

**SMALL STATES AND THE PROMOTION OF THEIR FOREIGN POLICY  
AGENDA IN THE INTERNATIONAL SCENARIO: TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO  
AND THE KYOTO PROTOCOL**

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Trinidad and Tobago and the Kyoto Protocol”

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## Abstract

*This case study aims to identify the elements of Trinidad and Tobago's foreign policy portfolio that allowed it to garner success in promoting its interests in the Kyoto Protocol. In doing so, this work will analyze Trinidad and Tobago's limitations in terms of locational, bureaucratic and resource vulnerabilities. Subsequently, a revision of this state's foreign policy portfolio will illustrate its use of capacity building and shaping strategies such as contact with institutional and non-state actors, coalition building and argumentative strategies, among others. Finally, this work will conclude that these actions allowed the promotion of Trinidad and Tobago's foreign policy agenda through the creation of route maps and the coordination of uncertainty in the Kyoto Protocol. To do so, this work will focus on examining concepts such as vulnerability and prioritization, while also contrasting several different academic articles on the subject and Trinidadian official documents.*

*Key Words: Small States, Foreign Policy, Prioritization, Climate Change, Kyoto Protocol*

## Resumen

*Este estudio de caso busca identificar los elementos del portafolio de política exterior de Trinidad y Tobago que le permitieron promover exitosamente sus intereses en el Protocolo de Kioto. Al hacer esto, este texto analizará las limitaciones de Trinidad y Tobago en términos de vulnerabilidades de localización, burocracia y recursos. Posteriormente, una revisión del portafolio de política exterior de este Estado ilustrará el uso de estrategias de creación de capacidades y de organización como lo son el contacto con actores institucionales y no gubernamentales, la formación de coaliciones y estrategias argumentativas, entre otras. Finalmente, este artículo concluirá que dichas acciones permitieron la promoción de la agenda de política exterior de Trinidad y Tobago a través de la creación de hojas de ruta y la coordinación de la incertidumbre con el Protocolo de Kioto. Para hacer esto, este trabajo se concentrará en examinar conceptos como vulnerabilidad y priorización, asimismo contrastando diferentes artículos académicos en la materia junto con documentos oficiales de Trinidad y Tobago.*

*Palabras Clave: Pequeños Estados, Política Exterior, Priorización, Cambio Climático,*

*Protocolo de Kioto*

Small States and the Promotion of Their Foreign Policy Agenda in The International Scenario:  
Trinidad and Tobago and the Kyoto Protocol

The study of small states has been one of the most representative silences in international relations theory. Due to the dominant theoretical approaches in the discipline, theorizing about small states has not been of great importance for IR scholars. The number of authors that have researched small states has been very limited, and the conclusions most have reached are very limited as well. One of these conclusions is the dominant thesis in small state studies: their limitations do not allow them to be considered as relevant players in international scenarios such as international organizations and international regimes. Although this argument pertains to the mainstream in the literature on small states, some authors have managed to find dissimilar ideas in relation to the possibilities of action for small states.

The growing interest in small states arose due to the fact that they came to amount to a significant number of states in the International system (and thus, a representative bloc for negotiation). Therefore, it is relevant to note that scenarios such as the Commonwealth of Nations and the United Nations have representative proportions of small state membership: the Commonwealth has over a third of small state members, while 46 of the 192 member states of the United Nations are considered small states, 25 of those identified as Small Island Developing States (SIDS) (Baldacchino, 2009; Cooper & Shaw, 2009; Prasad, 2009). As a consequence, IR scholars developed new conclusions: analyzing limitations was not the only relevant aspect of small state studies. Acknowledging this context, an increasing number of authors posited that there could be a number of ways for small states to overcome limitations and achieve political effects for the promotion of their foreign policy agenda.

Due to these advances in IR theory, the analysis of small state foreign policy has become more relevant. Additionally, with global problems and transnational issues becoming a growing concern for all states, the study of the possibilities of action for small states in different international scenarios has become more pertinent than ever before. Regardless of all the advancements in this field of study, the question remains as to the level of significant action small states can pursue within international organizations or regimes, especially when it is

related to the promotion of their interests in the negotiation agendas of multilateral environments. Added to this inquiry, it is still relevant to note the fact that SIDS have an even greater challenge in achieving their desired foreign policy objectives because of their resource, bureaucratic and locational vulnerabilities (Lewis, 2009). Because of this, SIDS face a greater challenge when addressing the imminent reality of climate change, which jeopardizes their survival (AOSIS, 2014).

It is within this context that understanding the possibilities for action of a small state in a multilateral negotiation becomes even more intriguing, pressing and relevant. Hence, one can bring to mind the case of climate change negotiations, especially those related to the decisions of the United Nations efforts that eventually led to the adoption of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), a context that gave birth to the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS). Concurrently, multiple climate change related decisions were made during the 1990's, which not only were a main priority for AOSIS members, but also provided the settings in which foreign policy action was more relevant for SIDS in general. It was during these years, but more specifically between 1994 and 1997 that ambassador Annette des Iles of Trinidad and Tobago's permanent mission to the UN assumed the pro-tempore presidency of AOSIS (Berringer, 2012).

After the finalization of the UNFCCC in 1992, SIDS pushed through for a series of commitments, and a Draft Protocol was introduced by AOSIS in 1994, although with very limited success (SEDEMA, 2004; Benwell, 2011; McDermott, 2013). Despite the lack of support the Draft Protocol had initially, after the Berlin Conference of the Parties and further negotiation, the Kyoto Protocol came to be in 1997, including elements of the previously mentioned AOSIS Draft (SEDEMA, 2004; Benwell, 2011; McDermott, 2013).

It is safe to assume that AOSIS achieved some level of leadership in the previously discussed negotiations. However, as previously set out, IR theory poses serious questions about to what extent a state like Trinidad and Tobago would exert such leadership. Additionally, another question that arises is whether Trinidad and Tobago could have promoted its own foreign policy agenda into the negotiation results of the Kyoto Protocol, especially taking into account

its role as one of the first two pro-tempore presidencies of AOSIS in the years leading into the Protocols adoption.

Thus, it is this case study's purpose to identify the elements of the foreign policy portfolio of Trinidad and Tobago that allowed it to garner success in promoting its foreign policy agenda in the Kyoto Protocol. In doing so, this work will initially assert the limitations Trinidad and Tobago may have as a small state within a multilateral negotiation scenario; subsequently defend that capacity building and shaping strategies like contact with institutional and non-state actors, coalition building and argumentative strategies, among others, allowed the promotion of the Trinidadian foreign policy agenda in the negotiations prior to the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol; and finally, assert that said strategies generated the creation of route maps and the coordination of uncertainty with the Kyoto Protocol's final text.

### **Trinidad and Tobago as a Small State: Understanding its vulnerabilities**

Categorizing states has been as much of a generalized practice of IR theory as hypothesizing about the International System and its phenomenon. Consequently, a myriad of criteria for categorizing states exists in IR literature, which has represented a challenge when the objective is to understand what a Small state is. There is not a singular definition that firmly stands paramount to all others with explicit criteria defining the necessary qualifications for a state to be classified as a small state (Baldacchino, 2009). As Neumann and Gstöhl put it: "The lack of an agreed concrete definition of small states has also very much marked the body of literature that might be termed small state studies." (Neumann & Gstöhl, 2004, p. 7). This is especially true when considering the different criteria used when defining small states.

Initially, any state that did not represent a great power or a middle power was considered a small state (Neumann & Gstöhl, 2004). Due to this appreciation, many small states were often confused with weak states (Neumann & Gstöhl, 2004). For some authors, small states could be understood by analyzing parameters often associated with population size, territory size, geographic location, Human Development Index, GDP, the levels of openness and of

dependency on external aid, military power, among others (Martínez, 2013). These criteria became another alternative when defining small states, under some “more objective” elements.

