

[Hartung on Crump and Erlandsson, 'Margins for Manoeuvre in Cold War Europe: The Influence of Smaller Powers'](#)

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Laurien Crump, Susanna Erlandsson, eds. *Margins for Manoeuvre in Cold War Europe: The Influence of Smaller Powers*. Routledge Studies in Modern European History Series. London: Routledge, 2019. xiii + 250 pp. \$170.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-138-38837-6.

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Margins for Manoeuvre presents new angles on Cold War European history by focusing on how small states were able to influence Cold War foreign policy. Through twelve case studies, this coedited volume successfully brings the scholarly debate on Cold War power relations into conversation with the literature on small states in International Relations (IR) theory. It supports the assumption of a multipolar Cold War world by demonstrating how Western and Eastern European states manipulated foreign relations.

By combining the analysis of foreign policy decisions with approaches from cultural history and economic history, *Margins for Manoeuvre* speaks to the New Cold War history and scholarship on small states. Both the New Cold War history and liberal approaches to small states scrutinize the assumption of a bipolar Cold War reality. They challenge the idea that the Cold War was dominated by the two superpowers: the United States and the Soviet Union. Instead, they highlight the crucial role small states played in influencing conflicts and determining international relations. Like the scholarship on small states in IR, the New Cold War history dismantles the view that small states were at the mercy of the two superpowers.[1] Instead, they propose to view small states as subjects in international relations whose power exceeds the mere reaction to the superpowers' actions. Such an approach allows for a departure from the realist similarity paradigm, which assumes that all small states would act in a similar fashion.[2] The essays in *Margins for Manoeuvre* contribute to this effort of tracing small states' agency in Cold War foreign policy. Specifically, the volume describes multiple strategies of how European small states increased their influence over foreign policy. In doing so, the essays dismantle the small state similarity paradigm and describe the multipolarity of the Cold War.

The authors argue that small states were able to challenge Cold War power relations and influence important foreign policy decisions. To highlight this ability, the book suggests the term "margins for manoeuvre." As the term "power" is associated with military connotations, replacing this term with "margins for manoeuvre" allows the authors to show opportunities for small states to influence foreign policy apart from militarism. Specifically, the term "margins for manoeuvre" describes the "interrelationship among system level, state level, and individual level of influence on small state foreign policy" and thereby "highlights the agency of smaller states" (p. 3). The term "margins for manoeuvre" is wisely chosen as it allows for the exploration of various ways of small states manipulating foreign policies, ranging from using their right to veto in multilateral settings, over

economic and cultural diplomacy, to influencing bilateral agreements by establishing personal relationships between state leaders.

The book originated from an international workshop of junior scholars in 2017. Although the authors are still early in their careers, their contributions do not fall behind in terms of the rigorousness of their research. Each essay not only is written in an accessible and well-organized way but also is based on extensive multi-archival research. The bandwidth of sources ranges from documents held by ministries of foreign affairs to oral history interviews with state leaders involved in foreign policy. Many essays study sources pertaining to multiple states/regions, thereby employing a comparative approach among smaller states. These comparisons highlight the unique approaches of smaller states in stretching their margins for manoeuvre. In addition, they show the combined efforts—and sometimes the opposition between smaller states—in increasing their abilities to manipulate foreign relations.

Each contribution presents a case study. The collected volume is divided into three different parts, each representing one theme. While the first four chapters highlight the role of multilateralism in stretching small states' margins for manoeuvre, chapters 5 through 8 demonstrate how small states decreased the superpowers' dominance in foreign relations. In doing so, the first part argues that both Eastern and Western European states leveraged their influence on foreign policy decisions through multilateral organizations and platforms, namely, the Warsaw Pact, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the European Community (EC)/the European Political Cooperation (EPC), the European Defense Community (EDC), the European security conference (CSCE), and the Benelux. Part 2 diverges from the theme of multilateralism and instead explores other means of stretching the margins for manoeuvre. The chapters in this part point to the importance of trade politics, public diplomacy in the context of colonialism, and the supply of natural resources. The last four chapters discuss the role of identity in shaping small states' margins for manoeuvre. Specifically, they highlight the importance of neutrality, the chances for small states to operate as mediators, and their self-perception as democracies and as part of larger communities, such as the Eastern bloc or the European community.

Organizing the contributions alongside these themes emphasizes the various strategies and angles that small states employed to assert their influence on international politics during the Cold War. While the division of chapters into these three parts creates a more coherent narrative throughout the book, chapter 11 seems to be misplaced in section 3. It discusses the democratization process in Spain, which certainly relates to part 3's theme of identity. However, it highlights the Western reintegration of Spain after the Francisco Franco regime and thereby bears strong connections to chapter 4 on the Dutch reluctance of accepting Spain as a NATO member. In chapter 11, Cristina Blanco Sío-López even makes a direct connection to chapter 4's topic by mentioning the "resistance and prejudice towards the accession of the poorer post-authoritarian countries of Southern Europe," voiced in Denmark and the Netherlands (p. 209). Consequently, chapter 11 would have fit better into part 1 on multilateralism.

