

***Writing and Exhibiting Small State Capacity Building:
The Case of Brunei's Defence White Paper Update
and Bridex 2007***

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Abstract

This paper looks at the theme of small state capacity building as a way to juxtapose two threads in some narratives that do not 'take small states seriously'; firstly, small states are irrelevant because they do not have significant capacity; secondly, small states are threats to the peace and stability of the international system due to their lack of capacity.

The paper then proceeds to examine how a small state, Brunei, proactively attempts to address such issues through building the military capacity for a minimum level of self-help as well as a 'capacity to contribute' regionally and internationally. It proposes that capacity can be proclaimed through the mediums of defence policy writing and commercial defence exhibitions and that such writing and exhibiting can be, in of themselves, demonstrations of potential capacity.

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Introduction

*Although often weak, geographically peripheral and strategically unimportant, small states are still numerous and can make significant contributions to the international system.*¹

The question might be posed why capacity building occupies a not inconsiderable part of the policy agendas of small states as well as the research agendas of small states studies?² Even if significant increases relative to a small state's original military capacity are achieved, it might be argued that, in the grand scheme of things, it will probably not make much difference. The truism remains that small states cannot effectively defend themselves against greater powers for a sustained period of time, as shown in the cases of the US invasions of Grenada in 1983 and of Panama in 1989 as well as Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1991.

This paper argues that even the harshest critics of small states often implicitly acknowledge their importance to international order. It will attempt to demonstrate it by untangling two important and contradictory threads in such criticism; the first being that small states have so little capacity that they are irrelevant to the maintenance of international order; the second being that the innate weakness of small states makes them a threat to international order because they make for all too tempting targets for larger predatory powers.

The paper then proceeds to draw on the example of how a small state, Brunei, proactively attempts to address such issues through building the military capacity for a minimum level of self-help as well as to combat regional and transnational threat in order to fulfil its obligations as a responsible member of the international system. It also argues that

¹ Roger MacGinty, 'War Cause and Peace Aim? Small States and the First World War', *European History Quarterly* V27N1 (1997), p.44.

² Iver B. Neumann and Sieglinde Gstöhl, 'Introduction: Lilliputians in Gulliver's World?' in Christine Ingebritsen, Iver Neumann, Sieglinde Gstöhl & Jessica Beyer (eds), *Small States in International Relations* (Seattle, University of Washington Press, 2006), pp.17-19. Also see the Small State Capacity Building workshop (4-5 Apr 2007) organized under the auspices of the BISA Small States Working Group: http://www.polsis.bham.ac.uk/research/capacity_building_workshop.htm [Accessed 6 Apr 2007]

capacity is proclaimed through the mediums of defence policy writing and commercial defence exhibitions; to push the point further, such writing and exhibiting can be, in of themselves, demonstrations of potential capacity.

The Small State as an Irrelevance?

*'But what one did not appreciate one could simply ignore.'*³

Neumann and Gstöhl have pointed out how small states are often regarded as objects rather than subjects of international relations. They cite Hans Morgenthau's explanations of their continued survival being due to the balance of power, the protection of a great power and/or their unattractiveness as prey as an early attitude that continues to be found in the contemporary era.⁴ As the existence and actions of small states are barely able to affect great powers or the international system, small states need not detain the attention of IR scholars.

In this vein, Keohane, in one of the most cited articles in the small states literature, puts forward a definition of the small state from a systemic point of view, focusing on 'the systemic role that states' leaders see their countries playing.' In this schema, states would be classified as 'system determining', 'system influencing', 'system affecting' and 'system ineffectual' and would be then labelled respectively as 'great', 'secondary', 'middle' and 'small' powers.⁵

While this provides a strong macro definition of small states, a contrast with David Vital's distinction between the 'intrinsic' (i.e. state-based) over 'contingent' (i.e. derived from the state's importance to the international system) shows how Keohane's taxonomy

³ Michael Cox, 'Introduction' in E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis 1919-1939* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), p.xxxv originally referring to how not all his readers appreciated Carr's materialist epistemology or debt to Marxism.

⁴ Neumann and Gstöhl (2006), p.18.

