

# **Small State Influence in the European Union: The Case of 'E-stonia'**

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## **Abstract**

There is a common perception in studies of European integration that the European Union is driven by its large Member States and the small ones are forced into the background when it comes to policy-making. However, the number of small countries in the EU and the increasingly profound engagement of scholars in analyzing them suggest that these states are becoming more and more significant in the European political scene. Researchers of small countries have identified several factors which help these states exercise influence in the EU. Nevertheless, there is no consensus about which factors determine the influence of small states and which are insignificant, moreover, some aspects, such as the importance of discursive elements are somewhat neglected in the previous research.

These circumstances gave a chance to this thesis to analyze small state influence in the EU through the example of Estonia and its promotion of the issue of cyber security in the past decade. The research has been done through testing four factors, previously identified by the small state literature, on a case that has not been examined before from this aspect. This analysis demonstrates, that policy expertise, agenda-setting by prominent politicians through institutional channels and the special way of framing a problem can be important factors in determining the influence of small Member States in the EU, whereas another factor which is generally claimed to have a great impact on the role of small countries, coalition building, is not always important.

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## Introduction

*“If Lilliputians can tie up Gulliver,  
or make him do their fighting for  
them, they must be studied as  
carefully as the giant.”*  
- Robert O. Keohane<sup>1</sup>

The twenty-seven, soon to be twenty-eight, Member States of the European Union (henceforth EU) possess a wide range of characteristics. In spite of the common European history that connects these countries, they differ from each other in many aspects: GDP, population, economic development, political culture, size etc. Nevertheless, there are other, even more EU-specific divisions along which the Member States can be placed: being an ‘old’ or ‘new’ Member State, being a net contributor or a net recipient of the budget, being a Eurosceptic or a Euroenthusiast country etc. Therefore, many dividing lines can be drawn between them and at the same time they are interconnected in many ways.

One of the most important features that create a distinction among the countries of the EU is size. The size-factor, as a subject of discussion, has long been present in the EU due to the complex voting and decision-making mechanisms of the organization. In spite of the fact that the aim of the different institutional mechanisms, such as the voting system in the Council of the European Union (henceforth Council) or the distribution of seats in the European Parliament (henceforth EP), is to achieve equal representation, many researchers claim that there is a huge discrepancy between the impacts of large and small states in the EU. Realist scholars still often claim that large states are dominant in most of the EU policy areas (mainly in foreign policy),<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Robert O. Keohane, “Lilliputians’ Dilemmas: Small States in International Relations,” *International Organization* 23, no. 2 (1969): 310.

<sup>2</sup> For accounts of the influence of large states see Catherine Gegout, “The Quint: Acknowledging the Existence of a Big Four–US Directoire at the Heart of the European Union’s Foreign Policy Decision-Making Process,” *JCMS*:

but there is an emerging discourse which says that small states are clearly overrepresented in the institutions, thus their influence is increasing in EU policy-making.<sup>3</sup> Which statement is more convincing and which is less depends on several circumstances, such as the examined policy area and the particular country in question, therefore I argue that the best way of conducting research about the influence of small and big Member States is to investigate specific cases as deeply as possible and draw conclusions from them. The aim of this thesis is to find out how small Member States can exercise influence in the EU and it does so by examining Estonia's role in promoting the issue of cyber security in the EU.

The question might arise: why is size still important in the EU if there are so many other circumstances playing a significant role in the behavior of Member States. This thesis argues, in line with Baldur Thorhallsson's idea, that size is still a relevant and significant variable in explaining the behavior of small states; therefore it is worth examining it.<sup>4</sup> The reason behind this is that the characteristics of small states are likely to have commonalities, which are different from that of the large states, therefore it can be expected that their behavior will be different as well.<sup>5</sup> Diana Panke argues that small EU Member States face "structural disadvantages in uploading their national policies to the EU level due to less bargaining power and less of the financial and administrative resources necessary for building up policy expertise and exerting influence via arguing."<sup>6</sup> The main components of the small ones' disadvantage, according to

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*Journal of Common Market Studies* 40, no. 2 (June 2002): 331–44; Christopher Hill, "Renationalizing or Regrouping? EU Foreign Policy Since 11 September 2001," *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 42, no. 1 (March 2004): 143–163, doi:10.1111/j.0021-9886.2004.00480.x.

<sup>3</sup> For insights into the institutional advantage of small state in the EU see Clive Archer and Neill Nugent, "Introduction: Does the Size of Member States Matter in the European Union?," *Journal of European Integration* 28, no. 1 (March 2006): 3, doi:10.1080/07036330500480466.

<sup>4</sup> Baldur Thorhallsson, *The Role of Small States in the European Union* (Aldershot, Hants, England ; Burlington, Vt: Ashgate, 2000), 1.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Diana Panke, "The Influence of Small States in the EU: Structural Disadvantages and Counterstrategies" (UCD Dublin European Institute Working Paper 08-3, May 2008), 1.

Panke, are the lack of political power, the insufficient resources to develop policy expertise, the fact that these states joined the EU recently and their lack of expertise and proficiency to operate as policy forerunners.<sup>7</sup> Although this study is aware that influencing EU policies can sometimes be harder for the small states than for the large ones, it denies the existence of a structural disadvantage due to insufficient resources and the lack of proficiency. The fact that these countries can also have a considerable impact on the EU will be demonstrated through the case of Estonia.

Nevertheless, the existence of a certain kind of disadvantage gives room for experts to focus on how small countries can compensate for this handicap and what strategies they have at their disposal to influence EU policy-making. There is a considerable amount of academic literature dealing with this subject. However, this literature is incomplete from several aspects. First of all, the scope of these studies is restricted to certain policy areas of the EU.<sup>8</sup> Secondly, the majority of the studies were written in the 1990s or the early 2000s. This indicates that they mainly focused on the Nordic or Scandinavian countries because the twelve ‘youngest’ countries (out of which many can be considered small) had not yet acceded to the EU, or it was too early to draw conclusions about their behavior in the EU. It should be pointed out at this stage that researchers of small states should not forget about the fact that there are huge differences even within the group of smalls. The older Member States for instance are generally believed to have a greater role in the EU than the new ones because of their experience. Moreover, there are some policy-areas (e.g. finance), where being a net contributor or a net recipient of the EU budget

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>8</sup> For small state research based on certain policy areas of the EU see Annica Kronsell, “Can Small States Influence EU Norms? Insights from Sweden’s Participation in the Field of Environmental Politics,” *Scandinavian Studies* 74, no. 3 (2002): 287–304; Anton Bebler, *A Small Member State and the European Union’s Security Policy* (Reykjavik: Centre for Small State Studies, Institute for International Affairs, University of Iceland, 2009); Teija Tiilikainen, “Finland — An EU Member with a Small State Identity,” *Journal of European Integration* 28, no. 1 (March 2006): 73–87, doi:10.1080/07036330500480599.

makes a considerable difference. Simon Bulmer and Christian Lequesne, in their book dealing with the Europeanization of all the Member States of the EU, claim that the impact of Member States, especially the new ones, at the EU level has to be further investigated by scholars.<sup>9</sup>

This thesis aims to investigate the role of the small Member States in the EU; more precisely it seeks to find out *what factors determine the influence of these countries in the European political scene*. To undertake this investigation, the thesis will engage in a deductive research: it will test the factors which were previously found by different scholars in the subject, but in an empirical case which has not been looked at before from this point of view. The variables were carefully selected by taking several aspects into consideration. The first factor, policy-expertise was chosen because a certain thread of literature claims that it is not at the disposal of small states. The second factor, agenda-setting, was mainly analyzed when researchers examined the Council Presidency and its impact on the agenda-setting capabilities of a state. Moreover, its components were not discovered in detail. Thirdly, framing was in a way neglected in the previous literature, because even though it was already mentioned when discussing bargaining and argumentative power of small states, the rhetorical elements were not sufficiently highlighted. Because of the lack of focus on discursive tactics, this can, in a way, be considered a new variable, encountered during the course of the research. The fourth variable, coalition-building, was selected because by the majority of experts it is considered to be the best strategy for small states to exercise influence.

The empirical part of the thesis is built on one puzzle: how Estonia, a new and small EU country could influence EU policy-making and become a leader in the domain of cyber security, a policy area which is becoming more and more important nowadays in world politics. This case

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<sup>9</sup> Simon Bulmer and Christian Lequesne, eds., *The Member States of the European Union* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 390.



helps in highlighting the methods that small Member States can use in promoting their interests in policy-making processes. There is no consensus in the literature about which factors are the strongest in determining small state influence, moreover, some variables, and aspects are neglected or not studied in detail. This gives room for this thesis to engage in the academic discussion about this subject.

In order to be able to analyze small state influence in the EU, it is indispensable to define what qualifies as ‘small’ in the thesis. In the relevant literature, there are several different explanations of the concept of size. Some authors define it in relative terms. For example, Robert Keohane defines it based on the perception of the countries’ leaders about the role of their state in the international system.<sup>10</sup> Robert Rothstein argues that the small countries are those that cannot exercise their political will or protect their interests and security.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, authors dealing with EU Member States usually choose an absolute definition. The four most prominent criteria in defining size are population, territory, GDP and military capacity.<sup>12</sup> However, Baldur Thorhallsson argues that size is constructed and more variables have to be looked at when examining how size affects states’ behavior and influence. He differentiates between several categories in this regard (e.g. fixed, economic or preference size) and argues that the researcher has to decide which category he/she focuses on, but it is always better to combine the different criteria and not to look at only one aspect.<sup>13</sup> This ‘multidimensional’ nature of size is emphasized by other authors as well.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Keohane, “Lilliputians’ Dilemmas: Small States in International Relations,” 295.

<sup>11</sup> Robert L. Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1968) as cited by Simone Bunse, Kalyso Nicolaidis, and Paul Magnette, *Is the Commission the Small Member States’ Best Friend?*, vol. 9 (Stockholm: Svenska institutet för europapolitiska studier (SIEPS), 2005), 8.

<sup>12</sup> Baldur Thorhallsson, “The Size of States in the European Union: Theoretical and Conceptual Perspectives,” *Journal of European Integration* 28, no. 1 (March 2006): 7, doi:10.1080/07036330500480490.

<sup>13</sup> To find out more about Thorhallsson’s categorization see *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>14</sup> See for example Archer and Nugent, “Introduction,” 6.

On the other hand, some researchers use more simple or objective definitions. For example, Diana Panke takes the allocation of votes among the states in qualified majority voting in the Council, and defines those who have fewer votes than the EU-average as small.<sup>15</sup> Based on this categorization she identifies nineteen small states. It is interesting to note that in EU-related research, scholars do not usually use the category of middle states. The reason for this is that the diversity of the criteria determining size would make it extremely difficult to decide where to draw the lines and how to make more groupings. Although Estonia is considered to be a small Member State according to all the definitions, the thesis will adopt Panke's understanding of 'small', because the distribution of votes in the Council already reflects size and population of the Member States, so it is a clear and comprehensive categorization.

Baldur Thorhallsson and Anders Wivel argue that both objective factors (the material, quantifiable aspects of power) and subjective factors (the perception of power) have to be examined to define the influence of a state.<sup>16</sup> They also claim that different actors at multiple levels have to be included in the analysis in order to understand small state behavior.<sup>17</sup> This thesis embraces both of the above claims and focuses on several aspects which constitute the influence of a state. The definition of influence I use is based on Nasra's understanding, which refers to the influence of small states as "the correlation between their preferences and the final outcome of EU policies."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Diana Panke, "Small States in the European Union: Structural Disadvantages in EU Policy-making and Counter-strategies," *Journal of European Public Policy* 17, no. 6 (September 2010): 799, doi:10.1080/13501763.2010.486980.

<sup>16</sup> Baldur Thorhallsson and Anders Wivel, "Small States in the European Union: What Do We Know and What Would We Like to Know?," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 19, no. 4 (December 2006): 654, doi:10.1080/09557570601003502.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 658.