Since the editors' conclusion excels in weaving the cases together and writing them into a coherent narrative, I will only point to four thematic connections that transcend the boundaries of the three parts of the book, namely, the bipolarity paradigm of the Cold War, westernization, channels of negotiations, and tensions between the domestic and the international. All chapters challenge the

bipolarity paradigm of the Cold War by demonstrating how small states manipulated foreign policy decisions and thereby curbed the superpowers' dominance on the world stage. Specifically, several essays point to the importance of the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, which "asserted the role of the European Community as a political actor," as Laurien Crump and Angela Romano find in chapter 1 (p. 24). Such an assertion effectively meant a challenge to the bipolar Cold War order in Europe. An effective tool in this process was the consensus rule and the fact that many talks took place behind closed doors, as Aryko Makko notes in chapter 3. Similar to Crump and Romano, Makko analyzes the actions of smaller Nordic states in the context of the CSCE negotiations. Stefanie F. M. Massink agrees with Makko, Crump, and Romano in their findings on unanimous rule. In chapter 4, Massink examines the Dutch opposition to Franco's Spain joining NATO and discovers that a unanimous vote agreement allowed the Dutch to effectively oppose Spanish NATO membership, thereby stretching the Dutch margins for manoeuvre.

A point of contestation among Eastern European states was their relationship to the West. For instance, Crump and Romano describe in chapter 1 how Poland and Romania opposed each other in their stances on the German question. Poland sought recognition of East German sovereignty to guarantee the newly established Polish borders. Romania, however, opposed this recognition at the expense of West Germany since the Romanians wished for tighter relations with the West (chapter 1). Being perceived as "Western" could, however, also bring its advantages. In chapter 5, Suvi Kansikas, Mila Oiva, and Saara Matala argue that the image of Polish and Finnish producers as "Western" gave their products a "competitive edge" (p. 102). In this chapter, the three authors analyze Cold War trade politics with the Soviet Union. Specifically, they study the advertisement of Polish textile products and negotiations for delivering a Finnish nuclear icebreaker for the Soviet Arctic Sea.

Chapters 6 and 8 focus on trade relations as well but also highlight the difficulty for smaller states in maneuvering the East-West divide. In chapter 6, Elitza Stanoeva studies Bulgarian trade relations with West Germany and Denmark in the 1960s. These relations became complicated by Bulgaria's participation in the 1968 invasion into Czechoslovakia, which the West sanctioned through boycotts of Bulgarian organizations. Similarly, smaller states were caught up in the conflict between the superpowers in the context of the Urengoy pipeline crisis, as Marloes Beers shows in chapter 8. Arguing that a reliance on Soviet gas would increase European dependency on the Soviet Union, the United States boycotted the pipeline, thereby limiting the European sovereign right of making their own trade decisions. The Netherlands could have resolved this issue by becoming a fallback option for the European gas supply. But they missed this opportunity to stretch their margins for manoeuvre and thereby manipulate the East-West divide.

The essays in this book highlight the variety of means through which small states were able to manipulate foreign policy through channels of negotiation. For example, Finns appealed to high-rank Soviet officials all the way up to Mikhail Gorbachev to advertise their offer to build a nuclear icebreaker for the Soviets (chapter 5). In addition, Frank Gerits shows in chapter 7 how Belgians used public diplomacy and their agents at the Belgian Information Center (BIC) in New York to justify Belgian colonial efforts in Congo. Finland and Austria, too, used public diplomacy to gain support for their neutrality in the Cold War. Specifically, they sought to instill national support for the nation's neutral stand and create national unity, as Johanna Rainio-Niemi argues in chapter 9. They saw public information campaigns as a defensive act. Similarly, six nations proposed disarmament in the 1980s by combining peace activism with governmental action, as discussed by Eirini Karamouzi in

chapter 12. The Netherlands, however, took a more militaristic stance to defend Europe. As Trineke Palm shows in chapter 2, the Dutch (in alliance with the Benelux states) suggested the formation of a European army as an alternative to German remilitarization.

Several chapters also show that many small states stretched their margins for manoeuvre by becoming mediators. Neutral states like Sweden and Finland repeatedly posed as mediators on European platforms, such as the Conference of Security and Cooperation in Europe (chapters 3, 4, 9). But countries within the Warsaw Pact also adopted this role, as Corina Mavrodin shows in the case of Romania proposing a denuclearized zone in the Balkans (chapter 10). Similarly, Greece became a mediator in the context of the Euromissile crisis. Alongside India, Sweden, Mexico, Argentina, and Tanzania, Greece proposed a Six Nation Initiative for nuclear disarmament and the channeling of military expenditures into assistance to developing countries (chapter 12).