⁵ Robert O. Keohane, 'Lilliputians' Dilemmas: Small States in International Politics', *International Organization*, V23N2 (Spring 1969), pp.295-296. Emphasis in original.

over-emphasizes; the former over the latter. It also draws our attention to the systemic effects that a small state can have on international order, often simply because it *is* a state. This paper attempts to take a middle position between the two because Vital's view that 'the intrinsic capabilities will always be of only marginal importance. What really counts are the contingent capabilities, i.e. the ability of the small state to mobilize forces and resources of the international system in favour of its policy'⁶ may also go too far in the opposite direction as complete dependence on contingent capabilities may reduce them to mere quasi-states whose sole claim to sovereignty was the former formal status of a colony.⁷ In order to have secure some degree of agency in relation to other states and the international system, a small state would need to possess some intrinsic military and diplomatic capacity in order to draw on and make more effective use of contingent capabilities.

The Small State as a Threat to International Order

When the preference for big over small is interrogated, the systemic role of the latter is not such a small one after all. For example, Cox has noted how E.H. Carr came to the conclusion 'that big units were good and small ones were bad'⁸ and how he saw 'the small nation-state [as] an impediment standing in the way of international stability and prosperity.'⁹

Writing about the aftermath of the First World War, MacGinty noted that the 'Great Powers regarded small states as a complicating factor; one likely to threaten European stability... they felt that the small states were to blame, and were fearful that the small states

⁶ Wilhelm Christmas-Møller, 'Some Thoughts on the Scientific Applicability of the Small State Concept: A Research History and a Discussion' in Otmar Höll, *Small States in Europe and Dependence* (Wien: Wilhelm Braumüller, 1983), pp.44-45. Also see David Vital, *The Survival of Small States: Studies in Small Power/Great Power Conflict* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p.9.

⁷ Robert H. Jackson, *Quasi-States: Sovereignty, International Relations and the Third World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.17.

⁸ Michael Cox, 'From the First to the Second Editions of *The Twenty Years' Crisis: A Case of Self-Censorship?*' in E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis 1919-1939* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), p.lxxxii.

⁹ Cox, 'Introduction', p.xxxi.

would drag the Great Powers into another war.¹⁰ Via the mechanisms of the balance of power and great power competition, it seems that even small states with relatively weaker capacity can ‘force’ great powers into conflicts that would rather not get involved in.

Ironically this ability to drag great powers into conflict is not based on the power of a state’s military capacity. Instead a state’s lack of capacity that increases the risk that a great power will have to intervene if that weakness and lack of capacity draws the unwelcome attention of another great power competitor. The corollary for small states would be to build capacity to the extent that it could provide self-help in the first instance, at least to buy time until contingent capabilities can be brought to bear. The building up of some intrinsic capability would also raise a small state’s credibility as a potential partner, rather than a dependent or free rider, in an alliance or multilateral security arrangement.

Beyond the systemic effect of lack of small state capacity causing great power conflict, there are also contemporary (revived?¹¹) concerns about a state’s capacity to effectively police its borders and territory so as not to become havens for various vectors of transnational security threats such as terrorists, pirates, drug or human smugglers, or even reservoirs of deadly epidemic-causing disease pathogens. The capacity to protect natural resources especially in disputed maritime and forested border areas as well as the securing of national economic infrastructure such as oil platforms, pipelines and refineries.

Other than the nature of the source materials for the empirical case study, this paper also concentrates on military capacity, at the expense of other forms such as economic or norm entrepreneur capacity. While ‘[m]ilitary force is not everything in the relations between states, but where there is both the capacity and the will to employ it, it necessarily

¹⁰ MacGinty (1997), p.51. He also goes on to cite Erik Goldstein, *Winning the Peace: British Diplomatic Strategy, Peace Planning and the Paris Peace Conference, 1916-1920* (London and Oxford, 1991), p.242 where the British position was that ‘Too many small, and therefore weak, states would cause instability.’

