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**MICROSTATES: PAWNS IN
THE GLOBAL STRATEGIC BALANCE**

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**STRATEGIC STUDIES INSTITUTE
US ARMY WAR COLLEGE
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania**

**MICROSTATES: PAWNS IN
THE GLOBAL STRATEGIC BALANCE**

by

William O. Staudenmaier

15 January 1982



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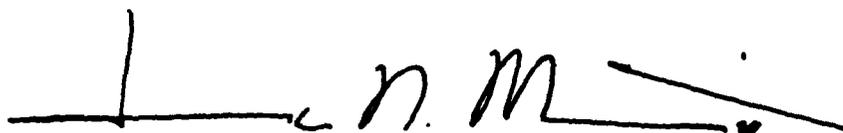
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FOREWORD

This memorandum examines the strategic aspects of the post-World War II microstate phenomenon. These microstates rose Phoenix-like from the ashes of the former European colonial empires. The author prepares a military profile of 57 microstates, both quantitatively and qualitatively. Three microstates—Singapore, Mauritania, and Costa Rica—are examined in some detail. The military capabilities of the microstates are also discussed in a regional context. The author concludes that most microstates are too weak and too vulnerable to protect themselves, so they remain but pawns in the global strategic balance.

The Strategic Issues Research Memoranda program of the Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, provides a means for timely dissemination of analytical papers which are not constrained by format or conformity with institutional policy. These memoranda are prepared on subjects of current importance in areas related to the authors' professional work.

This memorandum was prepared as a contribution to the field of national security research and study. As such, it does not reflect the official view of the College, the Department of the Army, or the Department of Defense.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. N. M.', is written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized and somewhat cursive.

JACK N. MERRITT
Major General, USA
Commandant

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

COLONEL WILLIAM O. STAUDENMAIER has been assigned to the Strategic Studies Institute since his graduation from the US Army War College in 1976. Previously he served as a divisional air defense battalion commander in Germany and in various staff assignments at the Department of the Army. Colonel Staudenmaier graduated from the University of Chattanooga and earned a master's degree in public administration from Pennsylvania State University. He has published articles on air defense and military strategy in professional journals and is a contributor to *The Gulf War: Old Conflicts, New Weapons* (forthcoming).

SUMMARY

The uninterrupted proliferation of nations since 1945 has complicated the international system both in a regional and in a global context, resulting in the creation of a great many nations that are small, weak, and vulnerable. The dilemma of most microstates is that their limited power potential, which stems from a small, but often dense population and few exploitable resources, inevitably restricts them to a peripheral role in world affairs; nevertheless, their vulnerability serves as an invitation to political, economic, and military penetration by other nations. Unfortunately, this modern political phenomenon has not been systematically or comprehensively addressed. This analysis will focus on the security aspects of microstates' behavior, viewed from the strategic perspective of the United States.

Perhaps the most distinctive characteristic of a microstate is its inability to use military force or the threat of it to secure its national interests. Consider that over three-fourths of the 57 microstates have only a minimal capability to defend themselves and that 22 states do not have any military capability at all. Most of the microstates must rely on external military power to survive. Even the microstates that possess a significant or moderate military capability only have armed forces that are comparable to second or third rate military powers. Moreover, microstates do not have the capability to sustain combat for very long, since they must rely on outside sources for their weapons, equipment, and, most importantly, spare parts. There is little doubt that a microstate with either a minimal or moderate military capability must depend on the "good will" of the international community for its survival. The pledge of assistance from other states does not necessarily negate this factor. Often the external actor may be too far away for timely military intervention or it may be too occupied with its own affairs to react to the microstate request. The external power may judge the request too costly, either diplomatically or economically, to fulfill or simply may feel that it is not in its best national interest to assist the microstate.

A factor that could increase the military potential of the armed forces of the microstates in the future is the increasing lethality and effectiveness of relatively light and inexpensive weapons such as antitank and anti-aircraft missiles. Weapons such as these are

already coming into the arsenals of some of the microstates. These highly accurate weapons have the potential to make a small force extremely combat effective, particularly against armored vehicles and aircraft. Today, most microstates have only a limited ability to deter conflict; armed with these new weapons, a microstate just might make it too costly for an adversary to attack it. In the final analysis, however, it must be judged that most microstates will remain too small, too weak, and too vulnerable to protect themselves.

MICROSTATES: PAWNS IN THE GLOBAL STRATEGIC BALANCE

Today's multipolar strategic environment is the result of the social, economic, and political forces that were released in the aftermath of World War II. The European colonial powers were so weakened by that war that the breakup of their empires was virtually inevitable. New states were carved from the former European colonies at accelerating rates until, by August 1, 1980, the international community consisted of 165 more or less independent states.¹ Many of these new states may be classified as microstates which this essay defines as an independent state with fewer than 2.5 million people.² Using this criteria, 57 nations may be defined as microstates, including such strategically important nations as Iceland, Panama, and Bahrain.

The uninterrupted proliferation of nations since 1945 has complicated the international system both in a regional and in a global context, resulting in the creation of a great many nations that are small, weak, and vulnerable. The dilemma of most microstates is that their limited power potential, which stems from a small, but often dense population and few exploitable resources, inevitably restricts them to a peripheral role in world affairs; nevertheless, their vulnerability serves as an invitation to political,

economic, and military penetration by other nations. Unfortunately, this modern political phenomenon has not been systematically or comprehensively addressed. This analysis will focus on the security aspects of microstate behavior, viewed from the strategic perspective of the United States.

The world seems to be growing smaller because of technological revolutions in the communications and transportation industries, but, paradoxically, the international community is becoming numerically larger. The postwar period has been characterized by not only a trend towards a greater number of nation-states, but by a trend toward diminutive nations as well. Over one-third of the community of nations is comprised of microstates, most of which have achieved their independence since 1945. Of the 57 microstates, 27 are insular, 19 are riparian, and 11 are landlocked. Economically, the microstates range from the wealthy, with per capita Gross National Products of over \$7,000 located in Western Europe and the oil-rich states of the Persian Gulf, to those in Africa with less than \$201 per capita. With some exceptions, most of the microstates lack the capital, management skills, natural resources, and skilled labor necessary for economic development. The microstates, almost by definition, are deficient in the critical elements of power—population and territory—that enable nations to wield power and influence in the contemporary world community.