The connection between domestic and foreign policy is strongest in Makko's chapter on the CSCE (chapter 3) and Massink's essay on Dutch opposition to Spain joining NATO (chapter 4). In this context, Makko takes the importance of national elections into account. He shows how leading Swedish Social Democrats in the 1960s feared that they would lose the support of the younger generation who voiced their unhappiness about the Swedish neutral stance in foreign policy. Therefore, Sweden adopted a more active role and became a critic of the superpowers. Moreover, both Norway and Sweden took on new foreign policy principles after their 1973 general elections. Those principles confirmed their respective roles as supporters of the CSCE in the case of Norway and as cautious mediators in the case of Sweden. Thus, domestic politics influenced the outlook of a small state's foreign policy. Similarly, Massink shows how domestic politics, specifically actors within smaller states, can exert their influence on foreign policy issues. In the case of the Netherlands and the Spanish question, Dutch Social Democrats (Partij van de Arbeid, PvdA) opposed Spanish membership in NATO. They argued, as many in the Dutch younger generation, that the acceptance of a dictatorship into NATO would weaken NATO's credibility. Only if Spain became a democracy should they be allowed to join. Additionally, Cristina Blanco Sío-López shows in chapter 11 how the domestic turn to democracy was increasingly seen as linked to Spanish reintegration into the European community.

By demonstrating the strategies of small states to manipulate foreign policy decisions, the volume seeks to redefine the concept of "smallness." In the literature on small states, the definition of "smallness" is a point of contestation.[3] In this debate, *Margins for Manoeuvre* sides with cognitive approaches to smallness, which hold that the definition of "small states" depends both on the states' (self-)perception and on their relation to other states.[4] By proposing the concept of "margins for manoeuvre," the volume expresses two ideas. First, the essays demonstrate that small states' ability to challenge Cold War power relations constitutes a fundamental part of the smallness of these states. Thus, their smallness needs to be seen in relation to the superpower states. To highlight the hierarchy between states, the authors describe small states as smaller powers. Second, the ability to manipulate foreign policy is located at the outskirts of small states' ability to influence foreign policy. Thus, small states must intentionally employ strategies to stretch their margins for manoeuvre. In doing so, they have to accept their smallness, which thereby becomes part of their self-perception.

In making this important intervention on the definition of "smallness," the editors could have made an even stronger case for small states' ability to challenge Cold War power relations by replacing the

term “power” altogether. At first, they make a convincing case for replacing the debate about (military) “power” with the term “margins for manoeuvre”; they then reintroduce the term “power” in speaking about “smaller powers,” thereby recognizing the hierarchy between states (pp. 3-4). Describing smaller states as “smaller powers” suggests that they maintained their inferior status despite their ability to challenge the superpowers’ influence over foreign policy. The question then remains if small states stretching their margins for manoeuvre did make a difference in Cold War power relations if they maintained the status of smaller powers? Similarly, did small states effectively challenge the bipolarity of the Cold War if they remained smaller powers? While all essays present compelling cases for the importance of small states in the Cold War conflict, they adhere to the terminology of the bipolar world and thereby describe the conflict in the context of the bipolar paradigm. While this framework highlights the challenges for small states in maneuvering the Cold War, the reader is left to wonder if small states were able to establish a multipolarity in Cold War foreign policy.

This slight vagueness in terms, however, does not limit the important contribution to both the scholarship on the Cold War and the literature on small states that the authors make. In fact, the challenges of defining “power” and the “bipolarity/multipolarity” of the Cold War seems to be an inherent matter of controversy in this scholarship and not a particular problem of this edited volume. Being reflective of this controversy does in no way limit the volume’s groundbreaking intervention on small states’ ability to manipulate foreign relations. Overall, the volume covers an impressive variety of topics that demonstrate the multiplicity of means that small states employed to challenge Cold War power relations. Thus, the high degree of extensive research makes this book a must-read for any scholar interested in Cold War history or the history of small states.

Notes

[1]. Instrumental in shaping this New Cold War history is Odd Arne Westad, ed., *Reviewing the Cold War: Approaches, Interpretations, Theory* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2000).

[2]. Christopher S. Browning, “Small, Smart and Salient? Rethinking Identity in the Small States Literature,” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 19, no. 4 (December 2006): esp. 670-72, doi:10.1080/09557570601003536.

[3]. Archie W. Simpson, “Small States in World Politics,” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 19, no. 4 (December 2006): 649, doi:10.1080/09557570601003379.

[4]. Browning, “Small, Smart and Salient?,” 673.

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