Nonetheless, an additional complication when defining small states resides in the consideration of size being a social construction, rather than an objectively given fact (Baldacchino, 2009; Panke, 2012). Because of the constructed nature of state size, some authors place importance in the relational component of size. Hence, these authors consider that a state is only big or small when it is characterized in relation to another in a particular context (Baldacchino, 2009; Lewis, 2009; Panke, 2012). This could lead to a state being considered as small in a determined scenario, but as big in a different one.

As such, defining small states may be dependent on the context in which one is analyzing state action. Thus, Panke focused in the specific scenario of negotiation settings, by claiming: “A small state can be defined as a state with less than average financial resources in a particular negotiation setting” (Panke, 2012, p. 316). Through this definition, “small states” would not be a concept pertaining to capabilities in every context, but to one very specific scenario of multilateral and international negotiations.

However, defining small states has another complication when considering an additional category: microstates. “Microstates” becomes a competing concept with “small states”, consequently blurring the already unclear differentiation between state sizes. One possible definition for “microstate” is a state whose claim of effective sovereignty is questioned to some degree by another state, and accordingly being unable to maintain a representative international presence due to a lack (or perceived lack) of resources (Neumann & Gsthöl, 2004). Furthermore, in some sense, authors consider microstates as an even more limited form of state size.

Nevertheless, one could argue there is some level of agreement on some common elements. For example, the World Bank uses a threshold of a population of 1.5 million or under to consider a state as a small, and this has been thoroughly supported in many other cases (Commonwealth Advisory Group, 1997; Mohamed, 2002; Independent Evaluation Group, 2006; Cooper & Shaw, 2009).

Though varied definitions may exist when explaining small states, a shared concept for most authors and policy makers when discussing them is that of vulnerability (Braveboy-Wagner, 2009). Chong defines it as follows: “Vulnerability is ... the consequence of the interaction of two sets of factors: (1) the incidence and intensity of risk and threat, and (2) the ability to withstand risks and threats (resistance) and to “bounce back” from their consequences (resilience)” (Chong, 2009, p. 65). On that account, vulnerability represents both the negative effects that the international system may pose to a state, as well as its ability to respond to said externalities. Moreover, three particular vulnerabilities have been identified that are crucial for the understanding of this case study. As Lewis describes it, these three vulnerabilities are:

- (i) Vulnerabilities deriving from the physical location of the state which we may refer to as *locational or territorial vulnerabilities*;
- (ii) The extent of the administrative coherence (a function in part of the social coherence) of the state and the vulnerabilities arising in respect of the management of the state’s policy operations and the stability of its decision-making – we can refer to this as the *extent of the state’s Domestic Political Efficiency (...)*
- (iii) The nature and extent of *economic vulnerability* of the state as an economic unit of particular geographical size in relation to both domestic resources and the networks of international transactions in which it is involved. (Lewis, 2009, p. ix)

Therefore, it is possible to consider these three vulnerabilities as the core limitations for small state action. These three limitations (location or territorial; bureaucratic and resource vulnerabilities) shape how small states perceive themselves, and consequently, how they conduct their foreign policy.

After considering all of the previously mentioned elements, it is relevant to ponder whether or not Trinidad and Tobago is a small state. The initial concern would be considering population size: Trinidad and Tobago fits the description with a population of 1.2 million (Trevino, 2012; CIA, 2016), with some authors even considering it a microstate (Braveboy-Wagner, 2010). But in order to fully analyze Trinidad and Tobago as a small state, it is necessary to understand each of the previously explained limitations. After all, as Baldacchino asserts: “vulnerabilities rather than opportunities are the most striking consequence of smallness” (Baldacchino, 2009, p. 21)



## **Locational or Territorial Vulnerabilities**

Considering the locational or territorial vulnerability of small states, it is key to consider all relevant aspects of its physical location. As is widely known, most small states are SIDS, and that represents a level of remoteness and insularity that translates into higher transportation costs and isolation from major markets (Independent Evaluation Group, 2006; Prasad, 2009). Paradoxically, this isolation was somewhat heightened with the development and improvement in transportation technologies. As ships and fleets advanced, SIDS lost functions as ports or refreshment stations, resulting in a more relegated position (McDermott, 2013). It is also relevant to note how this isolation is not only understood in the geographical sense. As will be further analyzed in the section discussing bureaucratic vulnerabilities, this geographical isolation generates isolation in the diplomatic sense as well (Lewis, 2009; Prasad, 2009).

Also worth considering is the transportation costs between islands. As Mohamed indicates: “owing to the remoteness of islands from one another, transport and communication between islands is extremely costly and the provision of public service to the islands is difficult and expensive” (Mohamed, 2002, p. 3). As an archipelago state, Trinidad and Tobago also faces this vulnerability.

Additionally, these small states are frequently located in regions that could be easily affected by natural or climatic events that also have effects on the states’ economy and population (Independent Evaluation Group, 2006; Cooper & Shaw, 2009). In the relevant context of the Caribbean states, where Trinidad and Tobago is located, it is particularly important to note:

Small island developing states (SIDS) as those of the Caribbean, would appear to be particularly vulnerable to the negative impacts of sea level rise, in view of the fragility of the physical systems, the intense land use of coastal locations and the lack of economic resources to adequately implement mitigation strategies (Singh, 1997, p. 95).

As can be seen, Trinidad and Tobago faces challenges posed by these locational characteristics because of possible effects on its territory. Some of these consequences include incidents like inundation of low-lying coastal areas, coastal erosion, flooding and coral bleaching, to name a few (Singh, 1997; Thorburn, 2007; Braveboy-Wagner, 2009; Prasad, 2009;

Braveboy-Wagner, 2010). The threat of sea level rise becomes especially acute for those small states with small and low-lying land areas since the most minimal sea level rise could represent a complete submersion (Baldacchino, 2009). Although Trinidad and Tobago does not face this imminent catastrophic scenario in its entirety, it does have a significant number of areas that could face this dread future.

Climate change represents a particular complication for this vulnerability that SIDS such as Trinidad and Tobago face. As Bily argues: “Warmer water also increases the frequency and the intensity of tropical storms and disrupts corals and fish that are important to these nations’ economies” (Bily, 2010, p. 43). This concern is fundamental for Trinidad and Tobago because Trinidad’s capital of Port of Spain is particularly vulnerable to tropical storms (McDermott, 2013). Nonetheless, considering these impacts as exclusively environmental would be a mistake: estimates on the economic impact of climate change on small states amount to 200% of GDP (Benwell, 2011).

Definitely, locational vulnerabilities represent a very important limitation to small state action, and that is certainly the case for Trinidad and Tobago. As McDermott argues, climate change has hit small states severely: “like a blow to a downed boxer, layering environmental vulnerability atop political and economic forms” (McDermott, 2013, p. 576). Since SIDS face such pressing issues in relation to climate change, their vulnerability has been heightened and recognized internationally. Although this vulnerability is a great limitation for the foreign policy action of small states, it has become a key element to achieve some level of recognition internationally.

### **Bureaucratic Vulnerabilities**

Comparably to those of the locational and territorial nature, small states have a series of vulnerabilities they face related to political institutions and internal bureaucracies. This is the case for most small states due to a lack of administrative resources, which is an expected consequence of having faced the high and rising costs of independence fairly recently, as some small states have barely reached 60 years of independence (Neumann & Gsthöl, 2004). This is certainly the case for Trinidad and Tobago, as Braveboy-Wagner illustrates:

When Trinidad became independent, it was extremely unprepared to deal with foreign policy and, as noted by the then-Permanent Representative to the UN, policies were evolved by the prime minister and a few close advisers with minimal input from the foreign policy bureaucracy (Braveboy-Wagner, 1989, p. 54)

Trinidad and Tobago did eventually achieve a more institutionalized foreign policy formulation, but decision making in this area does remain excessively personalized.