STRATEGIC PROFILE OF THE MICROSTATES

In terms of their ability to control their own political destiny, the microstates collectively suffer from inherent constraints that limit their role as independent actors on the world stage—e.g., limited resources, significant domestic economic and social problems, and an underdeveloped, and in many cases nonexistent military capability. Microstates, therefore, must rely on external support to attain internal objectives or limit their participation in internal affairs—or both. Many microstates allow the military forces of former colonial powers to be based on their territory. France is especially notable in this regard—it has about 7,000 troops stationed in Africa, approximately 3,000 of which are in strategically located Djibouti.³ In foreign policy, then, the dilemma facing the microstates is to either refrain from active involvement

in world affairs or to diversify their dependence among several foreign sources.⁴ However, unless a microstate possesses some economic or strategic significance, it is unlikely to be in a position to balance its dependence in this way.

Economically, most of the microstates rely on an undifferentiated, single commodity export, which subjects them to fluctuations not only in the world economy, but also in weather conditions. For example, in 1979, Dominica, already one of the most impoverished Caribbean nations, was struck by the full force of tropical hurricane David, which severely damaged both the island and its economy, leaving over 40 dead, 9,000 injured, and 60,000 homeless in its wake. The endemic economic weakness of many microstates provides a vulnerability that can be exploited by external powers to gain access to the microstates and to reap strategic gains.

Some microstates are important for the strategic resources that they possess, such as the petro-states in the Persian Gulf and some relatively well-endowed microstates in Sub-Saharan Africa. Others are important because of the base facilities that they possess. Panama, Singapore, and Iceland immediately spring to mind as examples of strategically located microstates. The United States maintains important base facilities in several of the microstates.

Another factor which has security implications for some microstates is the growing realization that the aircraft carrier is extremely vulnerable in confined seas such as the Caribbean, Mediterranean, and Persian Gulf, particularly in view of the increased capabilities of the Soviet Navy. Land-based aircraft offers a possible solution to the problem of aircraft carrier vulnerability and underscores the strategic importance of insular or riparian microstates like Barbados, Malta, and the Maldives. One prominent writer in the field estimates:

...the possible creation of 50 additional states in the foreseeable future, largely in the Caribbean and Pacific areas. The preponderant majority of these would also be small in size (with 45 having less than 300,000 people), insular (some 40) and developing.⁵

Thus, the effect on insular microstates of this strategic proposition could be great considering the location of the insular microstates in areas of potential superpower rivalry.

Collectively, the microstates are militarily weak—the combined

military strength of all of the microstates is about 240,000 soldiers, sailors, and airmen or a little larger than the armed forces of Thailand. The microstates generally emphasize the army, devoting about 90 percent of their manpower resources to that service. Although 20 microstates do not maintain any armed forces, most of the microstates maintain paramilitary forces of some type, ranging from the 29 security police in Liechtenstein to the 18,000 border guards and security police maintained by Mongolia, the largest microstate in terms of territory. These paramilitary units include national police units, local defense units, border guards, workers militia, and local police. Paramilitary forces are often a mixed blessing—they can be important supplements to the regular armed forces of the microstates, but they also could represent a force that can be organized and used to oppose the legally constituted government.⁶ The most recent example of the latter use of paramilitary forces is the attempted coup in Gambia by some elements of the paramilitary Mobile Police Company, a 200-man force that is the only organized armed force in the country other than local police. The attempted coup was prevented by loyal elements of the mobile paramilitary police force and Senegalese troops that came to the aid of the Gambian President Dawda Kairaba Jawara.⁷

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Although the size of the armed forces of the microstates contained in the several regional charts which follow is one measure of their potential power, it is also important to examine them qualitatively. This may be done by preparing a profile of three microstates each with varying but representative military capabilities. These representative profiles of military capabilities are labeled—significant, moderate, and minimal. A microstate with a *significant* military capability is one that fields all three services—army, navy, and air force—and is armed with modern weapons and has armed forces numbering over 15,000. A *moderate* military capability for a microstate is signified by modern equipment, at least two Services, and an armed force in the 5,000-15,000 range. A *minimal* capability describes a microstate with a total armed force of less than 5,000. These categories were established after a comprehensive analysis of the armed forces of all of the microstates and their military equipment and they

represent identifiable plateaus of microstate military capability. For the purpose of this comparative analysis, Singapore, Mauritania, and Costa Rica will be used to represent states with significant, moderate, and minimal military capabilities respectively.

SINGAPORE

Singapore, situated astride the strategic strait of Malacca, is perhaps the strongest military microstate in the world. Its modern army, navy, and air force totals 42,000, making Singapore militarily comparable to such countries as Denmark, Norway, Libya, and Ecuador. Singapore's armed forces are modern in every respect and have gained the respect of its Asian neighbors. In 1971 it signed the Five-Power Defense Pact (Singapore, New Zealand, Australia, Malaysia, and Great Britain), thereby enhancing its security. Singapore currently spends about \$604 million on defense, which represents approximately 17 percent of its national budget. Although never very popular in Singapore, two to three years of military service continue to be required of all males 19 and over. This conscription serves to maintain a ready reserve force of 18 infantry battalions, which together with their support units total about 45,000 reservists. Add to this a paramilitary force of 30,000 home guardsmen, a police force of 7,500, about 500,000 men between the ages of 15 and 49 who are fit for military service, and it is easy to see that Singapore has a formidable defense force. A profile of Singapore's standing forces is at Table I.⁸