<sup>18</sup> Skander Nasra, "Governance in EU Foreign Policy: Exploring Small State Influence," *Journal of European Public Policy* 18, no. 2 (March 2011): 165, doi:10.1080/13501763.2011.544490.

Therefore, the basic unit of examination is state influence, which is measured through Member State preferences compared to what they achieved in a certain policy area. In order to get an insight into small state influence, the thesis analyzes policy-making processes at a domestic and EU level and their outcomes. This is done by focusing on the engagement of the country's prominent politicians and experts in cyber security, by reviewing the relevant national strategies and how they were projected to the EU. Besides the secondary sources (press releases, policy analyses) primary EU documents such as summit reports, strategies and treaties are used for the analysis and a special attention is devoted to the rhetorical elements. Interviews with EU officials and experts have also been conducted to give a basis for this research.

Despite the potential in this research project, small state studies inevitably face certain limitations. Conducting an analysis about the influence of all the small Member States in all the EU policy areas would be very interesting and challenging, but it is hardly feasible. Therefore, the researcher always has to narrow down the scope of study and has to be careful with generalizing. This thesis tries to compensate for this limitation by conducting an in-depth research about the Estonian case which examines several aspects of policy-making. This enables the study to identify influence determining factors and tactics which can be useful for other small countries in the EU to shape policy-making processes. The main finding of the thesis is that the small EU Member States, also the newest countries, can play a key role in 'educating' the other European states about some specific issue areas. The factors which helped Estonia exercise influence on EU policy-making are being a policy expert, agenda-setting by its politicians through institutional channels and framing the issue around vulnerability, terrorism and solidarity. On the other hand, a frequently mentioned small state influencing factor, coalition-building, did not play a role.

The structure of the thesis is as follows. In the first chapter I will conduct a literature review on the topic of power, influence and the importance of size in the EU. I will also review the previous research on the question of small state influence and group the different small state influence determining factors based on their area of focus. I will choose four variables from the small state literature to be tested on the case of Estonia. In the second chapter I will contrast the theory with empirics: I will test the relevance of the previously identified factors on the case study. The last chapter will conclude with the findings about small state influence in the EU.

## Chapter 1 – Theoretical foundations

This chapter will lay down the theoretical foundations of the thesis by reviewing the research conducted in the past related to the subject. First, the previous literature about power politics and influence will be discussed; then the most important small state literature will be reviewed. Due to the fact that it is a widespread research area, I will show from which aspects small states have been examined before, and I will also concentrate on research on the newest countries of the EU. Finally I will precisely look at what factors have been identified by scholars as key to determining small state influence in the EU. After grouping these factors according to different IR theories and other aspects, a few of them will be chosen to be tested on the case of Estonia and cyber security.

### 1.1 Previous literature on power and influence

The first section of this chapter will conduct a short review on the prominent literature of power politics and small state studies. It is essential to note here that the subject of the thesis, small state influence in the EU, cannot be discussed without briefly introducing the concept of power, yet the boundaries of the thesis do not allow for an in-depth portrayal of the concept.

In the 1970s, the term power has generally been perceived as a realist concept since E. H. Carr “claimed it for realism.”<sup>19</sup> Based on this notion, power was treated by much of the International Relations discipline as “the ability of one state to use material resources to get another state to do what it otherwise would not do.”<sup>20</sup> Later on, power started to be examined from other angles as well, and was broken down to its components. Kenneth E. Boulding for instance identified the ‘three faces of power’ based on the consequences of exercising power. He

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<sup>19</sup> Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall, eds., *Power in Global Governance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 2, <http://public.eblib.com/EBLPublic/PublicView.do?ptilID=228275>.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

differentiates among destructive power, the power to destroy mainly with military means; productive power, the power to create through exchange and trade, for example; and integrative power, the power to create relationships.<sup>21</sup> This is a view which extends and broadens the scope of power. Theories of International Relations all tried to do a similar extension and insert new aspects to the concept of power or more precisely to explain international relations with different variables than that of realism.<sup>22</sup> Neoliberals, for example, dealt with the institutional aspects of power, and how states with convergent interests can create institutional cooperations that can actually tame power.<sup>23</sup> Liberals tried to turn the focus from power to democratic values, domestic interests, economic interdependence, and liberal values which explain international outcomes better than power itself.<sup>24</sup> Mainstream constructivists attempted to demonstrate the significance of normative structures and processes of learning and persuasion.<sup>25</sup>

These understandings suggest that IR theories, instead of creating their own conceptualization of power, only aimed at providing alternative explanations for international outcomes than that of realism. This is why Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall created a new, comprehensive taxonomy by identifying four types of power.<sup>26</sup> For them “power is the

<sup>21</sup> Kenneth E. Boulding, *Three Faces of Power* (Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications, 1989).

<sup>22</sup> Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall, “Power in International Politics,” *International Organization* 59, no. 01 (February 15, 2005): 40, doi:10.1017/S0020818305050010.

<sup>23</sup> For neoliberal ideas on power see Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984); Robert O. Keohane and Lisa Martin, “The Promise of Institutional Theory,” *International Security* 20, no. 1 (1995): 39–51, quoted in Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall, “Power in International Politics,” *International Organization* 59, no. 01 (February 15, 2005): 40, doi:10.1017/S0020818305050010.

<sup>24</sup> For liberal ideas on power see Andrew Moravcsik, “Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics,” *International Organization* 51, no. 4 (1997): 513–554; Anne-Marie Slaughter, “International Law in a World of Liberal States,” *European Journal of International Law* 6, no. 4 (1995): 503–538, quoted in Barnett and Duvall, “Power in International Politics,” 41.

<sup>25</sup> For constructivist ideas on power see Thomas Risse, “Let’s Argue: Communicative Action in International Relations,” *International Organization* 54, no. 1 (2001): 1–40; Peter J. Katzenstein, ed., *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), quoted in Barnett and Duvall, “Power in International Politics,” 41.

<sup>26</sup> Barnett and Duvall, *Power in Global Governance*, 3.

production, in and through social relations, of effects that shape the capacities of actors to determine their own circumstances and fate.”<sup>27</sup> However, they argue that power does not have a single expression or form, but they identify four of them. Compulsory power refers to interactions that “allow one actor to have direct control over another.”<sup>28</sup> Institutional power means indirect control, for example, when states create international institutions that work for their advantage and for the disadvantage of others. Structural power is “the constitution of social capacities and interests of actors in direct relation to one another.”<sup>29</sup> Productive power is the production of subjectivity through meaning and signification. All definitions and understandings of power created by IR scholars or political scientists can be put into one of these categories. This taxonomy detaches the discussion of power from the possible limitations of realism and makes it possible for scholars to see the multiple forms of power and to identify connections between them.<sup>30</sup> This thesis will mainly use structural and productive power when discussing small state influence. The reason for not closely engaging with the first two is that when analyzing EU policy-making through Member State action compulsory and institutional power are not that significant. On the one hand, compulsory power has the connotation of forcing somebody to do something, which is definitely not a small state strategy. On the other hand, institutional aspects have been exhaustively discussed in the literature about small states, so this thesis does not engage in analyzing institutional power.

This short review of the 20<sup>th</sup> century power studies informs this thesis to the extent that in order to analyze the European Union or a Member State of the EU one cannot stick to the realist understanding of power, but the other aspects have to be included as well (as previously

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 4.

presented by Barnett and Duvall). These are the so-called ‘multidimensional’ understandings of power which appeared already in the 1980s. They can be considered multidimensional because they go beyond the hard aspects of power by concentrating on other factors as well. A prominent scholar who should be mentioned when analyzing the EU and its power is Joseph Nye, who separated the hard (pure or brute) type of power from soft power. Although in his original book he applied the concept to the United States,<sup>31</sup> later he further developed and generalized it as a “means to success in world politics”.<sup>32</sup> Soft power means “the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments.”<sup>33</sup> It also means the use of persuasion through values and culture instead of military means, so this understanding of power fetches far from the original, realist understandings of the concept. Soft elements can include, for example, the way of bargaining or negotiating, something which will be discussed later when we detail the different factors determining small state influence on EU policy-making.

The development of the European Community and the formation of the European Union itself called for the emergence of the new types of interpretations of power and influence. This is so because the EU and its functioning cannot be examined by focusing only on military means and balance-of-power analysis. This is why many scholars dealing with the European Union and the nature of its power apply the multidimensional power concept. Fabian Krohn, for example, differentiates between civilian, military and normative power, and argues that the EU does not belong to only one of those but possesses the features of all three.<sup>34</sup> The three categories originate in the previous IR and European integration studies: ‘military’ refers to the realist concepts of

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<sup>31</sup> Joseph S. Nye, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1990).

<sup>32</sup> Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, 1st ed (New York: Public Affairs, 2004).

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, X.

<sup>34</sup> Fabian Krohn, *What Kind of Power? The EU as an International Actor* (Atlantic Community, 2009), [http://archive.atlantic-community.org/index/Open\\_Think\\_Tank\\_Article/The\\_European\\_Union:\\_a\\_Quiet\\_Superpower\\_in\\_the\\_Making](http://archive.atlantic-community.org/index/Open_Think_Tank_Article/The_European_Union:_a_Quiet_Superpower_in_the_Making).



power and ‘civilian’ is derived from Duchêne’s definition of the European Community as a “civilian group of countries long on economic power and relatively short on armed force.”<sup>35</sup> Krohn also added Smith’s definition of civilian power to the concept, meaning non-military power that includes economic, diplomatic and cultural policy instruments.<sup>36</sup> The notion of normative power comes from Ian Manners, who drew largely on the arguments of previous researchers, such as E.H. Carr, and defined it as the ability to shape the concept of ‘normal’.<sup>37</sup>

This thesis does not apply any of the above mentioned understandings exclusively, but examines Member State influence as a combination of mainly civilian and normative tools. It will concentrate on structural and productive power because these are the ones which can be best applied when studying small Member State behavior in the EU, and there is still room for conducting further research on them. However, it should be noted here that power alone tells us little about the behavior of small states without context.<sup>38</sup> Therefore, in order to conduct this research, it is not enough to examine only the power that the states possess but the focus has to be on the power they exercise.<sup>39</sup> In the European Union this kind of power means influence, so this thesis uses the term influence in the meaning of ‘power exercised’. The thesis analyzes small state influence, which means the preferences of Member States and what they could achieve in a certain policy area.

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<sup>35</sup> François Duchêne, “The European Community and the Uncertainties of Interdependence,” in *A Nation Writ Large? Foreign Policy Problems before the European Community*, ed. Max Kohnstamm and Wolfgang Hager (London: Macmillan, 1973), 19, quoted in Krohn, *What Kind of Power? The EU as an International Actor*, 4.

<sup>36</sup> Karen E. Smith, “Still ‘Civilian Power EU’?,” 2004, 1, <http://www.arena.uio.no/cidel/WorkshopOsloSecurity/Smith.pdf>, quoted in Krohn, *What Kind of Power? The EU as an International Actor*, 4.

<sup>37</sup> Ian Manners, “Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?,” *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 40, no. 2 (2002): 240.

<sup>38</sup> Thorhallsson and Wivel, “Small States in the European Union,” 653.

<sup>39</sup> Hans Mouritzen and Anders Wivel, eds., *The Geopolitics of Euro-Atlantic Integration*, Europe and the Nation State 9 (London ; New York: Routledge, 2005); Thorhallsson and Wivel, “Small States in the European Union,” 654.