Small states face several complications in terms of their bureaucratic vulnerabilities. Insufficiently staffed diplomatic missions, poorly trained and equipped home offices, scarce resources, lack of coordination between ministries, among other issues plague decision makers and foreign policy enactors in small states (Braveboy-Wagner, 1989; Mohamed, 2002).

The main bureaucratic vulnerability is the lack of human resources, or financial resources to allocate the existing personnel. As some authors note, even when small states focus on specific thematic areas like climate change, these states experience limited participation due to having fewer international diplomats and field experts who struggle to cope with complex multilateral negotiations (Mohamed, 2002; Benwell, 2011). Diana Panke elaborates on this idea:

Available budgets influence the number of personnel and experts in government and the ministries back home who are available to develop national negotiation positions on the basis of which diplomats can actively participate in international negotiations in the first place (Panke, 2012, p. 315).

A series of results can be deduced due to budget limitations in national offices. For example, small states tend to be slower when formulating national interests for negotiations in international scenarios (Panke, 2012). The effects are not reduced only to delays, but also in terms of argumentative strategies. This bureaucratic vulnerability leads to having difficulties in creating compelling arguments, as well as generating long-lasting expertise in diplomatic missions and foreign ministries alike (Panke, 2012).

Nonetheless, budgets are not only a limitation for internal affairs, because: “Budgets influence the size of delegations that ultimately defend the national position at the negotiation table” (Panke, 2012, p. 315). Another very representative bureaucratic limitation occurs in a less noticeable manner than other negative effects of budget and personnel restrictions. This is the

case of how having few diplomatic personnel both at home and abroad represents higher workloads (Braveboy-Wagner, 2009; Panke, 2012). Several consequences arise from this fact, as Panke illustrates. Higher workloads lead to: firstly, delays in formulation and execution of foreign policy; secondly, topics in which small states prefer to withhold from negotiation due to being unable to articulate a national position; thirdly, less engagement in networking with other states and institutional actors; fourthly, limited overview of the interests of other states, preventing issue linkage or compromises/concessions (Panke, 2012). All of these effects represent less international activity for small states, fewer possibilities to develop arguments or to simply promote their interests.

As stated before, small states cope with having limited diplomatic representation abroad, as they have an average of 4 to 7 diplomatic missions, and usually, SIDS have even fewer (Mohamed, 2002). With limited resources, small states prefer to maintain fewer diplomatic missions in limited geographical areas. Other studies find more specific patterns when analyzing the diplomatic missions of small states. In general, SIDS choose to establish diplomatic missions in their former colonial power, their most important neighbor and a permanent mission to the United Nations (Mohamed, 2002). Trinidad and Tobago has been above this trend: in 2000, there were 11 Diplomatic Missions abroad, and 22 Embassies in Trinidadian territory (Mohamed, 2002). Table 1 demonstrates how these were geographically distributed, and how the data is for current diplomatic missions abroad. On the other hand, Table 2 illustrates the trend on the different diplomatic missions that Trinidad and Tobago has received. As Table 2 indicates, and as Mohamed reinforces: “The pattern of diplomatic representations in microstates (...) suggests that the more advanced countries do not engage with microstates any more than the latter does with the former” (Mohamed, 2002, p. 22)

Table 1. Trinidadian Diplomatic Missions Abroad

	Africa	Asia	Europe	Latin America and the Caribbean	North America	Pacific	Diplomatic Missions	Total
2000	1	1	2	3	2	0	2	11
2016	3	2	2	6	2	0	2	17

Sources: (Mohamed, 2002), (Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, 2016a).

Table 2. Foreign Diplomatic Missions in Trinidad and Tobago

	Africa	Asia	Europe	Latin America and the Caribbean	North America	Pacific	Total
2000	1	3	6	10	2	0	22
2016	2	4	7	14	3	1	31

Sources: (Mohamed, 2002), (Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, 2016b).

Since small states lack the necessary resources to establish more diplomatic missions abroad, small states are not only selective with these, but also more dependent on diplomacy in multilateral scenarios (permanent missions). Through this method, small states can lower the costs that bilateral representations embody in their international relations (Mohamed, 2002). As a consequence, the United Nations is one of the most used Organizations to overcome this problem of non-representation through the small states' permanent missions. In the Trinidadian case, the Heads of Government Conferences for Caribbean states was another important channel for Trinidadian foreign policy. Nonetheless, the 1975 Conference was postponed, which posed a great challenge for Trinidad and Tobago. Braveboy-Wagner asserts: "As a result, this major channel for Trinidadian influence was lost until 1982" (Braveboy-Wagner, 1989, p. 48).

Trinidad and Tobago initially sought regional integration after its independence, as shown with initiatives like the Heads of Government Conferences. Other similar actions were also a priority for Trinidadian foreign policy:

Indeed since 1967 (with effect from 1968) it has been a member of a regional free trade area (the Caribbean Free Trade Area, CARIFTA), which was elevated to a common market and community in 1973–1974 (the Caribbean Community, CARICOM) (Braveboy-Wagner, 2010, p. 414).

Nevertheless, this determination was met with reluctance in the Caribbean neighboring states during the 1980s. Thus, as Braveboy-Wagner explains: "Trinidad responded to the decline in regional collaboration by adopting a low-profile, downgrading its participation in regional meetings and withdrawing from regional activism, even while maintaining its high level of economic contributions." (Braveboy-Wagner, 1989, p. 46). As a consequence, Trinidad and Tobago pursued different fronts in order to gain influence and reduce its bureaucratic vulnerabilities: although it sought to join OPEC, the Organization declined this application. This

decision was motivated because of Trinidad's small production base and OPEC's reluctance to welcome more Latin American and Caribbean members (Braveboy-Wagner, 2010). In this way, Trinidad and Tobago was allocating limited resources into other areas, similarly to how another state would. The fact these efforts were unsuccessful highlight the imminent reality of the bureaucratic vulnerabilities Trinidad and Tobago has faced.

These circumstances gave way to a series of trial and error moments in Trinidadian foreign policy in the Caribbean. Trinidad and Tobago served as an intermediary in the Venezuela-Guyana border dispute in 1970, yet failed to limit Venezuela's growing influence in the region (which it hoped to do by being a mediator state) (Braveboy-Wagner, 1989). Another relevant event hindered Trinidadian influence in the following years. This episode was the failure of Trinidad to articulate an effective plan (or rather, any stand at all) in relation to the People's Revolutionary Government in Grenada (Braveboy-Wagner, 1989). Adding to the already pressing difficulties Trinidad and Tobago faced due to bureaucratic vulnerabilities, the Trinidadian decision to withdraw came at a cost. It was not until 1982 that the Heads of Government Conference convened again, with Trinidad having lost its leadership role to Jamaica and Barbados (Braveboy-Wagner, 1989).

The issue of brain drain can also represent a limitation in bureaucratic terms. Trinidad and Tobago, as many other small states, faces significant emigration that becomes the reality of brain drain (Prasad, 2009). This can represent educated and specialized people leaving the state for better opportunities, somewhat preserving the issues of untrained personnel in the Trinidadian Foreign Service. Trinidad and Tobago certainly faces this issue, and as Braveboy-Wagner puts it: "The greatest need is for very specialised staff at a time when skilled and educated personnel are attracted to better-paying opportunities in the private sector and elsewhere" (Braveboy-Wagner, 2009, p. 112).

Trinidad and Tobago has an additional element in its political institutions that generates another bureaucratic vulnerability. As Trinidad and Tobago is a Parliamentary Democracy, parliamentarians have some level of incidence in foreign policy decision-making. However, as Ince can exemplify: "Parliamentarians are, as a rule, elected on domestic matters, and only on

very rare occasions are elections won on or lost on foreign policy issues” (Ince, 1976, p. 282). This represents a significant limitation in foreign policy formulation since most parliamentarians are uninterested, and uninformed about foreign policy and foreign affairs issues. But most importantly, most parliamentarians have no incentive or opportunity to acquire knowledge in these areas, because: “their political future depends on keeping in close touch with their voters and thereby securing nomination and re-election” (Ince, 1976, p. 282).