When Singapore's reserve forces are included, its armed forces are generally comparable in fighting potential to a light corps of approximately 100,000 men. Moreover, the size of its army is adequate, considering its small spatial area (233 square miles) of employment. Its modern tank force is armed with the French made AMX-13 light tank. Serviced by a crew of three and mounting either a 75 or 90mm gun, the AMX-13 is one of the most successful tanks that has been built since World War II. The armored personnel carrier, M-113, is "the most widely used armored fighting vehicle outside the Soviet bloc," and carries 11 infantrymen into battle.⁹ The two-passenger Commando scout car is built in the United States and is a relatively new weapon system. Singapore's field artillery consists of the 25-pound howitzer from

Army

- Manpower: 35,000
- Organisation:
 - 1 Division Headquarters
 - 1 Armored Brigade
 - (1 Tank Battalion;
 - 2 Mechanized)
 - 3 Infantry Brigades
 - (3 Infantry Battalions)
 - 1 Artillery Brigade
 - 6 Field Artillery Battalions
 - 6 Engineer Battalions
 - 3 Signal Battalions
 - 1 Commando Battalion
- Major Equipment:
 - 350 AMX-13 Light Tanks
 - 500 M-113 APC's and 250 V-200 Commandos
 - 6 25-pounder and 60 155mm Howitzers
 - 50 120mm Mortars
 - 90 106mm Recoiless Launchers

Navy

- Manpower: 3,000
- Fleet:
 - 6 Fast Attack Craft with Gabriel Missile
 - 6 Fast Attack Craft with Guns
 - 2 Coastal Mine Sweepers
 - 2 Training Ships
 - 5 Amphibious Ships - LST
 - 6 Small Landing Craft
 - 4 Police Patrol Craft

Air Force

- Manpower: 4,000
- Aircraft: 125 combat aircraft
 - 2 Fighter Ground Attack/Reconnaissance Squadrons--35 Hunter FGA-74
 - 2 Fighter/Ground Attack Squadrons--32 Skyhawks and 21 F-5's
 - 1 COIN Squadron--20 BAC-167's Strikemasters
 - 1 Transport and Sea/Air Rescue Squadron--6 C130B and 6 Skyvans
 - 1 Helicopter Squadron
 - 17 UH-1H's and
 - 3 AB 212's
 - 2 Training Squadrons
 - 2 SAM Squadrons with 28 Bloodhounds and 1 with 10 Rapier

Table I. Singapore--Armed Forces*

* CIA, The World Fact Book, April 81; Department of State, Background Notes on each country; The International Institute for Strategic Studies, The Military Balance, 1980-81; and the Defense and Foreign Affairs Handbook, Copley & Associates, London, 1980.

the United Kingdom with a range of 12 kilometers and the 155mm howitzer from the United States with a range of 14,600 meters; both are excellent weapons. Singapore's navy is built around 12 speedy patrol boats that are similar in appearance to the PT boats of World War II, although somewhat larger. Six of these fast attack craft are armed with the Israeli developed Gabriel ship-to-ship missile. Each of its five Landing Ship Tanks can carry 431 troops or 23 tanks. All in all, the navy of Singapore is a modern force, ideally suited to an insular nation with a defensive mission. Its air force is equally well suited. The single seat Hawker-Hunter is a British made jet aircraft, first flown in 1951, that can be configured for air defense, close air support or reconnaissance missions. The Northrop F-5 is a lightweight jet fighter with a greater speed than the Hunter and can be armed with the Sidewinder air-to-air missile. The Strikemaster is a two-seat, turbojet designed to meet the counterinsurgency needs of small countries. Singapore's helicopter squadron is armed with the familiar Bell UH-1 Iroquois utility helicopter. Finally, Singapore's modern armament is rounded out by its air defense forces. Britain's Bloodhound surface-to-air missile has a high explosive warhead and a range of over 50 miles and the Rapier is a relatively new short-range, surface-to-air missile, probably effective to a range of about 7,000 meters.

The armed forces of Singapore are representative of, although slightly larger than, the three other microstates with a significant military capability—Oman, United Arab Emirates, and South Yemen. Other states are as well armed qualitatively as these nations (Kuwait for one), but they are accorded a moderate capability because of the smaller size of their armed forces. More representative of microstates with a moderate military capability is Mauritania (see Table II).

MAURITANIA

Mauritania's armed forces reflect the Mauritanian strategic problem: domestic instability and, until recently, a guerrilla insurgency centered on the Western Sahara.¹⁰ During that conflict, the armed forces of Mauritania increased ten-fold from about 1,200 men in 1975 to approximately 12,500 men in 1980.¹¹ Mauritania's force structure is dictated by its geography and

<u>Army</u>	<u>Navy</u>	<u>Air Force</u>
Manpower: 12,000	Manpower: 300	Manpower: 150
Organization:	Fleet:	Defenders
30 Motorized Infantry Companies	4 Patrol Boats	3 C47's
1 Parachute Commando Company		2 Broussards
3 Reconnaissance Squadrons		2 DC-4's <u>Skyvans</u>
1 Field Artillery Battery		4 Reims 337 <u>Super Skymasters</u>
1 Airborne Company		
Major Equipment:		
105 Armored Cars		
60mm, 81mm and 120mm Mortars		
57mm and 75mm Recoiless Launchers (RCL)		
40 Vehicle Mounted 106mm RCL's		
150 jeeps		

Table II. Mauritania--Armed Forces *

* CIA, The World Fact Book, April 81; Department of State, Background Notes on each country; The International Institute for Strategic Studies, The Military Balance, 1980-81; and the Defense and Foreign Affairs Handbook, Copley & Associates, London, 1980.

transportation infrastructure. Faced with terrain that is 90 percent desert and a transportation system that has only 400 miles of railroad and 350 miles of paved road in a country that rivals Alaska in size, the army has been designed as a light infantry force with jeep mobility, the navy as a small coast guard, and the air force as a transport force. The army is divided into 30 separate infantry companies and several reconnaissance squadrons, using second-hand armored cars provided by France, mortars, and recoilless rocket launchers. It has only a single field artillery battery and no organic air defense weapons. The 150 jeeps provide the army with mobility over the country's primitive landscape. Mauritania's Air Force consists almost exclusively of transports, some of which are of World War II vintage design and Mauritania's Navy has four ex-French patrol boats, each mounting two 20 mm guns.