## 1.2 Previous studies on small states

After going through the literature on the basic theoretical concepts of the thesis, we have to look at the early stages of the analysis of small state behavior. Two of the most significant articles which dealt with small states in the early stages of International Relations scholarship are Robert Keohane's study about 'Small States in International Politics'<sup>40</sup> and Robert Rothstein's book on 'Alliances and Small Powers'.<sup>41</sup> These researchers analyze the attitude of small states towards international organizations, their behavior in the balance-of-power system situations and their willingness to form alliances. They come to the conclusion that alliances are generally beneficial for small states. Analyzing the behavior of the small ones in the scope of alliance formation was not only popular in the 1960s, IR scholars found it relevant to deal with at the beginning of the 2000s too.<sup>42</sup>

This focus on alliances suggests that the research on small countries is extremely widespread not just because of the number of countries to be analyzed, but because of the angles from which they can be looked at. The book of Christine Ingebritsen et al, 'Small States in International Relations', for example, is a collection of articles which look at small state behavior from several different aspects, such as their engagement in the world market, their economic development and their performance in certain EU policy areas.<sup>43</sup> This leads us to one of the fundamental readings of small state analysis in the EU, namely Baldur Thorhallsson's 'The role of small states in the European Union'. This book examines the small EU countries and the impact they have on EU politics, more precisely on the Common Agricultural Policy and on

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<sup>40</sup> Keohane, "Lilliputians' Dilemmas: Small States in International Relations."

<sup>41</sup> Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers*.

<sup>42</sup> For an account on small states and alliances see Erich Reiter and Heinz Gärtner, eds., *Small States and Alliances* (Heidelberg ; New York: Physica-Verlag, 2001).

<sup>43</sup> Christine Ingebritsen et al., eds., *Small States in International Relations*, New Directions in Scandinavian Studies (Seattle : Reykjavik: University of Washington Press ; University of Iceland Press, 2006).

Regional Policy.<sup>44</sup> The value of his work lies in the thorough definition of the concept of smallness in the EU, as well as its findings which are generalizable to other political areas as well.

Picking a certain policy area and looking at the role of small states under that scope is a widespread strategy among scholars. Just to mention a few analyses of that kind: Diana Panke for instance concentrated strictly on the institutional aspects in her research,<sup>45</sup> whereas Henrik Larsen examined small state behavior (that of Denmark) in EU foreign policy.<sup>46</sup> This leads us to another type of distinction among small state studies, which is based on geographical areas. Scholars very often focus on one state (usually their home country) or a group of countries in their analysis. Good examples for this are Teija Tiilikainen's engagement in Finland's behavior,<sup>47</sup> Annica Kronsell's research on the Swedish role in environmental policy-making,<sup>48</sup> Thorhallsson's writing on Iceland's economic performance<sup>49</sup> and Ingebritsen's book about Nordic states in the EU.<sup>50</sup>

The 'golden age' of small state research in the EU started at the beginning of the 2000s, so it should come as no surprise that usually the EU-15 is the basis of the analyses, and the Member States acceding the EU in 2004 and 2007 are left out of the studies. Of course, in the

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<sup>44</sup> Thorhallsson, *The Role of Small States in the European Union*.

<sup>45</sup> Panke, "The Influence of Small States in the EU: Structural Disadvantages and Counterstrategies."

<sup>46</sup> Henrik Larsen, *Analysing the Foreign Policy of Small States in the EU: The Case of Denmark* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

<sup>47</sup> Tiilikainen, "Finland — An EU Member with a Small State Identity."

<sup>48</sup> Kronsell, "Can Small States Influence EU Norms? Insights from Sweden's Participation in the Field of Environmental Politics."

<sup>49</sup> Baldur Thorhallsson, *The Icelandic Economic Collapse: Incompetence or the Small Size?* (Reykjavík, Iceland: Faculty of Political Science, School of Social Science, University of Iceland, May 16, 2011), <http://uni.hi.is/baldurt/files/2012/08/Incompetence-versus-size-by-Baldur-Thorhallsson-16May2011-2-1.pdf>.

<sup>50</sup> Christine Ingebritsen, *The Nordic States and European Unity*, Cornell Studies in Political Economy (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998).

past ten years, there is a tendency to deal with these countries as well,<sup>51</sup> but the number of articles and books focusing on them is considerably smaller than that on other small EU countries. The first thread of literature dealing with these countries is mainly about their Europeanization, such as the book edited by Simon Bulmer and Christian Lequesne, ‘The Member States of the European Union’. This writing analyses all the Member States of the EU (not one by one but in several groups) and their responses to EU membership.<sup>52</sup> Europeanization means the impact of EU integration on the Member States.<sup>53</sup> Tania Börzel differentiated between bottom-up Europeanization, meaning the evolution of European norms, values and institutions and a top-down process which refers to the impact of these new institutions and political structures on the Member States.<sup>54</sup> However, we should not neglect the role of the Member States themselves in uploading their policies and influence to the community level. The more profound engagement of the EU countries in EU policy-making and their commitment to influence the flow of the European politics is also part of the bottom-up Europeanization process. It is evident that there is more room for this kind of research in the current European studies literature about the twelve ‘youngest’ EU Member States. This is why this thesis focuses on one of the Baltic states, Estonia, and seeks to find out how it could influence EU policy-making.

### 1.3 Review of factors which determine small state influence

There is no common theory behind small-state studies, yet most authors share the conviction that size matters.<sup>55</sup> However, this is not to say that their interest in size makes all these

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<sup>51</sup> For a research about a young EU Member State see Bebler, *A Small Member State and the European Union's Security Policy*.

<sup>52</sup> Bulmer and Lequesne, *The Member States of the European Union*.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>54</sup> Tania Börzel, “Pace-Setting, Foot-Dragging and Fence-Sitting: Member State Responses to Europeanization,” *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 40, no. 2 (2002): 193.

<sup>55</sup> Mouritzen and Wivel, *The Geopolitics of Euro-Atlantic Integration*, 6.

scholars neorealists because they do not necessarily pay attention to the power possessed by the states but the power exercised by them. Moreover, they try to explain how these small states react to the process of European integration through several different angles. With this attempt, they are already able to discover some variables which determine small state behavior. A useful way of exploring which variables are relevant for a certain research is to group them according to IR theories.

With this method, Thorhallsson and Wivel identified three clusters of variables to investigate.<sup>56</sup> The first is the realist group, which mainly focuses on the importance of power and how the small states could survive in spite of the lack of it. The scholars of this cluster mainly focus on geopolitics when explaining small state behavior. This was done by Mouritzen and Wivel, for instance, who updated the geopolitical tradition of international relations to fit into the European environment.<sup>57</sup> The second is the liberal theory which focuses on the importance of domestic interest groups and the effect of European integration on their cost-benefit calculations. This is done by Ingebritsen's already mentioned book about Nordic states, in which she analyses how these countries' economies are affected by the integration process.<sup>58</sup> Thirdly, constructivists focus on the importance of discourse. Wæver, for example, argues that the discourse of the small states explains their dilemmas and problems to a large extent.<sup>59</sup>

However, the authors point to the tendency that these scholars usually do not use these variables exclusively, but they combine them in order to get a more comprehensive

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<sup>56</sup> Thorhallsson and Wivel, "Small States in the European Union," 656.

<sup>57</sup> Mouritzen and Wivel, *The Geopolitics of Euro-Atlantic Integration*, quoted in Thorhallsson and Wivel, "Small States in the European Union," 656.

<sup>58</sup> Ingebritsen, *The Nordic States and European Unity*, quoted in Thorhallsson and Wivel, "Small States in the European Union," 656.

<sup>59</sup> Ole Wæver, "Identity, Communities and Foreign Policy: Discourse Analysis as Foreign Policy Theory," in *European Integration and National Adaptations: The Challenge of the Nordic States* (London; New York: Routledge, 2002), 20–49, quoted in Thorhallsson and Wivel, "Small States in the European Union," 657.

understanding of small state behavior.<sup>60</sup> This thesis will use the same method, mixing variables from different groups, when analyzing the influence of Estonia on EU policy-making, but a special attention will be dedicated to the constructivist elements, such as rhetoric and discourse.

The diversity of the variables gives the researcher the opportunity to create a new type of categorization among them. I identified three main distinctive categories based on which factors of small state influence can be grouped. The first group consists of institutional aspects which are features existing due to the particular organizational methods of the European Union. These are, for instance, the institution of the rotating Presidency of the Council, the relationship with the Commission or unanimity as a type of voting. Holding the Presidency is agreed to be a huge opportunity for all Member States, especially for the small ones, to influence EU politics. It is so because “the EU Presidency possesses a set of informational and procedural resources that can help unlock incompatible negotiating positions and secure efficient agreements.”<sup>61</sup> For six months the Member States get to participate in decision-making and preparing processes in which normally they are not involved. Moreover, each Presidency usually has a priority, a policy area, which they focus on. This also gives an opportunity for the country to put an issue on the agenda which is important for her. However, one must not forget that the Lisbon Treaty changed the EU policy-making system to a considerable extent. With the office of the permanent European Council President the rotating Presidency lost somewhat its influence and it is less significant than it used to be.

The good relationship with the Commission is a more debated variable. The general claim is that the Commission is a “friend of small states” which means that it is more sensitive than any other actor or institution of the European political scene to the needs and interests of small states,

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<sup>60</sup> Thorhallsson and Wivel, “Small States in the European Union,” 657.

<sup>61</sup> Jonas Tallberg, “The Power of the Presidency: Brokerage, Efficiency and Distribution in EU Negotiations,” *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 42, no. 5 (2004): 999.

and it is ready to ensure compliance by the Member States, regardless of their size.<sup>62</sup> However, the findings of Bunse et al show that although generally the Commission has a role in guaranteeing equality among the Member States, it is not the defender of small state interests when it comes to specific legislative proposals.<sup>63</sup> Many scholars analyze the influence of small states based on the voting system in the Council. In this respect they usually look at what types of decision-making processes are more beneficial for the small ones: qualified majority voting (henceforth QMV) or unanimity. The answer to this question for some is unanimity because in that case every Member State is equal and has a veto right, whereas in QMV the large states have more votes.<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, others argue that small states are proportionally over-represented in QMV and in the European Parliament as well, so the other decision-making processes are not as disadvantageous for them as they may seem.<sup>65</sup>

I argue that building a research about small state influence solely on the institutional and voting processes can be misleading because the policy-making has several other very important stages. Informal negotiations and some particular circumstances of the given situation can be as determining as the voting itself, or even more. In fact, the importance of institutional aspects is also highly dependent on the policy area itself. In the Estonian case the most important features of influencing policy-making happen before the voting itself. Therefore, the thesis will not focus primarily on institutional factors.

The second group of variables looks at the capacities of the Member States themselves. The administrative or economic capacity of the country and being an expert in a certain policy

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<sup>62</sup> Bunse, Nicolaïdis, and Magette, *Is the Commission the Small Member States' Best Friend?*, 9:6.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Katharina Holzinger, *The Influence of the New Member States on EU Environmental Policy-making: a Game Theoretical Approach*, Discussion Paper (Social Science Research Center Berlin (WZB), 1995), 10, <http://hdl.handle.net/10419/48970>.

<sup>65</sup> Archer and Nugent, "Introduction," 4.

area are parts of this cluster. I claim that this is the group where one can find out the most about the Member State's capacity to influence the EU, but in the meantime one could argue that it is really hard to come to general conclusions based on these factors because they are usually different in the case of every country. However, some general tendencies can always be discovered based on these features. Thorhallsson, for example, claims that the flawless administrative functioning and the prepared staff and expertise of a state are crucial in maintaining its economic and political status in the EU.<sup>66</sup> Panke also emphasized that the uninterrupted administrative working environment gives an impetus to the small countries' activity in shaping EU policies.<sup>67</sup> On the other hand, she argues that small states have constrained administrative and economic resources to build up policy expertise and exert influence.<sup>68</sup> This is the reason for their already mentioned structural disadvantage.

I argue that despite the existence of a certain disadvantage under some circumstances, small states can be policy forerunners because it is not their resources which count the most in being an expert. On these terms, I agree with the authors who claim that if the country has the knowledge and expertise in a certain subject, and it can prove it to the other Member States and the EU institutions, then it can be a policy leader. The thesis will look at this factor in the case of Estonia and test whether it played a role in the Estonian promotion of cyber security or not.

