whereas the six that did not participate was not promised anything or enough.

Generally, all of the micro states in question had and still have a relatively low GDP per capita. All of the CFA states participated and had except for the potential diplomatic responsibility to do this, a major economical incentive as they are economically dependent on the US. Furthermore the CFA for the Republic of Marshall Islands and the Federal States of Micronesia was renegotiated with considerable economical consequences in the period 1999-2003.³⁰ Palau's agreement was not renegotiated. Palau gets 450 million USD in assistance over 15 years and is eligible to participate in more than 40 federal programs from 1994-2009 with annual payments in the CFA. In the CFA

²⁸ For instance this could be that the U.S. provided security and free access to its market and the state needs to spend less on military. This in addition to other economical perks of the presence of an American base in a small local economy potentially could have.

²⁹ For example the American initiative, the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) from 2000 grants preferential access to US markets to sub-Saharan states that meet a list of criteria. One of these is a demand that the state is "not engaged in activities that undermine United States national security or foreign policy interests" (AGOA 2000.).

³⁰ In the CFA the Republic of Marshall Islands gets at least 57 USD annual until 2023, jointly managed trust funds, Marshallese will continue to have access to many US programs and services. Under the compact agreement more than 40 US government agencies such as the federal aviation administration, US postal service, etc operate programs or render assistance to the Marshall Islands. The US gets use of Kwajalein Atoll (USAKA) Regan missile test range, space operation support, missile interceptor and ballistic missiles. The Atoll was rented until 2016 and in the renegotiation of the compact amendment the lease was extended to 2066 with an option of until 2086 negotiated. Today the test range is a vital part of the US missile defence shield tests. The Federal States of Micronesia got 2 billion grants and services between 1986-2001 in the CFA and in the renegotiation for the period 2004-2023 100USD annual in direct assistance, joint managed trust fund, additional approximately 35 million USD annual US grants.

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In sum, there are no clear tendencies in relation to financial crisis or low GDP influencing the participation behaviour. There is though a clear tendency in that all states receiving bilateral aid from the US participated, including the CFA states with renegotiation of agreements. Furthermore, in relation to Pacific micro states it should be noted that economy and survival are closely connected, because for some of the states foreign aid constitutes the main post on the state budget.

Hypothesis 3: Alliance participation reflects the lessons of the past

An important consequence of the lack of a monopoly of violence in international affairs is the constancy of unpredictability and insecurity. Lessons of the past provide states with tools to cope with this uncertainty: the positive and negative experiences of the past may be used as a guide to foreign policy when information about the present is limited. For micro states this is particularly important, because as the weaker state in any asymmetric relationship, they are unable to dominate others or even to defend themselves. Moreover, their limited resources make it difficult for micro states to collect and analyse information about their external environment. Thus, foreign policy decision makers in micro states may suffer even more acutely from lack of information than foreign policy decision makers in other states.

Our point of departure in a realist understanding of international affairs leads us to three predictions about the effect of past lessons on present foreign policy. Our first and most fundamental assumption about the effect of the lessons of the past on alliance strategy is that ‘continuity follows success, while innovation follows failure’ (Reiter 1994: 490). States wish to maximise their chances of security and survival. Therefore, they adopt strategies which they think may enhance their chance of success. When they have little information about the present, the successful strategies of the past may be viewed as a good option. Second, we expect negative lessons to play a more important role in the alliance strategies of micro states than positive lessons. The absence of a legitimate monopoly of violence induces risk aversion in all states’ behaviour, but this effect of anarchy is particularly strong on micro states, because they are permanently the weaker state in asymmetric relationships. Thus rather than maximising benefits, micro states will attempt to avoid risks and reduce costs. Third, we expect the importance of historical lessons for alliance strategy to vary with the probability of conflict. In times with a low probability of conflict, lessons of the past will play a bigger role than in time with a high probability of conflict, when immediate security concerns will tend to override past lessons.

It should be noted that basing alliance strategies on lessons learned from the past does not necessarily lead to success. Our assumption is that foreign decision-makers have been affected by past experience (Levy 1994: 291-94), not that this will lead to a positive outcome. As argued by Jervis, ‘nothing fails like success’ (Jervis 1976: 278-79). Decision makers tend to overlook the historic peculiarities of past successes and to underestimate the differences between then and now.