There are about 177,000 citizens between the ages of 15-49 who are fit for military service should the dormant conscription law ever be implemented. Mauritania's military budget is difficult to determine, since the major sources offer a range of \$29 million to \$849 million. If, as is reported, 60 percent of the government's budget went to support military activities in 1977 (year for which reliable data is available) then a military budget of about \$160 million would be indicated for that year, when Mauritania was still engaged in the insurgency in the Western Sahara. Today, since Mauritania is no longer engaged in that insurgency, a figure of \$60 to \$80 million might be more appropriate. Mauritania also fields a paramilitary force of approximately 6,000 civilian guardsmen and gendarmerie.

COSTA RICA

About the size of West Virginia, Costa Rica is the second smallest Central American Republic. Costa Rica wields influence in Latin America out of proportion to its size largely because of its domestic stability and adherence to democratic ideals. Because it has seen nearly 30 years of tranquility, Costa Rica's defense program, which is rated minimal, has remained in low profile. The Costa Rican army was abolished in 1948 in favor of a civil guard of approximately 3,000 men. Like Mauritania, this force (virtually an army) is configured along light infantry lines. The civil guard is supplemented by a rural assistance guard of about the same size.

Costa Rica also has four patrol boats which it uses to police its territorial waters. The Costa Rican government allocated about \$13.5 million to defense in 1977 or about 3 percent of its central budget. There are about 360,000 men between the ages of 15-49 who are fit for military service. Although minimal, the armed forces of Costa Rica equal or exceed those of 34 other microstates.

The categories of *significant*, *moderate*, and *minimal* will be used in the regional analyses to furnish the reader with a sort of "strategic shorthand," which will indicate the relative military capability of the microstates. Bear in mind, however, that when compared to the armed forces of larger countries, all but a handful of microstates are hopelessly outclassed and must usually seek to secure their national objectives through means other than military. In the final analysis, most microstates remain militarily weak, vulnerable, and penetrable by the larger nations of the international system. The ensuing discussion analyzes the microstates military capabilities in the regional context. The regions considered are the Caribbean Basin, the Persian Gulf, Europe, Asia, Oceania, and Africa. Moreover, the analysis considers the microstates and the regions from the geostrategic perspective of the United States.

THE CARIBBEAN BASIN

The microstates of the Western Hemisphere are located in the Caribbean Basin which is of immense strategic importance to the United States. It is a vital interest of the United States that no hostile power should gain a foothold in this region. The notoriety that accompanied the discovery of a Soviet brigade in Cuba serves to remind us that threats to US interests are perceived in this area. Yet, the threat is more subtle and less immediate than suggested by the public reaction to the discovery of the Soviet brigade in Cuba. As Professor Saul Cohen points out:

The actual military threat posed by one hostile country like Cuba is negligible. But the success of its revolutionary policies could tap widespread anti-US sentiment in Mexico, Panama, Venezuela, Hispaniola and even Puerto Rico. The emergence of political systems radically opposed to the US political and social ideals, coupled with Soviet bases in Middle America, is not entirely inconceivable.¹²

<u>Country</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Conscription</u>	<u>Total Armed Forces</u>	<u>Army</u>	<u>Navy</u>	<u>Air Force</u>	<u>Paramilitary</u>	<u>Combat Capability</u>
The Bahamas	249,000	Unk	500	-	500	-	900	Minimal
Barbados	256,000	No	-	-	-	-	675	Minimal
Costa Rica	2,269,000	No	3,000	2,965	35	-	3,000	Minimal
Dominica	79,000	Unk	-	-	-	-	-	Minimal
Grenada	107,000	No	1,000	(People's Revolutionary Army)	-	-	-	Minimal
Guyana	50,000	No	7,000	(Single Service)	-	-	5,000	Minimal
Jamaica	2,255,000	No	4,000	(Single Service)	-	-	7,000	Minimal
Nicaragua	2,465,000	No	5,400	5,100	100	200	-	Moderate
Panama	1,939,000	No	4,800	-	-	-	11,000	Minimal
St. Lucia	124,000	No	-	-	-	-	-	Minimal
St. Vincent & the Grenadines	116,000	Unk	-	-	-	-	-	Minimal
Suriname	388,000	No	-	-	-	-	-	Minimal
Trinidad & Tobago	1,176,000	No	1,200	1,000	200	-	-	Minimal

Table III. Microstates of the Caribbean Basin*

* CIA, The World Fact Book, April 1981; Department of State, Background Notes on each country; The International Institute for Strategic Studies, The Military Balance, 1980-81; and the Defense and Foreign Affairs Handbook, Copley & Associates, London, 1980.

The recent emergence of socialist microstates in the region makes Cohen's concern real.

The military capability of the microstates of the Caribbean Basin is shown at Table III. The military capabilities of Guyana and Suriname are considered to be minimal. Although the armed forces of Guyana consist of 7,000 men, the "Jonestown Affair" indicated their ineffectiveness. The Central American microstates are somewhat better off. Costa Rica has already been described, and Nicaragua, the only microstate in the Caribbean Basin with more than a minimal military capability, is trying to recover from the troublesome aftereffects of a violent revolution, therefore, its military capability must remain an unknown quantity. Standing guard over the Panama Canal, which is still of great economic and strategic importance to the United States, are the extensive US military facilities in Panama. In addition to these facilities, the United States also maintains bases in Cuba (Guantanamo) and in Puerto Rico (Roosevelt Roads). The United States also maintains smaller facilities in the Bahamas for research in antisubmarine warfare. But more importantly, the Caribbean microstates border sea lanes which are critical to the US economy. Unfortunately, the microstates have little inherent capability to defend themselves, relying, instead, on the former colonial powers from Europe.