The persistent lack of coordination between Foreign Affairs and Trade ministries is another issues that small states face (Mohamed, 2002; Braveboy-Wagner, 1989). This lack of communication also happens in the cases of other ministries inside of small states that eventually carry out international functions. Many ministries in small states have established their own mini-foreign affairs units (Braveboy-Wagner, 2009), causing the foreign affairs ministry to lose its “gatekeeper” position in foreign affairs (Mohamed, 2002). This in turn represents an issue that because of a negative effect over the workforce in the foreign affairs ministries. As Braveboy-Wagner indicates: “Major international activities are undertaken by other ministries without any input from the foreign ministry, leaving foreign ministry personnel marginalised and too often demoralised” (Braveboy-Wagner, 2009, p. 111).

In sum, most of these bureaucratic vulnerabilities exist due to issues on resource allocation, a very important factor to consider when establishing and dividing functions between foreign affairs actors at home and abroad. Consequently, the understanding of resource vulnerabilities allows the full comprehension of the picture on small state vulnerability.

### **Resource or Economic Vulnerabilities**

As explained above, the lack of resources is one of the key causes for bureaucratic issues pertaining to lack of representation abroad. Definitely, financial resources are paramount for the successful participation of states in international negotiations within international scenarios. Additionally, due to resource limitations, and the previously mentioned bureaucratic vulnerabilities, small states endure more challenges when convincingly threatening other states with culminating collaboration and acting in a unilateral manner instead (Panke, 2012). Thus,

small states usually can't work with these strategies when negotiating agreements or compromises/concessions.

Likewise, a number of other limitations present themselves to small states due to economic vulnerabilities. One such issue is scarcity. Neumann and Gstöhl contend how scarcity caused by physical smallness produces external economic dependence (Neumann & Gstöhl, 2004). Small states are described as economically weak because of a lack of resources, or a lack of appropriate mobilization to put those resources to good use (Mohamed, 2002). This is a complicated scenario for small states, since it represents the existence of limited economic diversification. "Because of narrow resource bases and small domestic markets, the production base and exports of small states are often undiversified" (Independent Evaluation Group, 2006, p. 2). This dependence on undiversified production bases and unpredictable markets heightens small state resource vulnerabilities (Braveboy-Wagner, 2010).

Limited resources also generate a sense of helplessness in the collective or individual efforts to advance policies dealing with climate change and its adverse effects (Singh, 1997). As mentioned before, small states are particularly vulnerable because of climate change. As Singh states: "One would expect to see impacts on several socio-economic sectors, especially the climate-sensitive sectors such as agriculture and forestry, energy, health and tourism" (Singh, 1997, p. 95). Failing to have resources for mitigation and foreseeing negative effects adds to this sense of helplessness. Since most of the small, low-lying AOSIS member states would face damages on their economic bases due to rising sea levels, ocean acidification and adverse effects on fertile fishing ground (Berringer, 2012), the before mentioned sense of helplessness surges understandably.

Small states also face limitations in terms of elevated costs. One such type of limitation is that of institutional capacity constraints, understood as the higher per capita costs that small states face when providing public services (Independent Evaluation Group, 2006). Some authors have highlighted how economic vulnerability is understood in features such as remoteness and isolation, which represent high transport costs; and vulnerability to natural disasters and the costs



associated with mitigation and disaster relief (Prasad, 2009). As can be seen, SIDS face a series of costs that are hard to provide for with the already limited resources.

As explained before, the traditional view of small states as weak also resulted from the consideration that small states represented small economies. Although European small states did not fall into this description SIDS perfectly fit the part. Small states previously functioned as the locations for primary production and supply to colonial rulers, and thus have maintained varying phases of dependence on ongoing preferential trade relationships with their former colonizers (Thorburn, 2007). As a consequence, SIDS are heavily dependent on external trade and foreign investment in order to overcome their resource limitations (Independent Evaluation Group, 2006). Neumann and Gstöhl mainly explain this:

Small economies were assumed to be more dependent on external trade than bigger states to tend to have trade deficits, to depend often on a single commodity of export, and to hardly export any industrial goods requiring a high intensity of capital or research (Neumann & Gstöhl, 2004, p. 10)

Most of these facts continue to be true; however, Trinidad and Tobago seems to have experienced a series of relevant exceptions.

At first glance, Trinidad's trade relations with the Caribbean region do not necessarily reflect what characterizes a small state in terms of economic vulnerability. As Braveboy-Wagner identifies, Trinidad's exports to CARICOM states have at times been 3 times larger than its imports (Braveboy-Wagner, 1989). Trinidad and Tobago has been lucky enough to have a supply of important petroleum reserves and as discovered in the 1990s, gas reserves as well (Braveboy-Wagner, 1989). Notably, most of Trinidad's exports CARICOM have been petroleum and its products. However, if these were excluded from trade balance considerations, Trinidadian surpluses would transform into deficits (Braveboy-Wagner, 1989). Despite this fact, Trinidad and Tobago could claim that its per capita Gross National Product was the highest in the region (Braveboy-Wagner, 1989), nowadays still being one of the highest.

However, Trinidadian petroleum reserves have failed to function as relevant foreign policy tools. Trinidad not only failed in achieving membership status in OPEC as previously described, but it also never managed to garner a level of influence or grateful dependents through

its Petroleum initiative in the Caribbean (Braveboy-Wagner, 1989; McDermott, 2013). As it is easy to note, interest in Venezuelan petroleum had started decades ago in the Caribbean region, adding to Trinidadian frustration (Braveboy-Wagner, 1989; Bryan, 2009; Cooper & Shaw, 2009). Evidently, Trinidad dreaded this Venezuelan action in the region seeing it as hindering its own interests. As Bryan illustrates: “Trinidad and Tobago was concerned that its state-owned Petrotrin refinery stood to lose about 30 per cent of its sales of petroleum products, fuel oil, diesel, and gasoline to the Caribbean” (Bryan, 2009, p. 141). Consequently, one could assert that even though Trinidad and Tobago has a significant resource in its energy reserves, its overreliance on it and its inability to adequately use it as a foreign policy tool exemplify the resource and economic vulnerabilities of a small state.

After the thorough examination of the different types of vulnerabilities, it would be in order to question if small states are doomed to lack any advantage for the promotion of their interests. Nevertheless, that is not the case, and several authors contend for a different approach that analyzes small state action in spite of vulnerabilities. As Braveboy-Wagner sustains:

A weak power approach introduces a very different dimension to the study of resilience. Essentially it aims to show that there are indeed some small states that may be not only resilient enough to deal with global economic pressures but also proactive enough to locate spaces in the international system where they might be able to successfully promote their interests (Braveboy-Wagner, 2010, p. 410).

Concurrently, this case study seeks to understand how Trinidad and Tobago aimed to successfully locate such spaces for the promotion of its interests. The strategy that Trinidad and Tobago employs is Prioritization, coined by Diana Panke, which will be further explained in the next section.

### **Prioritization as Trinidad and Tobago’s Mechanism to Overcome its Limitations**

Although the theoretical mainstream dismisses small states as unable of exerting some level of influence in multilateral negotiation settings, some authors dissent with this idea. For example, Keohane and Nye have argued that IR theory should rather question smallness within specific "issue areas", thus considering that small states hold great issue-specific power (Neumann & Gsthöl, 2004). Likewise, as Payne denotes: “An excessive preoccupation with

vulnerability easily leads to defeatist, misinformed and inappropriate diplomacies” (Payne, 2009, p. 283).

As Panke illustrates, the method for small states to successfully have some level of impact on the international level is prioritization (Panke, 2012). With the existing vulnerabilities and lack of assets, resource allocation is key for small states. Thus, prioritization resides in ensuring the investment of their power resources in the issues that are high priority agenda items for them (Panke, 2012). It is through prioritization that small states find two different set of strategies that help them in negotiation settings to the fullest: capacity building strategies and shaping strategies.