In sum, our expectation is that micro states’ choice of participation in the coalition against Iraq in 2003 was based on *lessons of the past*, which they assume will allow them to reduce the security risks of the present by mimicking the successful strategies of the past and/or pursuing strategies contrasting the unsuccessful strategies of the past.³¹

All five Pacific micro states participating in the coalition against Iraq in 2003 share close historical ties with the United States and/or the United Kingdom based on past security challenges. Three lessons of the past continue to influence their policies: a relatively peaceful transformation from colonial status to independence aided by the United States, the United Kingdom or both; a stabilisation of society after World War II secured in close cooperation with the United States; and finally a successful introduction to the international system underpinned primarily by aid from and agreements with the United States.

The Marshall Islands were claimed by Spain in 1874, but became a German protectorate in 1885 before being controlled by the Japanese from the beginning of World War I until 1944, when the United States defeated the Japanese troops on the islands. From 1947 until independence was achieved in 1979 the Marshall Islands were controlled by the United States under the auspices of the United Nations as part of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. The Marshall Islands conducts its foreign relations in accordance with the Compact of Free association signed by the Marshall Islands and the United states in 1983. The compact allows the United States with full authority over security and defence

³¹ The brief histories of Pacific micro states in this section are based on U.S. Department of State, Background Notes (www.state.gov).

issues and the government of the Marshall Islands is prohibited from taking actions incompatible with US responsibilities in security and defence. Moreover, a subsidiary agreement to the Compact allows the United States to use part of the Marshall Islands' territory as missile test range.

Micronesia has been settled for at least 4,000 years but was colonised by Spain in the 16th century before being controlled by Germany from 1899 until 1914 and then by Japan until the end of World War II, when they became part of the US controlled United Nations Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. Independence was achieved in 1979 and a Compact of Free Association with the United States allowing the Americans full responsibility and authority over defence was signed in 1986.

Palau was settled more than 4000 years ago, but only became independent in 1994. Independence followed governance by Spain (until 1899), Germany (until 1914) and Japan (until 1947). During World War II part of Palau was the scene of intense fighting between Japanese and American forces. After World War II when control was handed over to United Nations Trusteeship as part of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Island administered by the United States. Palau voted for a nuclear free constitution in 1981, but eventually decided to abolish it as the United States strongly disagreed with the decision and therefore denied Palau a Compact of Free Association, effectively denying the basic conditions for independence. Palau gained independence in 1994, but even though Palau became a member of the United Nations shortly after its independence in 1994 and has joined several other international organisations and established diplomatic ties with a number of states, the historical ties to the United States continue to influence both economics and security policy. Thus the United States remains responsible for the defence of Palau for 50 years after independence and even though the two countries have embassies in each others countries, important aspects of Palau's relations with the United States are negotiated through the US Department of the Interior's Office of Insular Affairs, not the normal diplomatic channels.

Tonga was a monarchy when it signed a treaty of friendship and protection with the United Kingdom in 1900. The treaty meant that the United Kingdom would take care of foreign affairs and defence, although Tonga remained independent. During World War II, Tonga cooperated closely with New Zealand and the United States, and in 1958 it signed a new treaty of friendship and protection with the United Kingdom. Tonga achieved full independence in 1970 and remains a member of Commonwealth. It has defence cooperation agreements with both Australia and New Zealand and the United States military provides training to Tonga's defence force.

It is believed that the Solomon Islands have been populated at least since 1000 BC. Missionaries began arriving in the middle of the 19th century, and in 1893 - following a series of massacres and problems with labour trade - the United Kingdom declared a protectorate over part of the Solomon Islands, which was expanded in the following years. The islands were the scene of fighting between American and Japanese troops and the massive presence of American troops after the Japanese withdrawal in 1943 resulted in close ties between the two countries. British colonial rule was re-established after the war but more and more power was handed over to Solomon institutions until independence was finally achieved in 1978. The Solomon Islands remains a member of Commonwealth. The US coast guard trains Solomon border protection officials and the US military continues to provide training and education to Solomon security officials.