The Soviet Union recognizes the importance of the Caribbean in the strategic calculus of the United States. Clearly, instability in this region would impinge on the ability of the United States to act in other parts of the world. For this reason, the USSR has been active in the Caribbean Basin—for over 10 years, Soviet air and naval units have made periodic visits to Cuba. The extreme sensitivity of the United States towards Soviet activities in Cuba limits the value of those bases to the Soviets. It would certainly be to the strategic advantage of the Soviet Union to attempt to penetrate the insular microstates of the Basin in order to establish bases in other parts of the Caribbean further removed from US soil. The United States must deny the USSR such opportunities, through diplomacy if possible, but through the use or the threat of the use of military force if need be.

PERSIAN GULF

Although the microstates of this region are heavily armed, they are not destined to play a major security role in the 1980's. That

Country	Population	Conscription	Total Armed Forces	Army	Navy	Air Force	Paramilitary	Combat Capability
Bahrain	392,000	No	2,400	2,200	200	-	2,500	Minimal
Kuwait	1,418,000	Yes	12,400	10,000	500	1,900	15,000	Moderate
Oman	591,000	No	19,200	16,200	900	2,100	3,300	Significant
Qatar	225,000	No	4,400	3,500	400	500	-	Minimal
United Arab Emirates	934,000	Yes	26,280	23,500	980	1,800	-	Significant
South Yemen (PDAY)	1,930,000	Yes	21,500*	19,000*	450*	2,050*	15,000	Significant

* Expected to increase to 40,000 by 1982: Army 33,000; Navy 1,000; Air Force 6,000.

Table IV. Microstates of the Persian Gulf**

** CIA, The World Fact Book, April 1981; Department of State, Background Notes on each country; The International Institute for Strategic Studies, The Military Balance, 1980-81; and the Defense and Foreign Affairs Handbook, Copley & Associates, London, 1980.

role will fall on the larger regional and extra-regional powers, including the superpowers. But the Persian Gulf microstates are strategically situated to impact on the vital interest of the United States, Western Europe, and Japan. This fact, coupled with the immense energy resources of the Arabian Peninsula, indicates a high potential for military involvement in the region in this decade. If the United States had to project military force into the region, even in a non-Soviet scenario, it would be a difficult military operation not only because of the great distances involved, but also because of the relatively large US force that would be required to counter the significant military forces maintained in the region by microstate and major power alike.

Three of the microstates in this region possess a significant capability (see Table IV). Another, Kuwait, has a moderate capability that is only a step behind the others. The significant military microstates—Oman, United Arab Emirates, and South Yemen (PDRY)—collectively have powerful and modern armed forces consisting of extremely capable tanks, armored cars, jet combat aircraft, air defense missile systems, helicopters and, in the case of Oman and PDRY, corvettes in their navies. Most of the microstates discussed thus far have relied, in the main, on Western military equipment; not so with South Yemen, whose forces are armed with Soviet equipment. Tanks of the T-34 and T-54 variety, modern field artillery (122mm and 130mm howitzers) and air defense surface-to-air missiles and guns have been provided by the USSR. Reportedly, the Cubans station two battalions in the country and East Germany provides military advisors. The navy operates patrol boats which are armed with the Soviet ship-to-ship Styx missile system. This is the type missile that sank the Israeli destroyer *Eliat* during the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. The South Yemen air force is composed of the MIG-21 Fishbed and the older MIG-17 Farmer—totaling over a hundred aircraft of all types.

The United States has maintained a military presence in the region for over a decade. Since the fall of the Shah in 1978 and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, the United States has perceived it to be in its strategic interest to be able to project power rapidly in the area to assure access to oil. In the past, the US Middle East naval force was “home ported” in Bahrain. Although that agreement was terminated in 1977, Bahrain still welcomes visits from US ships operating in the Indian Ocean. Oman, together with

Kenya and Somalia, have been approached to provide military facilities that would enhance the projection of the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force into the Persian Gulf region.

Collectively, the microstates of this vital and volatile strategic region have more people in uniform and they are armed with better equipment than microstates in any other region of the world. While these nations are small, they have sufficient military capability to give pause to any nation, superpowers included, contemplating combat in the region.

EUROPE

The European microstates have virtually no capability to defend themselves, so they rely on the protection of their larger neighbors. Iceland (a NATO member), Malta, and Cyprus are the microstates of primary strategic importance to the United States. The others, with the exception of Luxembourg which is also a member of NATO, are of little strategic interest. Not a single microstate in the European region can be rated as militarily significant. Even Cyprus, which is rated moderate, is an unknown quantity because of the Turkish force on the island (see Table V).

The continental microstates—the Vatican, Monaco, Liechtenstein, San Marino, and Andorra—to the extent that they maintain armed forces at all, only use them for ceremonial purposes. For example, the “defense budget” of mountainous Andorra has been reported to be less than \$20 and that sum is used for the upkeep of the ceremonial cannon. These microstates must carve out their place in the world based on attributes other than military prowess. The Vatican is the spiritual center of over one-half billion Roman Catholics worldwide and exudes a strong influence in secular issues that transcends national boundaries such as overpopulation, hunger, human rights, and world peace. Liechtenstein and Monaco are relatively important because of the financial conveniences that they provide to corporations involved in international trade and San Marino represents the only West European nation that has a Communist-controlled government. The European insular microstates alone play an important role in the world geostrategic balance.