### **Capacity Building Strategies**

Diana Panke defines capacity building strategies as those that: “are employed not to directly influence negotiation outcomes, but to improve the conditions to do so with specific shaping strategies” (Panke, 2012, p. 318). In other words, these are the strategies that help small states acquire more assets to improve the conditions prior to a negotiation. Panke describes the existence of three main types of capacity building strategies: contact with institutional actors; contact with NGO’s, epistemic communities and industries; and creating institutional memory (Panke, 2012). The first strategy allows small states to increase knowledge on a subject matter, as well as the different positions on said subject. This is achieved through contacting international secretariats and chairs that provide additional background information on the item of the agenda that is in negotiation (Panke, 2012).

The second strategy provides small states with an opportunity to increase knowledge on the subject matter, strengthening arguments and reducing the burden on the limited personnel at home or abroad (Panke, 2012). This strategy clearly illustrates how the small state seeks to act despite its vulnerabilities, even if contacting NGOs, epistemic communities and industry lobbyists is unconventional. The acquired knowledge is a very powerful resource, which can later on be used in shaping strategies (Panke, 2012).

Finally, the third strategy consists in the creation of institutional memory by learning from the past experiences, which increases the expertise on how negotiations work. As Panke states: “The longer a small state is a member of a particular international organization or regime, the more easily it can counterbalance size-related disadvantages” (Panke, 2012, p. 318). Thus, small states can position diplomats for longer periods of time, aiming to ensure a good generational relay inside of diplomatic missions and to strengthen networks internally and outwards. As Trinidad and Tobago has certainly used these strategies at its disposal, it is relevant to study how some of them even directly improved its conditions in the UNFCCC negotiations and specifically in the Kyoto Protocol negotiations.

**Institutional actors.** One example of Trinidadian contact with institutional actors is how Trinidad and Tobago hosted the first meeting in the English-speaking Caribbean of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) (Braveboy-Wagner, 1989). Another relevant scenario for small states has been the Commonwealth, as was previously mentioned, because: “The Commonwealth Secretariat, in particular, has ushered in a range of studies focused on ‘small states’” (Baldacchino, 2009, p. 24). Trinidad and Tobago has also made use of UN institutions inside its own territory. For example, the national government has joined with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in several occasions for a multiplicity of development initiatives (Berringer, 2012).

Small states also focus on being elected for relevant positions inside UN settings or other international organizations. This strategy has succeeded in several occasions, attaining achievements such as Trinidad and Tobago having occupied the position of assistant secretary-general in the Organization of American States (OAS) (Braveboy-Wagner, 2010). Through these actions, small states strengthen their relations with institutional actors like the Secretary General of the OAS, while also strengthening institutional memory. Trinidad and Tobago also managed to achieve other relevant positions inside of the UN, such as the vice-presidency of the General Assembly in 1966 and the chairmanship of several General Assembly committees (Braveboy-Wagner, 2009). Additionally, Angela Cropper, the second advisor who had accompanied Lincoln Myers to Geneva in 1990 (and a relevant figure for the birth of AOSIS as will be explained further on) eventually became deputy secretary-general of the United Nations Environment

Programme in 2007 (McDermott, 2013). These positions allowed Trinidad and Tobago to not only strengthen its relations with institutional actors, but also generate institutional memory inside its own Permanent Mission to the UN.

Another example of just how successful small states were in creating relations with institutional actors is the good relation they had with UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. There are two possible repercussions of this relation: in 1994, the focus on SIDS was brought to international recognition inside of the UN at the United Nations Conference on Small Island Developing States (Lewis, 2009). Moreover, as an initiative led by small states and the Secretary General, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs Division for Sustainable Development (UNDSEA) demanded the establishment of a SIDS division in 1995 (Berringer, 2012). Additionally, Kofi Annan himself said: “The small States of the world...are more than capable of holding their own...their contributions are the very glue of progressive international cooperation for the common good” (Benwell, 2011, p. 207).

However, none of these is the most significant success of small states in negotiation settings. As Benwell indicates: “The most important institutional process achievement by small states has been to secure a special seat on the Conference of the Parties (COP) Bureau, alongside the five UN regional groupings” (Benwell, 2011, p. 204). Through this achievement, small states achieved becoming an active group inside of UNFCCC negotiations, while fostering their contact with other institutional actors. Although Trinidad and Tobago did not occupy this seat, it did become a key aspect for the usage of other shaping strategies, added to the benefit of contact with Samoa (who did occupy it) as an institutional actor itself. This decision also set a precedent for SIDS’ representation in other instances, like the Kyoto compliance Branches after the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol (Benwell, 2011).

**NGOs, Epistemic Communities And Industry Lobbies.** The issue of climate change has generated a symbiotic relationship between the scientific community and small states. On one hand, scientist have benefited from state actors inside UN negotiations pushing for the petitions they make that otherwise wouldn’t be heard. On the other hand, small states like Trinidad and Tobago have used the arguments of scientists to gather extra knowledge that

eventually strengthens their position for negotiations. For example, it is relevant to see what Singh explains: “It is a widely held belief among scientists, environmental advocacy groups and politicians in the small island developing states (SIDS) of the Caribbean, that global warming and sea level rise are being imposed upon them by the developed world” (Singh, 1997, p. 95). This has also allowed small states to utilize science as a way to “depoliticize” the debate (Benwell, 2011).

AOSIS, as a lobby group in which Trinidad and Tobago had a very important role that will be further analyzed in this case study, had several events where contact with different actors was encouraged and fundamental. As an example, the Workshop on the Clean Development Mechanism of the Kyoto Protocol was hosted by AOSIS in 1999, counting with attendees from states like the Philippines, the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Norway, New Zealand, and Switzerland (Bily, 2010).

**Institutional memory.** Generating institutional memory is never easy, but small states have found mechanisms to do so. As previously mentioned before, the Trinidadian period as assistant secretary general as well as the special seat in COP Bureau have helped. Yet another different strategy that has helped to generate institutional memory is the rotational characteristic of the AOSIS chairperson. This position has been held by Vanuatu, Trinidad and Tobago, Samoa, Mauritius, Saint Lucia, Grenada, Maldives and Nauru (Berringer, 2012; AOSIS, 2015). Most importantly, Ambassador Annette des Isles of Trinidad and Tobago held the position from 1994 to 1997 (Berringer, 2012; AOSIS, 2015).

### **Shaping Strategies**

Panke describes shaping strategies as the set of actions that small states have at their disposal in order to influence negotiation outcomes (Panke, 2012). These strategies include: (Re-) framing; Causal/ technical arguing; Moral arguing/shaming; Legal arguing; Coalition building; bargaining; and Value-Claiming. The first is related to the ability of states to influence negotiation outcomes through the manipulation of how the negotiation takes place and how the issue is perceived by framing or re-framing the debate (that is, changing the frame again) (Panke, 2012). This strategy even has an additional advantage for small states: “if they are regarded as

having little self-interest at stake, they may be more likely to convincingly frame a policy as either being in the common interest or as relating to fairness” (Panke, 2012, p. 320).

The second, third and fourth strategy are related to the argument types small states may use. The first of these is that of causal or technical arguments that arise, for example, after using capacity building strategies to gather knowledge on a specific issue area. Through this kind of strategy, small states can manage to be considered as interested in the best policy rather than themselves (Panke, 2012). Thus, small states achieve the previously mentioned depoliticizing effect (Benwell, 2011). The second type of argumentative strategy is the use of moral and normative claims. This is the use of institutionalized logics of appropriateness, thus delegitimizing positions contrary to those presented by the small state that in theory campaigns for international values and norms (Panke, 2012). Again, this is a strategy that allows small states to seem as impartial in negotiation settings. The final strategy related to argument type is that of using legal arguments. Similarly to the previous strategy, small states use the acquired impartialness and motivate other states to act according to international law (Panke, 2012).