The third and perhaps most interesting group of factors is the one which focuses on negotiating tactics. I argue that this cluster is the most interesting because first of all it encompasses many factors and secondly because there is still considerable room for further research in this matter. Panke, for example, argues that Member States can normally influence EU negotiations through three types of powers: bargaining power, argumentative power and the

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<sup>66</sup> Thorhallsson, *The Icelandic Economic Collapse: Incompetence or the Small Size?*, 10.

<sup>67</sup> Panke, "Small States in the European Union," 799.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.



power of reputation.<sup>69</sup> The first means using implicit or explicit threats to push for concessions, the second means using compelling claims in order to convince others while the third refers to using their reputation or the reputation of others to pursue their interests. She states that the bargaining capacity of small states in these respects is limited and thus she offers compensational strategies for them, such as institutionalized coordination on a regional basis or strategic partnership with bigger states<sup>70</sup> as well as selective engagement in policy areas and connections to the Commission.<sup>71</sup>

Although this thesis does not examine bargaining, but rather looks at certain stages of policy making, it argues that during the negotiations the small Member States can be as successful as the big ones because it is not their size or resources what count but their convincing arguments and good discursive tactics. And in this respect they do not have a disadvantage compared to the big ones. Although some researchers already mentioned having convincing arguments as a strategy for small states,<sup>72</sup> I argue that not enough attention has been paid to the discursive elements in setting the agenda and framing the subject of a policy-making process, so there is room for more research in this area. The Estonian case will show that the way of constructing a discourse around the subject in question is essential in the level of influence that small states can exert in the EU.

#### **1.4 Presenting the factors to be tested on the Estonian case**

This short section will justify the selection of the variables which are tested on the case of Estonia. Although some components of the reasons for choosing them were already mentioned in

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 802.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Panke, "The Influence of Small States in the EU: Structural Disadvantages and Counterstrategies," 9.

<sup>72</sup> Peter Viggo Jakobsen, "Small States, Big Influence: The Overlooked Nordic Influence on the Civilian ESDP," *Journal of Common Market Studies* 47, no. 1 (2009): 87.

the previous review of factors, I would like to summarize and clarify the reasons why they have been selected as ‘test variables’. It should be noted here that these factors will not be examined in detail, because that is the task of the next chapter. The purpose of these paragraphs is to explain why the study intends to test these particular variables through the Estonian example.

The first factor that this thesis examines is policy expertise. I chose this variable to test because it is a bit ambiguous in the previous research. Despite the fact that it is frequently listed among those factors which can help small states to influence EU policy-making, by another thread of research it is also claimed to be a part of the structural disadvantage of small states. As previously mentioned, Diana Panke argues that small countries do not have the resources to be forerunners in a policy area, so they have to compensate with other tactics to exercise influence.<sup>73</sup> The hypothesis of this thesis related to this factor is that there is no need for these compensational strategies, because small countries can be policy forerunners based on their knowledge and expertise. Against the backdrop of this claim my argument falls along the lines of those scholars who posit that policy expertise is a tool for small states to influence EU policy-making. However, these researchers did not pay enough attention on how a country can become an expert in the field and on what exactly it can achieve through its tactics. This is why, compared to previous studies, I will pay more attention to the circumstances which led to the emergence of policy expertise, the process of becoming an expert and how expertise played out in the end.

The second factor to be examined is agenda-setting, which means “the introduction of new issues on the policy agenda, which involves efforts to raise the awareness of a problem and to develop innovative proposals.”<sup>74</sup> Although it has been mentioned by previous scholars as a

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<sup>73</sup> Panke, “The Influence of Small States in the EU: Structural Disadvantages and Counterstrategies,” 2.

<sup>74</sup> Thomas C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960); John W. Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies* (Boston, Mass.: Little, Brown, 1984) quoted in Jonas Tallberg, *Leadership*

strategy to gain influence in the EU,<sup>75</sup> its components were not mentioned in detail before. Moreover, the process of agenda-setting is usually mentioned together with the Council Presidency, when authors aim to determine whether holding the Presidency facilitates setting the agenda for a small country or it does not have such an effect.<sup>76</sup> This thesis will not examine agenda-setting in relation to the Council Presidency because it argues that small countries can set the agenda without chairing as well, which can be seen as using their structural power.<sup>77</sup> If that was not the case, then small countries would be silent observers of EU policy-making most of the time, and this is not true, as the case of Estonia will demonstrate. In the process of setting the agenda, the question of ‘how’ is the most important aspect; therefore one has to discover the particular tools of this factor.

The third element of determining small state influence which will be looked at in the Estonian case is framing. This thesis uses the concept of framing in its meaning identified by International Relations scholars: framing is the use of expressions and images that resonate with the audience and that are part of the process of persuasion.<sup>78</sup> The reason for choosing to test this variable is the fact that when mentioning framing, authors usually focus on argumentative and bargaining power and they relate it to certain kinds of resources that small states usually do not

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and *Negotiation in the European Union* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 24, <http://site.ebrary.com/id/10150299>.

<sup>75</sup> Annika Björkdahl, “Norm Advocacy: a Small State Strategy to Influence the EU,” *Journal of European Public Policy* 15, no. 1 (January 2008): 135, doi:10.1080/13501760701702272.

<sup>76</sup> For account on the importance of the Council Presidency see David Král, Irena Brinar, and Josefin Almer, *Position of Small Countries Towards Institutional Reform – from Tyranny of the Small to Directoire of the Big?*, EPIN Working Paper (Swedish institute for European Policy Studies; Institute for European Policy, November 6, 2003), 3, <http://aei.pitt.edu/1806/>; Jonas Tallberg, “The Agenda-shaping Powers of the EU Council Presidency,” *Journal of European Public Policy* 10, no. 1 (January 2003): 1–19, doi:10.1080/1350176032000046903.

<sup>77</sup> Barnett and Duvall, *Power in Global Governance*, 3.

<sup>78</sup> Rodger. A. Payne, “Persuasion, Frames and Norm Construction,” *European Journal of International Relations* 7, no. 1 (March 1, 2001): 43, doi:10.1177/1354066101007001002.

possess.<sup>79</sup> My hypothesis in this regard is that in the negotiating process resources are much less important than the particular way of framing the arguments, so, based on Barnett's and Duvall's typology, structural and productive power can be exercised.<sup>80</sup> Moreover, when mentioning the argumentation of small states in negotiations, the authors most frequently focus on the institutional elements (such as voting power) and the discursive tactics are overlooked. One could also say that in the case of framing, as well as in agenda-setting, the previous literature has a significant gap: it is too superficial and fails to point out how these tactics were carried out. I expected that looking at the way of constructing the arguments will give an additional insight on the flow of the negotiations. The expectations were met during the research because, despite the deductive approach of this study, after carefully evaluating the explanatory power of the chosen variables on the case of Estonia, the study could identify an additional variable, which has been neglected by the previous research.

The last variable tested on the Estonian case was that of forming coalitions. The reason for choosing this factor was that it was always listed among the most important tools of small Member States to achieve what they want in the EU.<sup>81</sup> Moreover, this variable can include many actors (institutions and states alike) and can occur in all stages of the policy-making, which makes it the most likely to play a role in small state influence.

The added value of testing these variables lies in the fact that when one looks at them in light of a new case, additional and undiscovered aspects or components are likely to emerge. This

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<sup>79</sup> For accounts on the disadvantage of small states in terms of resources see Panke, "The Influence of Small States in the EU: Structural Disadvantages and Counterstrategies," 5; Andrew Moravcsik, "A New Statecraft? Supranational Entrepreneurs and International Cooperation," *International Organization* 53, no. 2 (April 1, 1999): 267–306, doi:10.1162/002081899550887.

<sup>80</sup> Barnett and Duvall, *Power in Global Governance*, 3.

<sup>81</sup> For research that claims the importance of coalition-forming for small states see Paul Meerts, "Negotiating in the European Union: Comparing Perceptions of EU Negotiators in Small Member States," *Group Decision and Negotiation* 6, no. 5 (September 1997): 478; Archer and Nugent, "Introduction," 4; Björkdahl, "Norm Advocacy," 138; Jakobsen, "Small States, Big Influence: The Overlooked Nordic Influence on the Civilian ESDP," 86.

is exactly what happened during the examination of Estonia and how it pushed for the issue of cyber security in the European political scene. The next chapter will demonstrate how Estonia became a policy leader in the EU in terms of cyber security and what strategies it used to achieve its goals.

## **Chapter 2 – The case of Estonia in promoting the issue of cyber security**

This part of the thesis will apply the theoretical foundations of small state studies, detailed in the previous chapters, to empirical data. This will be done by testing the aforementioned four influence-determining factors on a new case, which is Estonia and its strategy pursued in the past few years to promote the issue of cyber security in the European Union. With this deductive, theory-testing method, this thesis aspires to intervene in the current academic debate about which variables have an impact on the level of influence that small states can exert in the EU and which are insignificant in this matter. It also fills a gap in the existing literature by the in-depth analysis of certain factors.

First of all, I will examine one factor, which is debated in the small state literature. According to a certain thread of research about small states' structural disadvantage in the EU, one of the frequently mentioned elements, policy expertise, is usually not at the disposal of small countries. The chapter will demonstrate that those researchers are right who claim that small states can also be forerunners and being an expert can have a positive impact on the influence of small countries in the EU. Looking at the process of becoming a policy expert is essential when discussing this variable. Secondly, the factor of agenda-setting, which is generally claimed to have an impact on small state influence in the EU, will be reviewed in light of the Estonian case. This variable will be analyzed without linking it to the Council Presidency (unlike how most of the studies do it) and by breaking it down to its components. Thirdly, a factor will be examined which is generally not given enough attention by small state researchers, namely the way of framing an issue. Finally one of the most prominent variables of the literature, coalition-building, will be discussed.

I will start by presenting the background of the emerging importance of the subject of cyber security in the EU. I will then analyze the roots of the significance of cyber security in Estonia and the strategy the country applied in order to exercise influence in the area. I will do this by examining which factors, identified in the previous literature, played a role in the Estonian case itself. Finally, I will present the results the country could achieve through its tactics in detail. The main argument of the chapter is that policy expertise, agenda-setting and the special framing of the issue were the most important factors which helped Estonia obtain influence in the subject of cyber security, whereas coalition building unexpectedly did not play a role.

## **2.1 The emergence of ‘cyber discourse’ in the European Union**

In the past few years, the issue of cyber security has been receiving more and more attention on the European and world political stage. Both EU and NATO leaders have been raising the public’s awareness to the importance of fighting cyber-attacks and ensuring the security of countries, businesses and individuals in this matter.<sup>82</sup> In general, cyber security is mentioned among the most important security challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>83</sup> In the European Union, the topic entered the center of discussion in 2008, in relation with the revision of the European Security Strategy (ESS). The ESS, which is a key document in European security and defense policy, was approved by the European Council in December 2003 and was drafted under the responsibilities of EU High Representative Javier Solana.<sup>84</sup> The document lays down the basic principles according to which the Member States of the EU have to coordinate their foreign activities and it also outlines the basic principles of EU external action. The ESS gathered

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<sup>82</sup> “Companies Must Report Cyber Attacks, EU Says,” *EUobserver.com*, February 7, 2013, <http://euobserver.com/justice/118989> (accessed May 1, 2013).

<sup>83</sup> “Nato Chief: EU Must Spend More on Military,” *EUobserver.com*, January 31, 2013, <http://euobserver.com/defence/118914> (accessed May 1, 2013)..

<sup>84</sup> “A secure Europe in a better world: European Security Strategy” (Council of the European Union, December 12, 2003), <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf>.

momentum at the beginning of the 2000s, due to events on the international political scene such as the war in Iraq.<sup>85</sup> Therefore, it should come as no surprise that after a few years there was a public demand for its revision, based on some significant events occurring on the world stage and on the new, emerging challenges of globalization. Despite pressure coming from both academia and prestigious think-thanks, the ESS has been subjected to no significant revision since 2003.