The island microstates of the Mediterranean play a direct role in world affairs because of their strategic location. Troubled Cyprus

<u>Country</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Conscription</u>	<u>Total Armed Forces</u>	<u>Army</u>	<u>Navy</u>	<u>Air Force</u>	<u>Paramilitary</u>	<u>Combat Capability</u>
Andorra	31,000	No	-	-	-	-	-	Minimal
Cyprus	629,000	Yes	10,000	10,000(Greek) 5,000(Turkish)	-	-	3,000	Moderate
Iceland	229,000	No	120	-	120	-	500	Minimal
Liechtenstein	27,000	No	-	-	-	-	28	Minimal
Luxembourg	365,000	No	660	660	-	-	430	Minimal
Malta	348,000	No	1,000	1,000	-	-	1,200	Minimal
Monaco	25,000	No	-	-	-	-	-	Minimal
San Marino	21,000	No	85	85(ceremonial)	-	-	-	Minimal
Vatican City	1,000	No	-	-	-	-	-	Minimal

Table V. Microstates of Europe *

* CIA, The World Fact Book, April 1981, Department of State; Background Notes on each country; The International Institute for Strategic Studies, The Military Balance, 1980-81; and the Defense and Foreign Affairs Handbook, Copley & Associates, London, 1980.

has become strategically more important with the emergence of the Soviet Union as a major Mediterranean naval power. Malta, although much smaller than Cyprus, is no less important, largely because of its strategic position astride the Sicilian Narrows, that bisect the Mediterranean at a point about midway between Gibraltar and Suez. The strategic importance of Cyprus is diminished and aggravated by the dispute that it has engendered between two NATO allies—Greece and Turkey. The island is partitioned between opposing Greek and Turkish forces that are kept separated by a United Nations peacekeeping force of about 3,000 soldiers. The British still maintain a presence at sovereign base areas at Episkopi and Dhekelia.¹³

Malta did not renew the 7-year defense treaty with NATO when it expired on March 31, 1979. Malta's small armed forces provide only a marginal defensive capability suitable for internal police and customs duties. Malta, blessed with fine harbors and ship repair facilities, could be a valuable asset in supporting naval operations in the Mediterranean. The island's facilities are not indispensable to NATO, so Malta's current policy of charting a diplomatic course between NATO and the Warsaw Pact is acceptable to the West, so long as the Soviets are not permitted *exclusive* use of the island's military facilities. Currently, this eventuality appears remote.

Of all of the European microstates, Iceland is certainly the most strategically important. Because it controls the vital "Greenland-Iceland-United Kingdom Gap" (GIUK)—through which the Soviet Northern Fleet must sail to reach the Atlantic in time of war—Iceland is the linchpin of NATO's Atlantic defense. The GIUK gap also serves to block the egress of Soviet ballistic missile submarines to the obscurity and protection of the open seas. Iceland, despite past strained relations with Great Britain over fishing rights in the North Atlantic, remains a member of NATO and has granted the United States responsibility for its defense. The United States stations about 2,500 military men and women on the island at the radar site at Hofn and at the airfield at Keflavik.¹⁴

The contribution of the European microstates to the world power balance remains limited. The continental microstates have virtually no capability to influence the course of world affairs except for the unique case of the Papal state. The insular microstates, however, could make a difference in the power balance depending upon which side of the scales they threw their

weight. Today, the strategic interests of the United States in the European microstates are generally well served.

ASIA

With the important exception of Singapore, the United States has little strategic interest in the Asian microstates. The establishment of US naval and air facilities on Diego Garcia has largely nullified the strategic importance of the Maldives. In any event, it appears as if the Maldives are trying to steer clear of superpower involvement. Not only will the government not lease the airfield facilities on Gan Island to either of the superpowers, in 1977 it refused a Soviet offer of \$1 million annually to lease that island as a fishing base. Bhutan, although of little strategic value to the United States, is of considerable interest to India and the People's Republic of China (PRC) because of the mountain passes which connect India and Tibet. However, Bhutan's primitive infrastructure would prevent its use as a base for further operations, either north or south. Mongolia possesses most of the attributes of a significant military power, to include tanks and jet fighters (see Table VI), but because of its location between the two Communist colossi, it cannot effectively defend itself. Allied with the Soviet Union, it receives protection in exchange for providing strategic depth for the defense of the vital Trans-Siberian Railroad. Moreover, it provides the Soviet Union with advanced bases on the very doorstep of the PRC.

Singapore's strategic location has made it the air and sea transportation center of Southeast Asia. If a nation hostile to Japan were to gain control of Singapore, it could cause the supertankers laden with Persian Gulf oil destined for Japan to take a lengthy detour through the Lombok and Makassar straits adding many days to the journey and considerable expense to Japanese oil importers. From the US strategic perspective, if the United States were required to project power onto the littoral of the Arabian Sea, Singapore possesses all of the support facilities needed for an intermediate base.¹⁵ In the past, the United States has used Singapore's airfields to support its air and naval patrol flights over the Indian Ocean. As long as Singapore remains friendly to the West, the strategic interest of the United States in the microstates of Asia will continue to be satisfied.

<u>Country</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Conscription</u>	<u>Total Armed Forces</u>	<u>Army</u>	<u>Navy</u>	<u>Air Force</u>	<u>Paramilitary</u>	<u>Combat Capability</u>
Bhutan	1,318,000	Yes	4,000	-	-	-	15,000	Minimal
Maldives	157,000	No	None	-	-	-	-	Minimal
Mongolia	1,681,000	Yes	30,000	28,000	-	2,000	18,000	Moderate
Singapore	2,406,000	Yes	36,000	30,000	3,000	3,000	7,500	Significant

Table VI. Microstates of Asia*

* CIA, The World Fact Book, April 1981; Department of State, Background Notes on each country; The International Institute for Strategic Studies, The Military Balance, 1980-81; and the Defense and Foreign Affairs Handbook, Copley & Associates, London, 1980.