The six Pacific micro states declining to participate in the coalition on Operation Iraqi Freedom did not all share the three lessons learned by the coalition participants. However, their history reveals few lessons pointing in the direction of coalition opposition, and Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Kiribati share some remarkable historical similarities with Pacific micro state coalition members. Tuvalu was a British colony until independence in 1978 and remains a member of the Commonwealth. In 1979 Tuvalu signed a treaty of friendship with the United States and maintains a pro-Western foreign policy. Ties with the United States were not new as the Americans had built bases and stationed thousands of troops on the islands during World War II. Vanuatu was the subject of Franco-British competition for control in the late 19th century but from 1906

the two countries agreed to administer Vanuatu jointly until independence in 1980. American troops were stationed in Vanuatu during World War II and the United States provides both military training and economic assistance to Vanuatu. Kiribati became a British colony in 1916 following a gradual development of increasing British control over the islands since 1892. Kiribati was the scene of intense fighting between American and Japanese troops during World War II. Kiribati achieved independence in 1979 and signed a treaty of friendship with the United States.

In addition to these states the development of Nauru and Samoa as independent states is closely tied to relations with Australia, one of the most ardent supporters of Operation Iraqi Freedom, and New Zealand, who also supplied troops to the coalition (although for a briefer period in 2003-2004), and relations with these countries remain close. Nauru was under German control from 1886 until it was captured by Australia in 1914. After World War I the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand jointly governed the island until 1942 when it was occupied by Japan, who deported a large number of Nauruans to work in the Caroline Islands. After the war, the island became a UN Trust Territory administered by Australia until independence was achieved in 1968. Nauru is a special member of the Commonwealth. It maintains close ties to Australia, who maintains a refugee centre in Nauru, used mainly for refugees unwanted in Australia. Samoa was under German control until 1914, when New Zealand took over control administering it for the League of Nations after World War I and for the United Nations until 1962 when Samoa gained its independence. Relations to New Zealand remain close after independence and the two countries agreed on a Treaty of Friendship, which allows Samoa to request New Zealand's support in both diplomatic affairs and in regard to security and defence issues. Samoa also has strong relations with China. Its most highly profiled foreign policy issue has been the protests over French nuclear weapons testing in the south Pacific.

Of the six states declining to participate in the coalition, only Fiji has a history of conflict with major coalition members such as the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia. A British colony from 1874 until independence in 1970, Fiji was expelled from

the Commonwealth in 1987 following a military coup and has since cultivated diplomatic relations with a number of Asian countries including China and India, while subject to sanctions from the United States, Australia and New Zealand.

In sum, the five Pacific micro states participating in the coalition all shared positive lessons from relations with the United Kingdom, and, in particular, the United States. For the six states not participating in the coalition, the experience of the past was more mixed although three of them had historical experiences very close to the participant. Thus, the lessons of the past seem to play no independent role in the decision whether or not to join the coalition. Instead lessons of the past may have had the role of an ‘amplifier’ of the effects of security and economic gains.

4. Conclusion

Two overall conclusions can be derived from our study. First, even though the probability of conflict facing the micro states were generally low, security interest played a major role in the alliance choice of the Pacific micro states. In particular, US security and defence guarantees played a decisive role in the Pacific micro states’ decision whether or not to join the coalition. In contrast, omnibalancing, response to indirect threat from Iraq and regional or sub-regional threat balancing played only marginal roles in the decision. Second, considerations about economic gains were important to the extent that the United States was in a position to increase or decrease aid or benefits from trade. Thus, all states receiving bilateral aid from the US participated, including the CFA states with renegotiation of agreements. In contrast we found no indications that financial crisis or low GDP influenced the decision to participate. Lessons of the past seemed mainly to emphasize the effects of security interests and economic gains.

Two implications follow from this conclusion, one empirical and one theoretical. The most important empirical implication following from our study is that participation in a coalition of the willing like the one that supported the invasion of Iraq in 2003 was relatively low in costs to the micro states as they only supported diplomatically - except for Tonga – and the increased threat of participation was minor. The US aimed for

quantity more than quality in the coalition formation supporting the invasion as the main issue was legitimacy of the invasion more than the practical conducting. Thus, for micro states the increase in ad hoc coalition making may provide them with new opportunities for ‘selling’ political support and legitimacy in return for security and economic benefits. The most important theoretical implications is that concepts such as ‘bandwagoning’ and ‘flocking’ - denoting asymmetrical alliance with the most powerful or threatening state - need to be further refined in order to allow us to obtain a more sophisticated understanding of the costs and – in particular – the benefits of micro states’ participation in ad hoc coalitions.

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