The one and only serious attempt to revise the Strategy was in 2008, but the result of the process was not an official revision, only the creation of a ‘Report on the Implementation of the ESS’.<sup>86</sup> Although this Report, according to some experts in the subject, could not live up to the expectations, and there is still a need for a real revision of the ESS,<sup>87</sup> the Implementation Report is nevertheless a useful document. In 2008 it constituted a step forward in European security because it highlighted the importance of some emerging challenges and also brought new topics into the political discussion. There were three main new subjects inserted in the document which previously did not receive sufficient attention in the ESS. These were cyber security, energy security and climate change together with environmental protection. The Report emphasized the importance of these issues and laid down the EU’s main tasks to improve its performance in these areas.

At the time of the revision process there was a feeling of uncertainty about which subjects should be discussed in the Implementation Report and which should be left out.<sup>88</sup> However, this uncertainty was due to circumstances in which the opportunity was given to some Member States

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<sup>85</sup> Jan Joel Andersson et al., *The European Security Strategy: Reinvigorate, Revise or Reinvent?*, UI Occasional Papers (The Swedish Institute of International Affairs, June 2011), 5, [www.tegs.eu/Files.aspx?f\\_id=77715](http://www.tegs.eu/Files.aspx?f_id=77715).

<sup>86</sup> “Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy: Providing Security in a Changing World” (Council of the European Union, November 12, 2008), [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/reports/104630.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/reports/104630.pdf).

<sup>87</sup> Margriet Drent and Lennart Landman, *Why Europe needs a new European Security Strategy?*, Clingendael Policy Brief (The Clingendael Institute, July 2012), [http://www.clingendael.nl/publications/2012/20120706\\_research\\_policybrief9\\_llandman\\_mdrent.pdf](http://www.clingendael.nl/publications/2012/20120706_research_policybrief9_llandman_mdrent.pdf).

<sup>88</sup> Daniel Keohane, Interview by author, April 19, 2013, Brussels.



to come up with policies that are important to them, and to push the others towards a direction favorable to their needs. Active in this regard were mainly the small countries, deeply engaging themselves in the support for energy and cyber security.<sup>89</sup> This is exactly what happened in the case of Estonia, which was the most prominent promoter of discussing the issue of cyber security and adding it to the Implementation Report. But the country did not stop after inserting its pet subject in the Report as it fought for the creation of more regulating documents on EU and NATO level as well. It organized several high level conferences on the issue of cyber-crime where it adopted a rhetoric convincing enough for the European Union to become more engaged in the issue of cyber security.<sup>90</sup> The next sections will demonstrate that in the absence of Estonia's activism, the issue of cyber security would not have received as much attention on the EU level as it eventually did. The Estonian example gives a perfect insight into how a small state can influence EU policy-making. The following sections will present why Estonia took the lead in this subject, what the country could achieve and, most importantly, how it could exercise its influence.

## **2.2 The road to becoming 'E-stonia' and a policy-leader in the EU**

The special importance of cyber security to Estonia is rooted in the cyber-attacks it suffered in the spring of 2007, as well as its special economic, governmental and administrative organization which is to a large extent based on computer technology.<sup>91</sup> At the end of April 2007 the Estonian government decided to move the Bronze Soldier, which is a memorial commemorating the Soviet liberation of Estonia from the Nazis, to a less prominent place in

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> "Estonia Leads the Way in Countering Cyber-attacks," *Euractiv*, April 9, 2009,

<http://www.euractiv.com/infosociety/estonia-leads-way-countering-cyb-news-221669> (accessed April 26, 2013).

<sup>91</sup> Stephen Herzog, "Revisiting the Estonian Cyber Attacks: Digital Threats and Multinational Responses," *Journal of Strategic Security* 4, no. 2 (June 2011): 49, doi:10.5038/1944-0472.4.2.3.

Tallinn. This act was met with opposition from the Russian government and media<sup>92</sup> and also resulted in riots among the country's Russian-speaking community. The conflict culminated in distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) cyber-attacks targeting the country's infrastructure, leading to the shut-down of the websites of all government ministries, two major banks and several political parties.<sup>93</sup> Such a massive wave of cyber-attacks was unprecedented in world history.<sup>94</sup> The events posed a big threat to Estonian national security because the international connections to several servers had to be blocked, creating a situation similar to a blockade of a country, only without actual weapons.<sup>95</sup> Despite the initial accusations targeting the Russian government, the actual delinquents have not been discovered. The attacks involved computers from 178 countries of the world, with the participation of politically motivated individuals and centrally controlled actions. The Russian authorities denied any kind of involvement.<sup>96</sup>

Such attacks were especially harmful for Estonia because of the country's special vulnerability in cyberspace. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the country wanted to reduce its gap in infrastructure by investing in computer technology.<sup>97</sup> This materialized in the high usage of computers in education, as well as in the public administration. In 2007, Estonia held its parliamentary elections through an e-voting system for the first time, and the usage of e-signatures in official documents has also become widespread throughout the whole country. Therefore, the 2007 attacks unveiled the possible negative sides of a country's modern

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<sup>92</sup> Eneken Tikk, Kadri Kaska, and Liis Vihul, *International Cyber Incidents: Legal Considerations* (Tallinn, Estonia: Cooperative Cyber Defence of Excellence (CCD COE), 2010), 15.

<sup>93</sup> Herzog, "Revisiting the Estonian Cyber Attacks," 50.

<sup>94</sup> Emmet Tuohy, *Toward an EU Cybersecurity Strategy: The Role of Estonia* (International Centre for Defense Studies, December 2012), 5., <http://icds.ee/fileadmin/failid/Toward%20an%20EU%20Cybersecurity%20Strategy%20-%20The%20Role%20of%20Estonia.pdf>.

<sup>95</sup> Häly Laasme, *The Role of Estonia in Developing NATO's Cyber Strategy*, Cicero Foundation Great Debate Paper, December 2012, 11, [http://www.cicerofoundation.org/lectures/Laasme\\_%20Estonia\\_NATO\\_Cyber\\_%20Strategy.pdf](http://www.cicerofoundation.org/lectures/Laasme_%20Estonia_NATO_Cyber_%20Strategy.pdf).

<sup>96</sup> Tikk, Kaska, and Vihul, *International Cyber Incidents*, 33.

<sup>97</sup> Tuohy, *Toward an EU Cybersecurity Strategy: The Role of Estonia*, 5.

infrastructure, as well as the inadequacy of international legal frameworks in the cyber domain, and also called for a large-scale solution in this issue. Moreover, the country's economy has been severely damaged by the attacks, due to its intertwined nature with the internet. The attacks came in several waves, and during the two peaks, Estonia first lost 50% of its bread, milk and gasoline sales for 90 minutes and then 75% of the same commodities for another 5 minutes.<sup>98</sup> Furthermore, the country's economy was devastated by the incidents also because the daily conduct of business of many commercial and industrial sectors, as well as the activity of small and medium size enterprises was halted.<sup>99</sup>

Estonia realized the importance of the issue and the possibility to take the leadership, and acted immediately with remarkable salience about how to frame the issue. The country's politicians addressed the topic of cyber security in several conferences, targeting a wide political scene and focusing on an international audience. One of the most important among these keynote speeches is that of Minister of Defense Jaak Aaviksoo, delivered at the Center for Strategic & International Studies in November 2007, in Washington D.C.<sup>100</sup> In his speech he stressed the importance of cyber security and expressed his regret for the lack of awareness and preparation against possible cyber-attacks in general.<sup>101</sup> He also mentioned the most important strategies of Estonia in addressing the problem right after the attacks. These tactics, besides applying a comprehensive approach to the subject, included speeding up the process of the creation of a national cyber security strategy. Estonian experts worked hard through the whole year after the

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<sup>98</sup> Ahto Lobjakas, "News Analysis: How Vulnerable Are Countries To Cyberattacks? Ask Estonia!," *Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty*, April 29, 2008, <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1109653.html> (accessed May 20, 2013).

<sup>99</sup> Tikk, Kaska, and Vihul, *International Cyber Incidents*, 24.

<sup>100</sup> Jaak Aaviksoo, "Cyber-Terrorism: Real Threats from the Imaginary World," *Vital Speeches of the Day* 74, no. 1 (January 2008): 28–32.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

2007 attacks, and the strategy was finally issued in 2008.<sup>102</sup> The opening of the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defense Centre of Excellence in Tallinn was also a really important step towards establishing a more secure cyberspace.<sup>103</sup> The creation of this fully accredited international military organization was already proposed in 2003 by Estonia, but NATO only gave a green light to its opening after the cyber-attacks. It was finally opened in October 2008.<sup>104</sup>

Despite the fact that Aaviksoo was speaking to an American audience, and mainly stressed NATO-related issues, he also referred to the EU and to the need for a European cyber security strategy as well as to the Member States' cooperation in this matter.<sup>105</sup> Moreover, he emphasized that the EU should not replicate what NATO had already done, but instead called for a certain kind of division of labor between the two organizations in the domain of cyber security. Another significant action taken by Estonia after the spring of 2007 was the creation of the Cyber Defense League, a cyber-reaction force, constituted of civilian and military IT experts who can be mobilized to carry out high volume national security missions.<sup>106</sup>

To sum up, Estonia introduced comprehensive reforms to secure its cyberspace, and did not keep its actions to itself, but shared them with the international community and called for continuous action. The combination of Estonia's highly developed computer technology and the quick and effective response to the attacks of 2007 lead to the creation of the nickname 'E-stonia' for the country which has been widely used in the media in the past years.<sup>107</sup> In fact, Estonia is still playing the role of 'cyber security promoter': in the past five years, the leading politicians

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<sup>102</sup> "Cyber Security Strategy of Estonia" (Ministry of Defense, Cyber Security Strategy Committee, 2008), [http://www.kaitseministeerium.ee/files/kmin/img/files/Kuberjulgeoleku\\_strateegia\\_2008-2013\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.kaitseministeerium.ee/files/kmin/img/files/Kuberjulgeoleku_strateegia_2008-2013_ENG.pdf).

<sup>103</sup> Aaviksoo, "Cyber-Terrorism: Real Threats from the Imaginary World," 31.

<sup>104</sup> Laasme, *The Role of Estonia in Developing NATO's Cyber Strategy*, 11.

<sup>105</sup> Aaviksoo, "Cyber-Terrorism: Real Threats from the Imaginary World," 32.

<sup>106</sup> Laasme, *The Role of Estonia in Developing NATO's Cyber Strategy*, 12.

<sup>107</sup> Tim Mansel, "How Estonia Became E-stonia," *BBC News*, May 16, 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-22317297> (accessed May 16, 2013).

and experts have been constantly ‘campaigning’ in prominent events and conferences, highlighting the importance of the issue for the whole world, and actively participating in creating an appropriately developed infrastructure to prevent cyberwars in the future.<sup>108</sup>

## 2.3 The components of Estonian influence

When examining how Estonia started to take a leading role in shaping the European cyber security agenda, several questions arise. What tools and strategies were at the disposal of the country to influence EU policy-making? How could Estonia adopt these tactics? What factors determined the impact Estonia could have on the European cyber policy? This subchapter will examine the most important factors, tactics and means that can be identified in the case of Estonia as key to exert influence.