OCEANIA

Oceania, together with the Caribbean Basin, has a greater potential for the creation of new states than any other region of the world. The military capability of these insular microstates, present and future, is about nil (see Table VII). Their strategic significance lies in the fact that they can provide territory on which to develop air or naval bases. The Soviet Union made unsuccessful bids several years ago to secure bases for its fishing fleet on Western Samoa and Tonga. Australia has economic commitments to these two island states, as well as to Fiji. These small states require outside assistance to survive—400 troops from Papua-New Guinea were needed to help newly independent Vanatu put down a secessionist revolt on Espirito Santo. The PRC pledged to protect Western Samoa from any "hegemonist aggression" from the Soviet Union. The United States does not use military facilities on any of these insular microstates.

These islands could become strategically important if the United States were involved in a global war with the Soviet Union. In this type of scenario, the Soviet Union might find some of these microstates useful as bases for its Pacific fleet. In operating its fleet over the vast distances that separate the fleet from its home bases in Vladivostok and Petropavlosk, the Soviets would require naval support facilities for the same logistic reasons that attracted the United States to Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean. Should the United States lose access to Subic Bay in the Philippines, either in peace or war, the Pacific microstates would loom larger strategically.

Either the status quo or diplomatic neutralization might be a suitable condition for the microstates of Oceania seen from the perspective of the United States. If the United States retains its access to bases in Japan, the Philippines, Guam, and Hawaii, even Soviet bases could easily be isolated from their support in the Soviet maritime provinces. However, because of the adverse effect that such Soviet accessions would have on global perceptions of US power, particularly on Australia and New Zealand, the United States should follow a policy of Soviet base denial in this region.

AFRICA

The African microstates, like virtually all microstates, are young

<u>COUNTRY</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Conscription</u>	<u>Total Armed Forces</u>	<u>Army</u>	<u>Navy</u>	<u>Air Force</u>	<u>Paramilitary</u>	<u>Combat Capability</u>
Fiji	636,000	No	1,020	870	150	-	900	Minimal
Kiribati	58,000	No	-	-	-	-	-	Minimal
Neuru	7,000	No	-	-	-	-	-	Minimal
Solomon Island	233,000	No	-	-	-	-	-	Minimal
Tonga	99,000	No	-	-	-	-	-	Minimal
Tuvalu	7,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	Minimal
Vanatu	119,000	No	-	-	-	-	-	Minimal
Western Samoa	157,000	No	-	-	-	-	-	Minimal

Table VII. Microstates of Oceania*

* CIA, The World Fact Book, April 1981; Department of State, Background Notes on each country; The International Institute for Strategic Studies, The Military Balance, 1980-81; and the Defense and Foreign Affairs Handbook, Copley & Associates, London, 1980.

nations struggling with the complex and perplexing tasks of building a nation that often seem to be beyond the economic grasp or political know-how of these small developing nations.¹⁶ The instability in many of the microstates in Sub-Saharan Africa, together with the presence of Cuban military advisors in the microstates of Equatorial Guinea and Guinea-Bissau, and the strategic location of some of these states, is some cause for concern on the part of the United States, but, in fact, the threat to US strategic interests in Sub-Saharan Africa is minimal. Given the nature of the low threat profile to US interests, the limited need for economic resources from the microstates and the instability of many regimes in the region, the United States does not maintain any military bases on the African mainland (although it does maintain landing and naval base access rights), but rather relies primarily on diplomatic methods to achieve US objectives.¹⁷ Militarily, the United States follows the lead of its allies, the former colonial powers, principally France, in safeguarding its interests in the Sub-Saharan region.

The microstates of Africa have only a minimal or moderate military capability to defend themselves (see Table VIII). Because of their military weakness, the microstates turn to the former colonial powers and to other neighboring African states for protection. France maintains some armed forces on the continent and an airborne battalion in France is designated for use in military operations in the region. Most recently, France supported the overthrow of Emperor Bokassa, who had been responsible for atrocities committed against his people. Spain provides military advisors to Equatorial Guinea. In August 1981, President Jawara of Gambia requested Senegal to provide troops to quell the coup attempted by dissident elements of the Mobile Police Company. The Seychelles relies on Tanzania and Madagascar to provide military support during periods of domestic instability. Lesotho is substantially dependent for its security on friendly relations with South Africa. The Soviet Union supplies military equipment to several African microstates, principally Guinea-Bissau; it also supplied two torpedo boats to Cape Verde in 1980 to form the nucleus of a navy. Most of the military equipment of the African microstates, however, is of Western origin, chiefly French.

The military weakness and instability in the African microstates provide vulnerabilities that can be exploited by revolutionary

Country	Population	Conscription	Total Armed Forces	Army	Navy	Air Force	Paramilitary	Combat Capability
Botswana	795,000	No	2,000	-	-	-	1,100	Minimal
Cape Verde	338,000	No	2,000	-	-	-	-	Minimal
Central African Republic	2,376,000	Yes	1,275	1,100	75	100	1,450	Minimal
Comoros	375,000	No	1,000	(Peoples Army)	-	-	-	Minimal
Congo	1,573,000	No	7,000	6,500	200	300	3,900	Moderate
Djibouti	286,000	No	5,000	4,000	250	750	500	Moderate
Equatorial Guinea	252,000	Unk	1,000	(Including police)	-	-	-	Minimal
Gabon	649,000	No	1,450	1,100	200	150	1,600	Minimal
The Gambia	609,000	No	None	-	-	-	200	Minimal
Guinea-Bissau	801,000	No	6,100	6,000	100	-	2,000	Moderate
Lesotho	1,350,000	No	-	-	-	-	900	Minimal
Liberia	1,872,000	No	5,250	5,050	200	-	1,750	Moderate
Mauritania	1,517,000	No	12,450	12,000	300	150	6,000	Moderate
Mauritius	961,000	No	-	-	-	-	-	Minimal
Sao Tome & Principe	83,000	No	200	200	-	-	-	Minimal
Seychelles	64,000	No	100	100	-	-	1,000	Minimal
Swaziland	564,000	No	400	400	-	-	700	Minimal

Table VIII. Microstates of Africa*

* CIA, The World Fact Book, April 1981; Department of State, Background Notes on each country, The International Institute for Strategic Studies, The Military Balance, 1980-81; and the Defense and Foreign Affairs Handbook, Copley & Associates, London, 1980.

elements, both indigenous and foreign, seeking to change the status quo. It is easy to imagine the continent becoming an area of increased international rivalry. It is in the interest of world peace and stability to dampen the conflict in Africa, particularly superpower rivalry. The threshold of superpower rivalry in Sub-Saharan Africa must be kept high lest it spark a more serious conflagration. It would appear that the US policy towards Sub-Saharan Africa, major and microstate alike, should be to keep the continent free of competitive superpower rivalry, to contribute toward the region's socioeconomic development, and to pursue diplomatic policies that will lead to political stability of the troubled African nations. Militarily, the United States should rely on security assistance and support the strategic activities of other Western nations.