The fifth strategy is one that has traditionally been used in all international negotiation settings, and that is coalition building. Nonetheless, it is much more useful for small states because of a series of elements. Particularly in scenarios where the quantity of actors is very high, coalitions can influence outcomes (Panke, 2012). Thus, small states can achieve to speak out and vote coherently and in harmony, echoing their positions and achieving greater attention (or even support). It is also important to highlight how coalition building signifies a representative cost reduction for small states, adequately addressing multiple-actor scenarios (Neumann & Gsthöl, 2004). Panke also demonstrates a relationship between this strategy and other shaping strategies: “In order to increase the number of actors within a coalition and in order to maximize internal coherency, coalition leaders can apply the various argumentative, framing and bargaining strategies” (Panke, 2012, p. 321).

The sixth strategy is related to bargaining, which means gaining influence via demands, threats, concessions and/or offers (Panke, 2012). However, this strategy is complicated for small states to use, because of all the previously mentioned vulnerabilities, especially resource

limitations. Yet, another possibility arises if all states are engaging in bargaining save from small states. If the negotiation setting is like the one previously described, small states can work as neutral mediators or “honest brokers”, having the possibility to introduce interests while being in this seemingly neutral position (Panke, 2012).

The final strategy is that of value-claiming actions. For this strategy, small states can achieve successes in negotiation settings by attaining the benefits of the “ first move”. As Panke describes:

First-movers make the first proposition of how to resolve a distributional conflict and thereby define the situation and shift the baseline for acceptable outcomes towards their own ideal position (...) As a consequence the second mover can only offer counter- proposals within a margin (Panke, 2012, p. 322).

This is especially beneficial for small states as they become more relevant if they are setting a position, than if they were intervening the negotiation at the end of the process. With the plethora of shaping strategies, it is relevant to question which strategies Trinidad and Tobago used, and how effective they were in achieving effects in the Kyoto Protocol negotiations.

**Framing/reframing.** Trinidad and Tobago has used framing and reframing strategies to garner success in international negotiations, especially those related to the UNFCCC. Initially, it is relevant to consider how Trinidad and Tobago managed to frame locational vulnerabilities as more important than the energy production policies it was pursuing. Thus, as McDermott elaborates:

The predator became prey, or so one would have observed from outside the victim slot. Yet, so powerful was this category that in three domains— physical geography, international diplomacy, and vulnerability assessment—it rendered Trinidad’ s complex, agroindustrial story as a flat narrative of innocence. And innocence amounts to a license to pollute (McDermott, 2013, p. 572).

As stated above, the team composed by Lincoln Myers (then Minister of Environment), Angela Cropper and Leo Heileman presented Trinidad and Tobago as an innocent victim of climate change in the climate change negotiations of the 1990s. However, the reality was very different: Trinidad’ s per capita emissions in 1990 were three times as much of the next highest AOSIS member (McDermott, 2013). Of course, one could expect said action. None of the representatives would jeopardize their country’s hydrocarbon industry, which made reframing



the perception of Trinidad and Tobago an easy way to make other states focus on the effects instead than the causes of climate change (McDermott, 2013).

Consequently, Trinidad and Tobago benefited from this “victim” perception throughout the 1990s, although it did face some challenges eventually. For example, the 1992 Rio Summit was an awkward situation for the Trinidadian team, as they had to remain silent, to avoid being called at for their policies (McDermott, 2013). But not all framing strategies used by Trinidad and Tobago have been used to hide its own wrongdoings. Trinidad and Tobago participated actively in the 1994 Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, a key meeting that strengthened the concept of SIDS, situating these states in the international agenda, and reaching the Barbados Programme of Action (BPoA) (Trevino, 2012; McDermott, 2013).

**Causal/technical arguments.** In association with capacity building strategies, Trinidad and Tobago managed to use causal and technical arguments that arose from the gathered knowledge. For example, action through the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) made Trinidad and Tobago one promoter of better terms of trade and the establishment of a New International Economic Order (NIEO) as relevant tools for the empowerment of SIDS, and as mechanisms to improve conditions for climate change prevention and mitigation (Braveboy-Wagner, 1989).

As stated before, the BPoA also allowed Trinidad and Tobago to use technical arguments related to SIDS and sustainable development (Baldacchino, 2009; Trevino, 2012). Also relevant to emphasize is the role of Leo Heileman. As one of Myer’s advisors in Geneva during UNFCCC negotiations, he was a marine chemist and thus, an expert that allowed for more specialized arguments (McDermott, 2013). Finally, the concept of vulnerability has been a flagship of all SIDS, including Trinidad and Tobago (Cooper & Shaw, 2009).

**Moral arguments.** Several authors recognize the role of small states as norm entrepreneurs (Neumann & Gsthöl, 2004; Braveboy-Wagner, 2009; Braveboy-Wagner, 2010; Benwell, 2011). The English-speaking CARICOM countries have especially been recognized for

this, with consistent records of stable governments and respect for international law and human rights as well (Braveboy-Wagner, 2010). Thus, moral arguments easily arise in the foreign policy of these states in negotiation scenarios.

There are varied examples of moral arguments in the foreign policy portfolio of Trinidad and Tobago. Myers' strategy in the UNFCCC negotiations was that of promoting the idea that "the very important issue of climate change overrides all other concerns." (McDermott, 2013, p. 575). In this way, small states somewhat become a moral authority, dictating the moral compass of climate change negotiations. To some extent, this idea, connected to the status of victimhood, allowing small state to "act above politics" (Benwell, 2011).

Another moral argument of paramount importance to small states is that of their powerlessness to change the negative effects of climate change, calling themselves as "front-line states" referring to both their leadership and their status as the first (and imminent) victims (Benwell, 2011). Through the use of these arguments, small states seek to influence other states into a recognition of their victim status, and thus, to comply with the existing arrangements (and ideally, to support other small state claims). It is in this argument that authors like Benwell convey: "Small states' power lies in their powerlessness" (Benwell, 2011, p. 207).

**Legal arguments.** Small states rely on legal principles in general in order to level up the field in negotiation scenarios. These principles include self-determination, sovereign equality, non-interference and polluter pays principle among others (Cooper & Shaw, 2009; Corbin, 2009; Braveboy-Wagner, 2010; Benwell, 2011). Caribbean states, and especially Trinidad and Tobago have been very invested in promoting decolonization and self-determination inside all relevant UN bodies (Corbin, 2009; Braveboy-Wagner, 2010). Additionally, Trinidad and Tobago also promotes the previously mentioned principles in its actions with AOSIS and during several of its interventions in other international fora.

**Coalition building.** Coalition building becomes particularly relevant for small states in a setting like the climate change negotiations. Trinidad and Tobago has pursued coalition building in different fronts, worth analyzing especially in terms of its incidence on the climate change

negotiations. Most of these actions are justified since Trinidad and Tobago has assumed the role of an intermediary between the English-speaking Caribbean and both the continental and global settings (Braveboy-Wagner, 1989).

Trinidad's participation within CARICOM is relevant when understanding its actions for coalition building. Such is the case that Trinidad and Tobago established a separate unit for CARICOM integration inside its ministry of foreign affairs (Braveboy-Wagner, 1989). This shows how Trinidad and Tobago wished to capitalize on CARICOM regionalism in order to further its interests in other scenarios. As Braveboy-Wagner defends: "The 1990s saw a turn toward enhanced outward-looking regionalism throughout most of the world, and as a result CARICOM refocused its energies on strengthening its integration arrangements" (Braveboy-Wagner, 2009, p. 100). This greater role of integration within CARICOM in the 1990s definitely played a part during the formation of AOSIS, as can be understood further ahead. For example, Trinidad and Tobago adopted Spanish as a second language in the 2000s in order to become a bridge between CARICOM (mostly English-Speaking Caribbean) and the Latin American orbit (Braveboy-Wagner, 2010). Thus, these actions sought to strengthen Trinidad's networks within the region, in order to strengthen its coalitions for multilateral scenarios like those in the UN.