### 2.3.1 Policy expertise

One of the factors most frequently mentioned by authors engaged in small state analysis is **being an expert**, or acting as a role model in a certain policy area. Peter Jakobsen<sup>109</sup> and Annica Kronsell,<sup>110</sup> for example, identify this strategy as being crucial for these countries in order to exercise influence on the EU level. Jakobsen identified three methods as key in establishing a forerunner or role model reputation: persistent activism to promote an issue on the international

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<sup>108</sup> For such activities of Estonian politicians see “President Ilves at the International Cyber Conflict Legal and Policy Conference in Tallinn,” September 9, 2009, <http://www.president.ee/en/official-duties/speeches/2685-president-ilves-at-the-international-cyber-conflict-legal-and-policy-conference-in-tallinn/index.html> (accessed April 25, 2013); “President Ilves at the Conference on Cyber Conflict,” June 16, 2010, <http://www.president.ee/en/official-duties/speeches/2710-president-ilves-at-the-conference-on-cyber-conflict/index.html> (accessed May 3, 2013); “The President of Estonia at the International Conference of Cyber Conflict, 8 June 2012,” June 8, 2012, <http://www.president.ee/en/official-duties/speeches/7589-the-president-of-estonia-at-the-international-conference-of-cyber-conflict-8-june-2012/index.html> (accessed April 25, 2013).

<sup>109</sup> Jakobsen, “Small States, Big Influence: The Overlooked Nordic Influence on the Civilian ESDP.”

<sup>110</sup> Kronsell, “Can Small States Influence EU Norms? Insights from Sweden’s Participation in the Field of Environmental Politics.”

scene, expertise and knowledge, and successful national policies.<sup>111</sup> However, on the other hand, a particular thread of the small state literature argues that one component of the structural disadvantage that small states possess compared to the large ones is their inability to become policy experts or forerunners. Diana Panke claims that small states do not have enough financial and administrative resources to build up policy expertise, thus exert influence.<sup>112</sup> This thesis does not agree with this claim, but argues that there is no such common characteristic of small states as a lack of resources or expertise. Panke's statement does not conform to the facts presented by the example of Estonia. In fact, the Estonian case demonstrates that this statement is not always relevant because Estonia performed well in all the three areas mentioned by Jakobsen: it was active in promoting cyber-security, it possessed a considerable amount of knowledge in the subject and it had its own successful national policies to show to the international community.

In order to understand the policy expertise of Estonia, we have to know how it accumulated its knowledge in the subject. As already referred to above, the country became an expert in the IT field by the 1990s because it tried to eliminate the gap it accumulated as part of the Soviet Union and wanted to approach the West by investing in technological development.<sup>113</sup> Later on it started to create a more and more advanced online administrative infrastructure. E-tax filing, e-cabinet services, online population registry, an e-school project, e-vehicle registry and electronic ID cards were already introduced in Estonia at the beginning of the 2000s in order to facilitate the lives of citizens. Therefore, the nickname 'E-stonia' comes as no surprise and neither does the fact that Toomas Hendrik Ilves (President since 2006) is considered to be "the

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<sup>111</sup> Jakobsen, "Small States, Big Influence: The Overlooked Nordic Influence on the Civilian ESDP," 87.

<sup>112</sup> Panke, "The Influence of Small States in the EU: Structural Disadvantages and Counterstrategies," 4.

<sup>113</sup> Tuohy, *Toward an EU Cybersecurity Strategy: The Role of Estonia*, 5.

man who made E-stonia”.<sup>114</sup> The country is well aware of its proficiency in computer technology. It launched a website, called e-Estonia, where the road to digital society, valuable case studies and projects based on the ICT sector are presented, and an access for the citizens to all the possible online administrative tools is also provided.<sup>115</sup>

Besides possessing a high-tech computerized infrastructure, the 2007 cyber-attacks provided Estonia with the opportunity of gaining expertise in fighting cyber-crime as well as developing an advanced national cyber security plan. The Cyber Defense Centre of Tallinn is regularly holding trainings for computer experts from all over Europe to teach them how to prevent cyberwar.<sup>116</sup> The successful Estonian policies, such as creating a national cyber security strategy and establishing professional institutions in the subject, could serve as an example for both the EU and NATO in creating their cyber security strategies. NATO updated its policy on the issue in 2011,<sup>117</sup> while the EU issued its strategy in 2013.<sup>118</sup> Playing on the international scene gave an additional impetus to Estonia’s success. The fact that the country focused on the issue at the highest possible level, which in this case was NATO, was definitely a wise strategy and a key to Estonia’s success. The constant participation of Estonian leaders in conferences organized all around the world, making the world familiar with how Estonia reacted after the attacks of 2007 and giving away its knowledge about computer technology put the country in the role of a ‘professor’ teaching its students the methods of cyber security. The Estonian case shows that a

<sup>114</sup> Jamie Kitman, “President Ilves: The Man Who Made E-stonia,” *The Guardian*, November 3, 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/nov/03/president-ilves-made-estonia> (accessed May 16, 2013).

<sup>115</sup> “Estonia’s Road to a Digital Society,” *e-Estonia Website*, <http://e-estonia.com/e-estonia/how-we-got-here> (accessed May 16, 2013).

<sup>116</sup> Valentina Pop, “Estonia Training Nato ‘Techies’ for Cyberwar,” *EUobserver.com*, June 14, 2011, <http://euobserver.com/cyber/32479> (accessed May 16, 2013).

<sup>117</sup> “NATO and Cyber Defence,” *NATO Website*, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-E25B9FFA-EDB95166/natolive/topics\\_78170.htm?](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-E25B9FFA-EDB95166/natolive/topics_78170.htm?) (accessed April 26, 2013).

<sup>118</sup> “Cybersecurity Strategy of the European Union: An Open, Safe and Secure Cyberspace” (European Commission, February 7, 2013), [http://eeas.europa.eu/policies/eu-cyber-security/cybsec\\_comm\\_en.pdf](http://eeas.europa.eu/policies/eu-cyber-security/cybsec_comm_en.pdf).

small country can be proficient and a role-model in a certain policy area based on its background knowledge and performance.

### 2.3.2 Agenda-setting

Another important factor in small state influence which should be highlighted here is **agenda-setting**. Although it is mentioned by previous scholars in the small state literature, its means and tools are usually not presented in detail. Moreover, in most of the cases it is mentioned together with the Council Presidency, as a strategy which can only be applied by small states when exercising the role of the chair. This important method of exercising influence in the political field consists of several components or tools, which should be analyzed here. One of the experts I conducted an interview with stressed the significance of picking a subject that is core to the small country's national interest and then working on putting this issue on the EU agenda with all its expertise and political power.<sup>119</sup> The small state literature calls this phenomenon agenda-setting.

The concept was developed in the 1970s by Maxwell E. McCombs and Donald L. Shaw referring to the influence that news media can have on audiences by choosing which stories are newsworthy and by deciding the amount of broadcasting them.<sup>120</sup> Although it comes from communication and mass media studies, the concept is now widely used in political science as well. Based on the definition of Schelling and Kingdon "agenda setting refers to the introduction of new issues on the policy agenda, and involves efforts to raise the awareness of a problem and to develop innovative proposals."<sup>121</sup> Annika Björkdahl identified agenda-setting as "introducing a

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<sup>119</sup> Keohane, Interview by author.

<sup>120</sup> Maxwell E. McCombs and Donald L. Shaw, "The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (1972): 176, doi:10.1086/267990.

<sup>121</sup> Thomas C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960); John W. Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies* (Boston, Mass.: Little, Brown, 1984), quoted in Jonas Tallberg, *Leadership a*



new idea or bringing a particular issue to the forefront” which is an important element of exercising influence.<sup>122</sup> Tania Börzel called this method pace-setting, referring to the process when a Member State is pushing a policy at the EU level, which reflects the country’s policy preferences and minimalizes implementation costs.<sup>123</sup> For her this tactic is a way of Member States to respond to Europeanization, by uploading their policies to the EU level.<sup>124</sup> It should be noted here that Börzel identified these tactics in general to EU Member States, without differentiating between small and big countries. The fact that a small country can also apply these methods reinforces the relevance of this strategy.

So, in these respects, Estonia performed well: it could put a subject crucial for her on the EU agenda. By acting as an agent in the issue, it could transform cyber security into a universal issue, and it could stress the relevance of the topic for the security of the other EU Member States. Therefore, the agenda-setting factor was indisputably present in the Estonian case. After undergoing a series of severe cyber-attacks in 2007, the Estonians could turn their misfortune into an advantage by starting to promote the importance of cyber security through their own example as policy forerunners.

I argue that Estonia’s ‘actorness’ in promoting the issue of cyber-crime played a great role in raising the awareness of the EU to the problem and in influencing the actions that the EU took in this matter. But the question to be answered here is: how could this small country set the agenda, what tools did it use to put and keep the cyber issue on the European political scene?

First of all, the Estonian success can be justified by the activism of its politicians. Börzel also mentions the “strategic employment of national bureaucrats” in the policy area in question as

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*and Negotiation in the European Union* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 24, <http://site.ebrary.com/id/10150299>.

<sup>122</sup> Björkdahl, “Norm Advocacy,” 138.

<sup>123</sup> Börzel, “Pace-Setting, Foot-Dragging and Fence-Sitting: Member State Responses to Europeanization,” 194.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

an effective way of pace-setting.<sup>125</sup> Some efforts by prominent Estonian decision-makers to draw the attention of the public to the importance of cyber security were already mentioned, and more examples will be brought up later as well. What is important to note here is that when the leading politician of the country acts as a “sales person” of the issue, it can have a tremendous effect on setting the agenda.<sup>126</sup> Based on this analogy, selling the issue of cyber security can be considered to be a marketing process where the President, the Prime Minister or the Minister responsible for the relevant political area are the main actors who ‘advertise’ the importance of the subject. In this case, it was mainly President Ilves, Prime Minister Andrus Ansip and Minister of Defense Aviksoo, who became the primary actors of promoting the issue of cyber security.<sup>127</sup> They did so by performing keynote speeches at international forums and by participating in national and EU policy-making processes.

These politicians mainly used institutional channels to make their voices heard, a strategy which can be considered as the second significant component of agenda-setting. An important result of their activism was the close cooperation between the different EU institutions, Estonian politicians and experts. The joint efforts of these bodies directly led to several concrete proposals and institutional changes. In April 2011 the Estonian Foreign Policy Institute was closely involved in preparing a study for the European Parliament about the importance of cyber power. The aim of the study, called ‘Cybersecurity and cyberpower: concepts, conditions and capabilities for cooperation for action within the EU’, was to familiarize the Members of the EP’s Sub-Committee on Security and Defense (SEDE) with the current issues of cyber security and

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 199.

<sup>126</sup> David Arter, “Small State Influence Within the EU: The Case of Finland’s ‘Northern Dimension Initiative’,” *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 38, no. 5 (December 2000): 686.

<sup>127</sup> For accounts on the activism of these politicians see Aaviksoo, “Cyber-Terrorism: Real Threats from the Imaginary World”; “President Ilves at the International Cyber Conflict Legal and Policy Conference in Tallinn”; “Prime Minister Andrus Ansip’s Speech in Riigikogu,” *Valitsus.ee*, May 2, 2007, <http://valitsus.ee/et/uudised/pressiteated/keskkonnaministeerium/13633> (accessed May 16, 2013).

cyber warfare and to provide recommendations for cooperation.<sup>128</sup> In November 2012 the EP adopted a report, written by Tunne Kelam, an Estonian Member of the European People's Party, which "calls for the development of a comprehensive cyber security and defense strategy on all levels of the EU."<sup>129</sup> Moreover, Estonian president, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, was chosen to chair the steering board of the European Cloud Partnership, which is a body working on the promotion of the use of cross-border digital public services in Europe, and also functioning as an advisory group to European Commission Vice-President Neelie Kroes in the area of cloud computing.<sup>130</sup> Such a high-scale involvement of Estonian experts in cyber policy-making clearly illustrates that the EU relied on the country's role in this particular area, so Estonia could exercise its influence in the subject. To put it in a different way, it exercised its structural power and put the subject in the center of European interests and policy-making with the help of its most important actors.<sup>131</sup> The activism of the most important politicians and the institutional channels of communication enabled Estonia to take the lead in the issue and made it possible for the country to set the EU agenda in cyber security.