CONCLUSIONS

Perhaps the most distinctive characteristic of a microstate is its inability to use military force or the threat of it to secure its national interests. Consider that over three-fourths of the microstates have only a minimal capability to defend themselves and that 22 states do not have any military capability at all. Most of the microstates must rely on external military power to survive. Even the microstates that possess a significant or moderate military capability only have armed forces that are comparable to second or third rate military powers. Moreover, microstates do not have the capability to sustain combat for very long, since they must rely on outside sources for their weapons, equipment, and most importantly spare parts. There is little doubt that a microstate with either a minimal or moderate military capability must depend on the "good will" of the international community for its survival. The pledge of assistance from other states does not necessarily negate this factor. Often the external actor may be too far away for timely military intervention or it may be too occupied with its own affairs to react to the microstate request. The external power may judge the request too costly, either diplomatically or economically, to fulfill or simply may feel that it is not in its best national interest to assist the microstate.

A factor that could increase the military potential of the armed forces of the microstates in the future is the increasing lethality and

effectiveness of relatively light and inexpensive weapons such as antitank and anti-aircraft missiles. Weapons such as these are already coming into the arsenals of some of the microstates. These highly accurate weapons have the potential to make a small force extremely combat effective, particularly against armored vehicles and aircraft. Today, most microstates have only a limited ability to deter conflict; armed with these new weapons, a microstate just might make it too costly for an adversary to attack it. In the final analysis, however, it must be judged that most microstates will remain too small, too weak, and too vulnerable to protect themselves.

Paradoxically, the inherent economic, political, and military vulnerabilities of the microstates are the very factors that increase their importance in the dynamics of the international system. As we have seen in the regional analysis, not only are the microstates weak, many are also strategically important. The core of the strategic problem is maritime in nature, because the majority of microstates are either insular or riparian. The United States and its allies are major maritime powers that are heavily dependent on sea lines of communication for their economic prosperity. Because the Soviet Union has emerged as a major global naval power, the competition for influence, if not control, of the microstates takes on an added strategic dimension.

ENDNOTES

1. Department of State, Office of the Geographer, *Status of the World's Nations*, September 1980, p. 1.
2. Robert G. Irani and William O. Staudenmaier, "Microstates and the Balance of Power in the Contemporary International System," *Naval War College Review*, September 1978, Vol. 31, pp. 76-96. Portions of this article were used in the preparation of this paper.
3. US Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *United States Foreign Policy Objectives and Overseas Military Installations*, April 1979, p. 132. Also see Colin Legum, "The Continuing French Role in Africa," *Encyclopedia Britannica, Book of the Year, 1981*, p. 162.
4. George I. Reid, *The Impact of Very Small Size on the International Behavior of Microstates*, Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1974, p. 39.
5. Elmer Plischke, *US Relations with Newly Developing Countries*, an unpublished issue paper prepared for the US Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, 1977, p. 1.
6. Louis Zurcher and Gwyn Harries-Jenkins, ed., *Supplementary Military Forces—Reserves, Militias and Auxiliaries*, Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1978, pp. 11-12.
7. Leon Dash, "President of Gambia, Target of Coup Attempt, Said to Return to Capital," *The Washington Post*, August 3, 1980, p. A12.
8. All of the data that relates to military forces throughout this paper were derived from the following sources: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 1980-1981*, London: Adlard and Sons, 1980; US Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Fact Book*, Washington, DC, April 1981; *Defense and Foreign Affairs Handbook*, London: Copely and Associates, 1980; and *Armed Forces of the World: A Reference Handbook*, 4th ed., Praeger Publishers, 1977. Where data conflicted between two or more sources, the author made a judgment as to which information seemed most reasonable and consistent with other data elements.
9. Data relating to equipment used throughout this paper was derived from the following sources: *Jane's Weapon Systems, 1978*; *Jane's All the World's Aircraft, 1977-78*; *Jane's Fighting Ships, 1977-78*.
10. "Tensions Rise in Sahara After Mauritania Pullout," *The Washington Post*, August 14, 1979, p. A14.
11. The International Institute for Strategic Studies, "The Maghreb: Implications of the Saharan War," *Strategic Survey, 1979*, p. 93. There is some evidence that Mauritania is reducing its armed forces as a result of opting out of the insurgency in Western Sahara. See IISS, *Military Balance, 1980-81*, p. 59. The present analysis uses the data found in the *Defense and Foreign Affairs Handbook, 1980*. Regardless which source is used, the Mauritanian armed forces would still be rated moderate.
12. Saul B. Cohen, *Geography and Politics in a Divided World*, 2d Edition, New York: Oxford University Press, p. 140.
13. *United States Foreign Policy Objectives and Overseas Military Installations*, p. 81.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 25-27.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 159-162.

16. Since 1979, the following microstates have been the targets of coups or coup attempts: Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mauritania, Central African Republic, and Equatorial Guinea.

17. The US Air Force does maintain a satellite tracking station on Mahe Island, in the Republic of the Seychelles, located in the Indian Ocean, north of Madagascar. The station may also be used as a communications link between Diego Garcia and other US facilities. The United States has negotiated a 10-year lease at an annual cost of one million dollars.

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