

**Evaluate the extent to which small states
can influence international security
outcomes through military and
non-military means**

*Legitimacy as the Centre of Gravity in Small-State
Influence*

**17194385 COMMANDANT (OF 3) ADAM BEATTY
B.A., B.SC., M.SC., M.ENG**

**SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE
MASTER OF ARTS IN LEADERSHIP MANAGEMENT
AND DEFENCE STUDIES
MAYNOOTH UNIVERSITY
2026**

**SUPERVISORS: DR. JEREMY MAXWELL AND
LIEUTENANT COMMANDER DIARMAID O'DONOVAN**

STUDENT DECLARATION

MA (LMDS)

Student Declaration

1. I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.
2. I, the undersigned declare that no Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools were used to complete all or any part of this thesis.
3. Permission is given for the Defence Forces Library and the Maynooth University Library to lend or copy this thesis upon request.
4. The views and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the Military College, the Defence Forces or the Maynooth University.

SIGNED: _____

RANK: 17194385 Commandant
(OF 3)

Name: ADAM BEATTY **Date:** October 11,
2025

1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the debate regarding how small states can influence international security outcomes. It defines what it means to be small state, explains why legitimacy emerges as the Centre of Gravity (COG) and explores how myths & national history shape strategic identity. This essay shall consider Ireland, Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea (DPRK) and Israel as ‘problem cases’ for the small state category. It employs a five-effects framework handrail throughout: niche specialisation; organisational agility; hybrid leverage; soft power synergy; legitimacy. This framework is intended to act as a boundary for the argument and to establish the following hypothesis: That small states are limited in their ability to dictate outcomes but may still shape them conditionally through legitimacy and institutional engagement.

1.2 Defining the Small State

The first task is to define what constitutes a small state.(Keohane 1969; Brooks and Stanley 2007; Biddle 1996)

Reference List

- Biddle, S. 1996. Victory misunderstood: what the gulf war tells us about the future of conflict. *International Security*, 21(2), pp. 139–179.
- Brooks, R. and Stanley, E. A. 2007. *Creating military power: The sources of military effectiveness*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press.
- Keohane, R. O. 1969. Lilliputians' dilemmas: small states in international politics. *International Organization*, 23(2), pp. 291–310.

Glossary of Terms

Revolution in Military Affairs A hypothesised period of rapid change in warfare driven by the interaction of new technologies, organisations and concepts.

List of Acronyms

COG Centre of Gravity.

DPRK Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea.

Index

Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea, 1	Israel, 1
DPRK, <i>see</i> Democratic People's Republic of Korea	Legitimacy, 1
Hybrid Leverage, 1	Niche Specialisation, 1
Ireland, 1	Organisational Agility, 1
	Soft Power Synergy, 1