Trinidad and Tobago also pursued participation in another regional initiative, or rather a continental one. Trinidad was the first English-speaking country to join the OAS in 1967, paving the way for other Caribbean nations (Braveboy-Wagner, 1989; Braveboy-Wagner, 2010). This is relevant because the OAS was predominantly Latin American and the English Caribbean had been somewhat neglected. The OAS also became a relevant scenario for small state action in general because of the number of small state members, which has allowed them to attain a fairly noteworthy level of influence (Braveboy-Wagner, 2010). Inside OAS, Trinidad actively participated in agenda items such as removing restrictions on membership for Guyana and Belize, (because of their territorial disputes with Venezuela and Guatemala), an effort that became successful in 1990 when the OAS decided to review the restrictive article (Braveboy-Wagner, 1989). This was another Trinidadian action for strengthening its networks with its neighbors, which has allowed it to garner support in UN elections, for example. Thus: "Trinidad has joined (...) as representative of the English-speaking nations as a group, representing the

Caribbean (and Latin America) on a number of UN committees, in particular the Group of Twenty-Four, the Economic and Social Council, and the Security Council” (Braveboy-Wagner, 1989, p. 53). Nonetheless, little evidence exists to affirm whether or not the OAS membership has represented benefits for Trinidad and Tobago in climate change negotiations.

However, the main example of coalition formation is the one that is directly related to climate change. AOSIS came to be after efforts started in 1990 and finalized in 1991 as a coalition of SIDS (Mohamed, 2002; Bily, 2010; Benwell, 2011; Berringer, 2012; McDermott, 2013; AOSIS, 2015). This coalition is less institutionalized than an international organization like the OAS or the Commonwealth Foundation (as a unit of the Commonwealth). Likewise, AOSIS only speaks collectively through collaboration in UN structures, with members working through their Permanent Missions to the UN (Bily, 2010; Berringer, 2012).

The reason behind AOSIS’ existence can be explained as SIDS felt that action through the G-77/China coalition denied them gaining the necessary support for their claims, and thus decided to leave their traditional negotiation allies of China and India (Benwell, 2011). AOSIS has a series of advantages as a coalition for small state foreign policy promotion. On one hand, 37 of UN members are part of AOSIS (Bily, 2010). This makes it a more representative group inside UN organs and UN sponsored negotiations, than if small states were acting on their own. On the other hand: “AOSIS is notable for combining the Caribbean, Pacific, and the African, Indian Ocean and Mediterranean small island/low-lying coastal states and for its global sphere of activity” (Benwell, 2011, p. 201). Through this coalition, small states were able to collectively learn from each other, and use all of the different capacity building and shaping strategies in such a way that the benefits could be procured together.

Trinidad and Tobago certainly could be considered the victor behind AOSIS due to several reasons. Trinidad and Tobago helped found AOSIS, as McDermott illustrates:

“The effort began in a hotel room in Geneva in 1990, during a meeting prior to the 1992 United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development, known as the Rio summit. Lincoln Myers, Trinidad’s then – Minister of Environment, and his two advisors agreed on a political strategy” (McDermott, 2013, p. 575).

As was previously mentioned, Trinidad and Tobago used this coalition as a way to frame its interests without jeopardizing its economic productivity. In order to adequately achieve framing, Trinidad and Tobago had the choice of allying with hydrocarbon producers or with world's archipelagos, and ended up choosing the other extreme of power: those overwhelmed with vulnerability (McDermott, 2013). To some extent, Trinidad and Tobago could be considered an odd member of AOSIS because of its high per-capita emissions that were previously described. Thus, McDermott claims: "In fact, Trinidad and Tobago gained admission to this club by creating it. Otherwise, its own carbon emissions might have barred Port of Spain from membership" (McDermott, 2013, p. 575). The final important element to emphasize is Trinidadian leadership in AOSIS during Ambassador des Iles' period as chairperson (Berringer, 2012).

As it was previously mentioned, Trinidad and Tobago also faced a series of failures in attaining its goals in coalition formation, as was shown with the reluctance of Caribbean nations to certain efforts of regionalism and the failed OPEC membership attempt (Braveboy-Wagner, 1989).

**Bargaining.** Bargaining is the most difficult strategy for small states to pull off, but Trinidad and Tobago counted with its petroleum reserves as a mechanism for generating influence. In this context, Trinidad and Tobago adopted initiatives like the 1980 Facility for Financing Oil, Fertilizer and Asphalt Purchases by CARICOM States (Braveboy-Wagner, 1989), as well as several financial policies (balance of payments subsidies, project aid, buying of bonds, contributions directly to the Caribbean Development Bank) (Braveboy-Wagner, 1989)

Trinidad's socioeconomic policy has given it some level of success, especially in terms of beneficial trade conditions in the region, dominating intra-CARICOM trade (Braveboy-Wagner, 1989; Braveboy-Wagner, 2010). However, failure to attain a real influence is a reality that has been previously described. This can be especially true when one considers that certain Caribbean states may resent Trinidad's status as the region's economic power (Braveboy-Wagner, 2010). Thus, it is possible to assert: "Trinidad and Tobago has used its economic resources largely to cement its regional rather than global leadership" (Braveboy-Wagner, 2009, p. 104). Therefore,

Trinidad and Tobago has limitedly used these bargaining strategies outside of the region, reducing its impact in climate change negotiations to only consolidate the Caribbean's positions.

Other non-traditional ways small states use bargaining strategies do exist however. One of these is through the leverage of diplomatic recognition, a situation that arose thanks to the issue of both Chinas (Prasad, 2009). With it, some states chose to establish diplomatic relations with one or the other side in order to attain benefits from the state they recognized. Hence, Trinidad and Tobago has benefited from its recognition of the People's Republic of China (Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, 2016b). Finally, since small states contribute little to the climate change threat (with exceptions have already explained), they can bargain very little with promised reductions (Benwell, 2011). In theory, this would allow them to act as "honest brokers", strengthening their own moral arguments, and judging whether or not concessions by other states are fair. Nonetheless, it is questionable if this happens in actuality.

**Value-claiming.** In relation to value-claiming strategies, small states have faced some mixed results. The most noticeable value-claiming action in Trinidad and Tobago's foreign policy portfolio certainly was how it was the first Party to submit a draft protocol under the Berlin mandate (Benwell, 2011; McDermott, 2013). Through draft (FCCC/AGBM/1996/MISC.2), Trinidad and Tobago gave small states (and itself) the benefit of establishing the terms, conditions and basic premises for the negotiation to adopt a protocol to the UNFCCC (which would eventually become the Kyoto Protocol). This style of negotiation has accompanied small states during all subsequent revisions of the UNFCCC and its following agreements. As Benwell argues: "Typically, as part of their 'emergency' negotiation style, AOSIS themselves were slightly ahead of the 'next most radical' negotiating position (often held by the EU), for example updating their temperature and GHG concentration targets to 1.58C and 350 ppm" (Benwell, 2011, p. 205). With the adoption of these *avant-garde* strategies, small states seek to continue to set the agenda and gain the benefits of seeing other states only establishing counterproposals, instead of leading the debate (Benwell, 2011).

With the thorough analysis of Trinidad's foreign policy portfolio, the following step is that of assessing the level of perceived success for the specific context of the Kyoto Protocol and its outcomes.

### **Trinidad And Tobago's Achievement Of Foreign Policy Objectives Through Policy Effects**

In order to understand to what extent the Trinidadian foreign policy agenda was institutionalized in the Kyoto Protocol, two concepts become particularly relevant. Goldstein and Keohane's ideational approach to foreign policy assesses the role of ideas in foreign policy formation. These authors conclude that three types of policy results exist, from which this case study will focus in two: the creation of route maps and coordination of uncertainty. The first of these is achieved when a particular belief's causal relations are understood, and a set of preferences is set to attain the objectives set by foreign policy (Goldstein & Keohane, 1993). Thus, ideas operate as a pathway for states to understand a causal connection regarding foreign policy action and the expected mechanisms to attain specific results.