### 2.3.3 Framing the issue around terrorism, vulnerability and solidarity

This leads us to another variable, framing, which has been already discussed to a certain extent by researchers, but from a different perspective. As has been previously mentioned in the theoretical chapter, negotiating and argumentative tactics were already examined by some

<sup>128</sup> Alexander Klimburg and Heli Tirmaa-Klaar, "Cybersecurity and Cyberpower: Concepts, Conditions and Capabilities for Cooperation for Action Within the EU" (European Parliament, DG for External Policies of the Union, April 2011), <http://www.evi.ee/lib/cyber.pdf>.

<sup>129</sup> "EU Cyber Security and Defence: Time to Act Now! Tunne Kelam MEP - 22/11/2012 - EPP Group," *EPP Website*, November 22, 2012, <http://arc.eppgroup.eu/press/showpr.asp?prcontroldoctypeid=1&prcontrolid=11543&prcontentid=19197&prcontentlg=en> (accessed May 1, 2013).

<sup>130</sup> "Digital Agenda: Tech CEOs and Leaders Kickstart New EU Cloud Computing Board," *Europa.eu*, November 19, 2013, [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-12-1225\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-12-1225_en.htm) (accessed May 1, 2013).

<sup>131</sup> Barnett and Duvall, *Power in Global Governance*, 18.

authors, but one of their components (framing) and their discursive elements have not been stressed enough. This section demonstrates that it is worth digging deeper into the way of constructing arguments and that the special way of **framing the topic around terrorism, vulnerability and solidarity** played a huge role in the Estonian influence. According to some researchers, it is always easier for a small Member State to influence an issue area where traditional power resources are less important, but other conditions, such as economic flexibility, diplomatic competence and discursive power matter.<sup>132</sup> Cyber security fits perfectly into these criteria and Estonia took advantage of this with the method of framing, and using its structural, as well as productive power.<sup>133</sup>

As the concept of framing is widely used in many disciplines of social sciences (psychology, sociology, communication etc.) it has several definitions. In International Relations, the following understanding of the term is used most widely: a frame is a tool of persuasion used to “fix meanings, organize experience, alert others that their interests and possibly their identities are at stake, and propose solutions to ongoing problems.”<sup>134</sup> So, framing refers to the use of expressions and images that resonate with the audience and that are part of the process of persuasion.<sup>135</sup> Estonia did this by applying a rhetoric which presented the attacks as threatening to the country’s political, economic and societal sectors. To put it in a slightly different way, “a frame can be constructed to connect a particular problem to a general line of appropriate action for ameliorating the problem.”<sup>136</sup> In this respect, Estonia built on certain political circumstances

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<sup>132</sup> Thorhallsson, *The Role of Small States in the European Union*, 658.

<sup>133</sup> Barnett and Duvall, *Power in Global Governance*, 20.

<sup>134</sup> Michael N. Barnett, “Culture, Strategy and Foreign Policy Change:: Israel’s Road to Oslo,” *European Journal of International Relations* 5, no. 1 (March 1, 1999): 25, doi:10.1177/1354066199005001001; Payne, “Persuasion, Frames and Norm Construction,” 39.

<sup>135</sup> Payne, “Persuasion, Frames and Norm Construction,” 43.

<sup>136</sup> David. A. Snow and Robert D. Benford, “Master Frames and Cycles of Protest,” in *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*, ed. Aldon D. Morris and Carol McClurge Mueller (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), 135–139, quoted in Björkdahl, “Norm Advocacy,” 138.

which have to be addressed (terrorism, vulnerability) and values which have to be embraced (solidarity). So, it applied a special type of rhetoric and constructed a meaning for the cyber-attacks that caught the attention of the national and international audience.

Soon after the attacks Minister of Foreign Affairs Urmas Paet labeled the perpetrators (thought to be the Russian government that time) as “cyber-terrorists.”<sup>137</sup> This was followed by the statement of a senior government official, the head of IT security at the Estonian Ministry of Defense, Mikhail Tammet, who referred to the attacks as a “kind of terrorism” and emphasized that “the EU and NATO have to work out its doctrines and position on these kinds of attacks and how to deal with them.”<sup>138</sup> The interpretation of the attacks by the Estonian officials spread quickly to the media and the public not just in Estonia but abroad as well. Editorials of prestigious British and American newspapers dealt with the events and they also referred to the incidents as “cyberwar,”<sup>139</sup> or the “first real war in cyberspace.”<sup>140</sup> By considering the events an act of war Estonia first of all increased the salience of the issue in the public and the political scene (not just at the domestic, but international level as well) and it also called for a joint action from the international community. Such an interpretation draws the attention of ordinary people and also policy-makers to the severe nature of the issue and it can also result in a common demand for diminishing the threat.

The other method of framing the issue was referring to the vulnerability of Estonia as well as the entire modern society. As already described in the previous sections, Estonia’s exposure to

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<sup>137</sup> “Russia Accused of ‘Attack on EU’,” *BBC News*, May 2, 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/6614273.stm> (accessed May 16, 2013).

<sup>138</sup> Adrian Blomfield, “Estonia Calls for Nato Cyber-terrorism Strategy,” *Daily Telegraph*, May 18, 2007, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/1551963/Estonia-calls-for-Nato-cyber-terrorism-strategy.html> (accessed May 16, 2013).

<sup>139</sup> “Cyberwarfare Worries,” *DC Estonian*, June 2, 2007, <http://www.dcestonian.com/estonews/articles/07/cyberwarfare0602.htm> (accessed May 20, 2013).

<sup>140</sup> “A Cyberblockade in Estonia,” *New York Times*, June 2, 2007, [http://www.nytimes.com/2007/06/02/opinion/02sat3.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/06/02/opinion/02sat3.html?_r=0) (accessed May 20, 2013).

the cyber-attacks was considerable because of its highly computerized administrative system. After the 2007 events, the Estonian cyber policy constantly stressed the inherent vulnerabilities of cyberspace. The vulnerability of Estonia and all nations through the digital world was highlighted in the country's cyber security strategy: "The asymmetrical threat posed by cyber-attacks and the inherent vulnerabilities of cyberspace constitute a serious security risk confronting all nations."<sup>141</sup>

Also in other forums, Estonian politicians highlighted the threat the whole world can be exposed to if the issue of cyber security is neglected. They never missed the chance to play the 'vulnerability card' in front of a broad audience and they always emphasized the global importance of the subject. In his speech of November 2007, Minister of Defense Aaviksoo stated that the more developed a country's electronic infrastructures, the more vulnerable they are.<sup>142</sup> He explicitly said that any country using modern information technology is a potential target for cyber-attacks and any computer owner can unwillingly participate in such a crime. "...The general audience, especially all of the computer owners are in most cases not reasonably well-prepared and aware of the possibility of those threats and to what extent they on one hand can be vulnerable, and on the other hand, willingly or unwillingly participate in those attacks."<sup>143</sup> With these words he expressed that it is in every country's interest to cooperate in the prevention of these attacks.

The discursive efforts of Estonian leaders bore fruit: the risks posed by the vulnerability of the EU citizens to various types of crimes were inserted in the EU's Internal Security Strategy (henceforth ISS) in 2010, which clearly shows that Europe was receptive of the Estonian message. Just to mention a short reference in the ISS to the need for the protection of the society: "EU action in the field of civil protection must be guided by the objectives of reducing

<sup>141</sup> "Cyber Security Strategy of Estonia," 3.

<sup>142</sup> Aaviksoo, "Cyber-Terrorism: Real Threats from the Imaginary World," 30.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

vulnerability to disasters through development of a strategic approach to disaster prevention and anticipation...”<sup>144</sup> The EU ISS will be further detailed in the next section dealing with the results of Estonian influence on EU cyber security. President Ilves used the ‘vulnerability rhetoric’ even three years after the attack when he addressed the audience of the Conference on Cyber Conflict in June 2010. He said: “...Our critical infrastructure, our electricity grids, transportation and mobile phone networks etc... are today so enmeshed with the Internet that any open society is vulnerable to complete failure.”<sup>145</sup>

The other important component of the Estonian method of framing was the protection of the nation by calling for international solidarity. Right after the attacks, Prime Minister Ansip said that “our sovereign state is under heavy attack.”<sup>146</sup> Aaviksoo also referred to the events of April-May as a situation which “clearly reached national security levels.”<sup>147</sup> However, this reference to national sovereignty was always connected to the duty of the international community, especially the EU, to address the attacks. Foreign Minister Paet expressed this by saying that what happened was an “attack on the whole European Union.”<sup>148</sup> In his already mentioned speech of June 2012, President Ilves also emphasized the borderless nature of digital and computer technology, saying that “cyber is everywhere, it permeates everything.”<sup>149</sup> These statements were clearly meant to draw the attention of the international community to the fact that they cannot stand by and watch their citizens and businesses being exposed to such threat, but they should act in the issue.

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<sup>144</sup> “Internal Security Strategy for the European Union ‘Towards a European Security Model’” (Council of the European Union, February 23, 2010), 12, <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/10/st05/st05842-re02.en10.pdf>.

<sup>145</sup> “President Ilves at the Conference on Cyber Conflict.”

<sup>146</sup> “Prime Minister Andrus Ansip’s Speech in Riigikogu.”

<sup>147</sup> Aaviksoo, “Cyber-Terrorism: Real Threats from the Imaginary World,” 29.

<sup>148</sup> “Russia Accused of ‘Attack on EU’.”

<sup>149</sup> “The President of Estonia at the International Conference of Cyber Conflict, 8 June 2012.”

This need for action was even more necessary in the EU, first of all because of the solidarity that connects its Member States. The Treaty on the Functioning European Union (henceforth TFEU) mentions solidarity as being the main principle of security policy, and the need for a convergence of Member State actions in this regard.<sup>150</sup> Based on the solidarity-principle, the harmonization of the EU's cyber politics was perfectly justified. In fact, the EU's Cyber Security Strategy mentions that "a particularly serious cyber incident or attack could constitute sufficient ground for a Member State to invoke the EU Solidarity Clause,"<sup>151</sup> which explicitly calls for a joint action of Member States to protect each other if a "Member State is the object of a terrorist attack or the victim of a natural or man-made disaster."<sup>152</sup>

Secondly, if one thinks in more practical terms, it should not be forgotten that the countries of the Union are more interconnected than perhaps any other countries in the world, therefore a threat facing one country can easily be a threat facing another as well. This makes every EU Member State interested in the issue of cyber security. Moreover, the digital and cyber world is an area which knows no borders, thus makes the countries highly dependent on each other in its regulation. Therefore Estonia's argumentation centered on terrorism, vulnerability and solidarity enabled the country to influence EU policy on cyber security. By presenting their own example, they could make the other countries aware of the dangers of cyber-crime and they could convince the actors of the international scene about the importance of the issue. The strategy seemed to work, because in the past few years, an enhanced discussion emerged about cyber security in the international political scene. This factor was not mentioned in detail before, and

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<sup>150</sup> "Consolidated Versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union" (Council of the European Union, November 12, 2012), 4, <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/08/st06/st06655-re07.en08.pdf>.

<sup>151</sup> "Cybersecurity Strategy of the European Union: An Open, Safe and Secure Cyberspace," 19.

<sup>152</sup> "Consolidated Versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union," 194.



the previous studies engaging in the analysis of small state influence in the EU did not focus as much on rhetorical elements. This is a considerable shortcoming of the academic literature, because as the above mentioned paragraphs showed, these discursive tactics are essential to exert influence in a certain subject. Therefore, the conclusion can be drawn that this research could identify a new variable which plays a role in the impact of small countries on EU policy-making: the special way of framing the problem.

#### 2.3.4. Coalitions

There is one variable which received a lot of attention from the academia dealing with small states in the EU: the importance of **coalitions** for small states.<sup>153</sup> All the people I interviewed mentioned this factor,<sup>154</sup> and a large segment of the prominent literature also deals with it as a main tool for small EU Member States to exercise influence. One could possibly argue that as the main unit of this analysis is the European Union, the twenty-seven Member States are always acting in coalition. However, in EU studies and small state analysis coalition-building means that making alliances with other states and creating groupings with them is the most useful way to achieve success in a certain issue, because otherwise the small countries are not capable of exercising influence. In this respect, coalitions made with large Member States are especially valuable, because of their perceived bigger role, the more votes in the Council or more seats in the European Parliament.<sup>155</sup> The European Commission is also considered to be a good

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<sup>153</sup> For more insight into coalitions within the EU see Reiter and Gärtner, *Small States and Alliances*; Meerts, "Negotiating in the European Union: Comparing Perceptions of EU Negotiators in Small Member States"; Jakobsen, "Small States, Big Influence: The Overlooked Nordic Influence on the Civilian ESDP"; Björkdahl, "Norm Advocacy."

<sup>154</sup> Some interviews where the importance of coalitions were mentioned: Keohane, Interview by author; Janis Emmanouilidis, Interview by author, April 17, 2013; Michal Kotlárík, Interview by author, April 18, 2013.

<sup>155</sup> Emmanouilidis, Interview by author.

coalition partner because it possesses several means of policy-making, which are generally not at the disposal of small Member States.<sup>156</sup>

However, in the case of Estonian cyber security promotion coalition-building cannot be considered to be a determining factor of influence. The country did not have to form separate alliances with other Member States to make its voice heard. Neither did it have to approach the Commission with special efforts. Instead, it worked on pushing the cyber security problem in all possible EU levels (ministerial conferences, summits etc.) without preferring one institution to another. So, Estonia can be seen as the ‘lonely warrior’ of the fight against cyber-crime, who managed to influence EU policy-making as a result of its well-prepared strategies. Being a policy-expert, applying a good strategy of agenda-setting and a special way of framing the cyber discourse helped the country to influence EU policy-making and Estonia did not need to enter into coalitions in fighting for the issue of cyber security.

## 2.4 The results of the Estonian efforts

After presenting how Estonia influenced the cyber policy-making of the EU, the main results of its strategies have to be examined. It should be noted here, that the previous sections already contained some of the results, but there is much more that the country could achieve. Although Estonia’s efforts were visible in the international level, the EU level is the most important from the perspective of this thesis. As was already mentioned before, the Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy brought in the domain of cyber security as one of the most important threats and challenges facing the EU. It directly referred to attacks in Member States, which gave a new dimension to this topic.<sup>157</sup> In the years following the cyber-

<sup>156</sup> For further insight into Commission-small Member State relations see: Bunse, Nicolaïdis, and Magnette, *Is the Commission the Small Member States’ Best Friend?*.

<sup>157</sup> “Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy: Providing Security in a Changing World,” 5.

attacks on Estonia, the EU took further action, which clearly reflected the Estonian rhetoric used between 2007 and 2009. In February 2009 a high level seminar was organized in Brussels with the title ‘Cyber Security: What Role for CFSP?’ by the General Secretariat of the Council of the EU, the EU Institute for Security Studies (EUISS) and in cooperation with Estonia.<sup>158</sup> The event was attended by more than sixty representatives from EU Member States, the EU Council Secretariat, the Commission, the Parliament, the EUISS, research institutions and NGOs, and it mainly dealt with conceptual, legal and political provisions and future prospects concerning the cyber security policy of the EU.

In March 2009 the EU issued its Communication on Critical Information Infrastructure protection, which is crucial to be mentioned because among the priorities of the document the primary goals previously highlighted by Estonian politicians can be found.<sup>159</sup> For instance, the Aaviksoo speech of November 2007 called for the establishment of common criteria in the critical infrastructure of the sector and international cooperation as the most important aims for the future, both of which became incorporated in this key document about European cyber security. The Defense Minister referred to the cyber security strategy of Estonia, then in the making, that would “define the critical infrastructure” of cyber security and claimed that his country is “deeply convinced that increased international cooperation is needed to handle those new threats from cyberspace.”<sup>160</sup> Similarly, the Communication contained a section in which the European Commission called for “all stakeholders, in particular businesses, public administrations and citizens to focus on...” among several other issues “...international

<sup>158</sup> Jean-Pascal Zanders, *Cyber Security: What Role for CFSP?*, Seminar Report (EU Institute for Security Studies, March 10, 2009), [http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/Report\\_cyber\\_security\\_1\\_.pdf](http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/Report_cyber_security_1_.pdf).

<sup>159</sup> “Commission Acts to Protect Europe from Cyber-attacks and Disruptions,” *Europa.eu*, March 30, 2009, [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-09-494\\_en.htm?locale=en](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-09-494_en.htm?locale=en) (accessed May 3, 2013).

<sup>160</sup> Aaviksoo, “Cyber-Terrorism: Real Threats from the Imaginary World,” 31.

cooperation and establishing criteria for European critical infrastructure in the ICT sector.”<sup>161</sup>

After issuing the Communication, Estonia organized an EU ministerial meeting for Representatives of the Member States, the European Commission and experts, on the 27-28 of April in Tallinn, to discuss the strategy.<sup>162</sup>

In February 2010, the EU prepared the draft version of its already mentioned Internal Security Strategy, which intended to pave the way ‘Towards a European Security Model’.<sup>163</sup> The document set out the principles and guidelines for how to deal with the most pressing security issues, and it also asked the Commission to propose concrete actions for implementing the strategy.<sup>164</sup> As a result, in November 2010 the Commission issued a new document, called ‘The EU Internal Security Strategy in Action’, that identified five strategic objectives which the EU should focus on.<sup>165</sup> Among these objectives, one was raising the levels of security for citizens and businesses in cyberspace, which again refers back to Aaviksoo’s speech: “...these threats cannot alone be managed by governments; it has to involve both businesses, third-sector organizations as well as individuals.”<sup>166</sup> The document set detailed action plans in all the areas it addressed, such as the creation of a European cyber-crime center, which opened in January 2013.<sup>167</sup> Moreover, it also called for the creation of rapid response teams in each European institution and Member State to react to cyber-attacks.<sup>168</sup> Since the adoption of the ISS, the Commission annually reports

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<sup>161</sup> “Commission Acts to Protect Europe from Cyber-attacks and Disruptions.”

<sup>162</sup> “EU Commissioner Reding Calls for Preventive Action to Make the EU Resilient Against Cyber Attacks,” *Europa.eu*, April 27, 2009, [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_MEMO-09-199\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-09-199_en.htm) (accessed May 3, 2013).

<sup>163</sup> “Internal Security Strategy for the European Union ‘Towards a European Security Model’.”

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>165</sup> “The EU Internal Security Strategy in Action: Five Steps Towards a More Secure Europe” (European Commission, November 22, 2010), <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:0673:FIN:EN:PDF#page=2> (accessed April 25, 2013).

<sup>166</sup> Aaviksoo, “Cyber-Terrorism: Real Threats from the Imaginary World,” 31.

<sup>167</sup> “European Cybercrime Centre (EC3) Opens on 11 January,” *Europa.eu*, January 19, 2013, [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-13-13\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-13_en.htm) (accessed April 26, 2013).

<sup>168</sup> “The EU Internal Security Strategy in Action: Five Steps Towards a More Secure Europe,” 10.

on its implementation, and in each report it stresses the importance of cyber security.<sup>169</sup> The argument of this research, that Estonian expertise influenced these documents, is supported by the fact that the most important targets set by them are already met by Estonia.

Despite such EU efforts, Estonia still does not think that the EU's commitment towards the issue has reached its highest possible level. In his speech at the International Conference of Cyber Conflict of June 2012, President Ilves expressed his regret for the "paucity of strategic awareness" about cyber defense in Brussels.<sup>170</sup> This can be interpreted as a sign of the high expectations Estonia sets for the international community and the continuous efforts of the country to keep the issue on the agenda. The most recent rhetoric adopted by the country stresses the importance of an EU-NATO cyber defense cooperation.<sup>171</sup>

All in all, this chapter showed that Estonia could successfully promote the issue of cyber security in the European Union which resulted in the EU's increased engagement in the subject. This was demonstrated by several events, documents and a considerable amount of rhetorical and textual similarities. Reflecting on the theoretical foundations of this thesis, it should be highlighted that besides the national capacities of the country, Estonia succeeded by exercising its structural and productive power, so by determining the interests of the EU and by using discursive practices. Estonia's case suggests that policy expertise or being a role model, agenda-setting by prominent political figures and using institutional channels and the special framing of the issue (around terrorism, vulnerability and solidarity) played an important role in the Estonian influence on cyber security, whereas coalition-building was not part of the Estonian tactics.

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<sup>169</sup> "DGs - Home Affairs - What We Do - ...Internal Security - Internal Security Strategy," *European Commission Website*, [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/internal-security/internal-security-strategy/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/internal-security/internal-security-strategy/index_en.htm) (accessed April 25, 2013).

<sup>170</sup> "The President of Estonia at the International Conference of Cyber Conflict, 8 June 2012."

<sup>171</sup> "Estonia's DM Stresses EU-NATO Cyber Cooperation," *Defensenews.com*, January 30, 2013, <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20130130/DEFREG01/301300026/Estonia-8217-s-DM-Stresses-EU-NATO-Cyber-Cooperation> (accessed April 25, 2013).



## Conclusion

This thesis showed that the words of Robert Keohane,<sup>172</sup> mentioned in the introduction, about the importance of analyzing small states in international politics are highly relevant today. Small states should be studied as carefully as the giants because their special strategies to achieve influence can point out new patterns of country behavior. This is even more relevant in the case of the European Union, where small ones significantly outnumber the large countries and their number is likely to further increase in the future. In spite of the main perceptions about the leading role of great powers and the structural disadvantage of the small states compared to the big ones, this research demonstrated that small Member States are able to exercise a considerable impact on EU policy-making if they find the right strategies for it.

This thesis contributed to the academic debate about how small Member States can influence EU policy-making. Its main purpose was to find out which factors determine the influence of small Member States in the European Union and it did so by discovering new aspects of how these countries can have an impact on the EU. The research tested variables previously mentioned by the prominent small state literature, but on a case which has not been examined before from this aspect: the importance of Estonia in developing the cyber security policy of the EU. So, the research engaged in tracing the process when one of the smallest and ‘youngest’ Member States of the EU is exercising influence in a policy area which is getting more and more importance in the European and the international political scene. The ‘test-variables’ of the thesis were policy-expertise, agenda-setting, framing and coalition-building.

The case of Estonia showed that even the smallest and ‘youngest’ countries of Europe can ‘educate’ the large ones in a certain policy area if they are well-prepared and choose the right

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<sup>172</sup> Keohane, “Lilliputians’ Dilemmas: Small States in International Relations,” 310.

strategies. By focusing on Estonia's role in cyber security promotion, the thesis discovered that coalition building is not always necessary for a small state to exert influence. Moreover, it came to the conclusion, that policy expertise, agenda-setting by prominent politicians through using institutional channels and framing the issue around delicate areas (such as terrorism, vulnerability and solidarity) are factors which can determine the role of small countries in the EU. Out of these, mainly framing and the importance of rhetorical elements and discourse were overlooked by the previous studies. These methods enabled Estonia to have a huge impact on EU cyber security, and allow the thesis to draw the conclusion that other small Member States can also adopt the same tactics if they want to make their voices heard.

This thesis contributed to the area of small state research by conducting an in-depth case study on a country that has not been thoroughly examined from this aspect before, as well as by focusing on factors, which were debated, superficially discussed or neglected in the previous literature. However, there is still room for further research on the subject. First of all, several countries from the latest enlargement wave have not been examined in this respect. The more studies are conducted in many policy areas about many countries, the greater and clearer the picture will become about the behavior of small countries in the EU. Moreover, with the accession of Croatia, the number of small Member States will further increase in the EU, so perhaps it is already time to create a more comprehensive categorization, and bring in the category of middle states as well. This approach might give even more insight into the behavior of countries of different size in the EU. Looking at the tactics of middle states, for example, and discovering when they apply small state strategies and when they choose to act as the large ones could lead to interesting conclusions.



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