The second effect consists of how these ideas shape the coordination of uncertainty through the institutionalization of beliefs. That is to say, unifying the roles of action, framing how a topic is managed and understanding the consecution of principles of foreign policy objectives (Goldstein & Keohane, 1993). Accordingly, ideas become institutionalized when those beliefs are employed over time, and uncertainty is handled because of the expectation that individual gains are lower than those of consistent action (Goldstein & Keohane, 1993).

#### **Creation of Route Maps**

AOSIS, under the leadership of Vanuatu and Trinidad and Tobago, had an active and influential voice while drafting the UNFCCC at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 (Baldacchino, 2009; Bily, 2010). Thanks to the nascent coalition, small states were able to promote their ideas inside of the negotiation setting. Some of these are the existence of a shared responsibility, the sense of urgency of climate change and the imminent vulnerability of small

states (Benwell, 2011). Nevertheless, the most important causal belief that Trinidad and Tobago and other small states promoted resides in the following:

The first major achievement of small islands was to ensure their recognition as a distinct category in the UN. The term small island developing states was coined in 1992 at the Rio Conference and their special environmental and developmental needs are acknowledged in Chapter 17 (G) of Agenda 21 (Benwell, 2011, p. 203).

Although prior to the Kyoto Protocol, these efforts cemented causal beliefs that would be crucial for small state foreign policy promotion, using the previously explained strategies while also paving the way for the creation of route maps.

Additionally, the UNFCCC grounded other relevant causal beliefs that small states promoted and later empowered them:

The Framework Convention provides the backbone of the climate regime and, by winning the inclusion of important normative principles, small states and other developing countries set a foundation for all subsequent discussions. The principles laid out in the Preamble and Article 3 are equity; ‘common but differentiated responsibilities’ (Article 3(1)); the precautionary principle (Article 3(2)); and sustainable development (Article 3(4)) (Benwell, 2011, p. 204).

Through the establishment of these principles, small states achieved the base for further negotiations, as well as the policy actions that they would seek, reaching not only the creation of route maps, but also a coordination of uncertainty.

Another important idea that small states (and especially Trinidad and Tobago) promoted was that of how those that contribute the least to the global problem of climate change are among those that would suffer the most the negative effects (McDermott, 2013). In fact, institutionalizing this beliefs further allowed small states to make them heard because of their status of victimhood. The main beneficiary of this route map definitely was Trinidad and Tobago as was previously described in regards to its framing of the subject.

As explained before, AOSIS also presented a draft protocol in the Berlin COP in 1995 (Benwell, 2011; McDermott, 2013). Through it, ideas of a 20 percent reduction based on 1990 levels of greenhouse gas emissions were promoted (Bily, 2010). As Bily notes: “Although the specifics of the so-called AOSIS Protocol were not adopted, the language and the vision of the



protocol informed subsequent negotiations leading to the Berlin Mandate and the Kyoto Protocol” (Bily, 2010, p. 44). Thus, most of the ideas Trinidad promoted made it into the causal belief system of the negotiation.

To some extent, Trinidad and Tobago in unison with other small states achieved institutionalizing the idea that all states were required to make substantial changes to the way they conduct their affairs in regards to climate change (Benwell, 2011). However, the success and application of said belief is, at best, limited. As Benwell explains: “Small states’ lobbying has successfully raised awareness, but not enough to fulfill underlying goals” (Benwell, 2011, p. 202).

Nevertheless, the role of Trinidad and Tobago as a leading state of AOSIS is very relevant in the Kyoto Protocol negotiations. It is unlikely that without its action and leadership in the intensive lobbying of AOSIS that the needs of SIDS would have been heard, especially in terms of adaptation and capacity building (Benwell, 2011). Thus, declaring the creation of route maps as a complete success or total failure is not in order, and a gray area is the most common conclusion.

### **Coordination of Uncertainty**

All of the previously mentioned effects of created route maps reach some level of coordination of uncertainty. AOSIS managed to coordinate uncertainty also by persuading larger nations into fairness of their cause, thus achieving that international negotiations on climate change recognize that small states should be represented proportionately to the amount of risk they face (Bily, 2010).

Another mechanism that has allowed small states to generate a coordination of uncertainty is the expectation of a call for nationally appropriate mitigation actions (NAMAs), especially for developing countries (Benwell, 2011). The main area of success for Trinidad and Tobago and other small states in which they have achieved coordination of uncertainty is mitigation action (Benwell, 2011).

Coordination of uncertainty was also reached when AOSIS promoted the 2.8°C limit to temperature increase in the Kyoto Protocol negotiations (Benwell, 2011). However, an interesting fact has arisen post-Kyoto. When success was reached in this front (with the adoption of the EU of this limit), SIDS have further lowered the figure to 1.58°C, even beyond Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) recommendations (Benwell, 2011).

However, the AOSIS founders did not initially foresee certain effects of the coordination of uncertainty, especially because they did not know how far the AOSIS coalition would go. As McDermott reveals: “Cropper and the other founders of AOSIS were not thinking of renewable energy and other reforms later considered vital: “Nobody knew where this would go, ” she recalled, “the whole thing evolved really” (McDermott, 2013, p. 575).

### **Trinidad and Tobago’s Lessons: Preparing for What Comes Next**

Small states were considered a nuisance in the international system for a long time. Braveboy-Wagner explains:

As late as 1977 the suggestion was made that small states should not be granted ‘full status and rights in the councils of the collective global community’ and they should not participate in the ‘broader international conferences, organizations and affairs’, dealing with matters ‘distant to their national interest’ (Braveboy-Wagner, 2009, p. 97).

Yet, times have changed and small states have reached possibilities of action as significant as having a seat in the COP Bureau, and many other examples.

Trinidad and Tobago as a leading small state is relevant to determine that it is simply not true that small states are exclusively condemned to following and never promoting their own interests. As seen throughout this article, small states do face several vulnerabilities of different nature. Trinidad and Tobago is no exception, as it is a state faced with locational, bureaucratic and resource vulnerabilities. Although this small state faces numerable challenges, it also has had the blessing of counting with petroleum reserves, making it somewhat of an atypical small state. Nevertheless, Trinidad and Tobago’s actions in climate change negotiations demonstrates how small states can indeed overcome their own limitations, even if results may not be complete

successes. The question remains for future analysis on how other small states fare in international scenarios when not counting with the important resource that petroleum is. Yet, as this study also showed, counting with this resource was not the only tool at Trinidad's disposal in order to garner some level of success while promoting its interests. The use of prioritization in the way of numerous capacity building and shaping strategies was determinant for achieving the attention to small states in the Kyoto Protocol negotiations. Although this case study focused exclusively on Trinidad and Tobago, it is true that several other small states have also used these strategies in multiple negotiations; both in climate change related topics or completely unrelated.

The current status of climate change negotiations is one that is hopefully picking up after some very slow years. Small states should be smart in capitalizing on this state of affairs, especially in order to achieve a more successful promotion of their own foreign policy agendas in order to ensure their survival. Will small states again guide international climate change negotiations in a similar fashion to that of when they drafted both the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol? The answer to this question will most likely be affirmative, once small states capitalize on their foreign policy portfolios like Trinidad and Tobago was able to do so in the past. The Paris Agreement is a much-needed breath of fresh air into a stagnated discussion, but small state maneuvers are becoming predictable, thus limiting their persuasive power. It is then that small states like Trinidad and Tobago should focus on detecting this and plan ahead with a different set of strategies for subsequent negotiations. Only then will small states again manage an effective creation of route maps that will certainly coordinate the most pressing of uncertainties: whether their survival is fiction or reality.

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