¹¹ Eric Tagliacozzo, *Secret Trades, Porous Borders: Smuggling and States Along a Southeast Asian Frontier, 1865-1915* (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2007).

overshadows all else. The mere possibility of its being employed suffices to transform the perspective of the policy-makers and to alter the anticipated material value... of all other factors relevant to the conflict.¹²

A Textual Strategy to Communicate Capacity Building

There is often a tension between secrecy to preserve operational security (to prevent the enemy from knowing and exploiting your weaknesses, also needed to be able to spring strategic surprises) and a need for transparency to maintain credibility as well as to disseminate information and maintain public confidence in an armed force's military capacity. Traditional means of projecting credibility include ceremonial parades and displays during special days or commemorative events as well as unilateral or multilateral exercises in the field. Due to the increasing sophistication of military hardware and systems, such high technology has become less visceral and less impressive in terms of visual impact. A bank of computers just isn't as sexy as the boy's toys of fighter jet, tank or ship.¹³

This paper sees writing and publishing as part of a cultural continuum whereby statements are formed and then disseminated in a socially recognized form of activity. Such activity, such as the publication of military literature, can be used to serve strategic ends such as signaling the building up or possession of particular types of military capacity.

It is of particular interest to this paper how perceptions or images of capacity can be projected externally as part of a textual strategy to communicate the credibility of an armed force's deterrence posture, that it has both the capacity and the will to defend the state.

Michael J. Shapiro, using a framework based on Foucault's method of discourse analysis, implies that a textual strategy involves the use 'textual mechanisms [such] as narrative,

¹² Vital (1971), p.1.

¹³ For an exposition of the use of technological spectacle to ideationally convey military power, see Chandra Mukerji, 'Towards a Sociology of Material Culture' in Diana Crane (ed) *The Sociology of Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), p.156-57.

rhetoric, and grammar and by genre, by forms of articulation - verbal utterances, video images, or combinations of these' in order to 'strategically affect the interpretation of policy structures, ideals and implementations.'¹⁴

Drawing on the practices of publishing defence white papers and of holding commercial defence exhibitions, if successfully drawn on, helps to boost the image of the issuing/hosting organization by drawing on the legitimacy accruing from these relatively settled internationalized practices which neoinstitutionalist studies of the phenomenon of isomorphism claim to be a rationalized rather than rational process. The most prominent theorist in this vein, John Meyer, is in favour of understanding such rationalization as having 'the [global] world as the locus of the rationalized environment and of much organizational formation and change as having world-wide character.'¹⁵ Significantly, those who follow in Meyer's footsteps also are also extremely critical of the statecentric model of the realists, arguing that particular organizational fields of professional expertise, across state boundaries, are much more important in explaining isomorphism.¹⁶ Nonetheless, this paper also notes that such instances of isomorphism can also be used to serve a particular state's interest.

Brunei's historical background

The Sultanate of Brunei is a former British colony that was achieved independence in 1984 and is a member state of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Located along the north-western coast of Borneo, Brunei's land borders are totally enclosed

¹⁴ Michael J. Shapiro, 'Strategic Discourse/Discursive Strategy: The Representation of "Security Policy" in the Video Age', *International Studies Quarterly* V34 (1990), p.334; also see David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), p.58.

¹⁵ John Meyer, 'Rationalized Environments' in W. Richard Scott and John W. Meyer with collaboration of John Boli et al (eds.), *Institutional Environments and Organizations: structural complexity and individualism* (London: Sage, 1994), p.41; also see Theo Farrell, 'Figuring Out Fighting Organizations: The New Organisational Analysis in Strategic Studies', *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, V19 N1 (Mar 1996), p.124-25.

¹⁶ Paul J. DiMaggio and Walter W. Powell, 'The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields' in Walter W. Powell and Paul J. DiMaggio (eds.), *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

and even bisected by Malaysia with whom it has a territorial dispute over Limbang (currently Malaysian-administered) as well as off-shore and deep seabed demarcation disputes.¹⁷ Brunei has a land area of 5,270 sq km (second smallest in ASEAN) and a population of 375,000 (smallest in ASEAN)¹⁸; it is largely on the basis of these two characteristics that this paper considers Brunei as a small state.¹⁹

Defence White Paper Update 2007²⁰

The Brunei Defence White Paper Update 2007 (DWPU2007), entitled *Shaping The Force TODAY*, is the second Defence White Paper published by the Sultanate's Ministry of Defence (MINDEF); the first was published in 2004 under the title of *Defending the Nation's Sovereignty*.

There is an increasingly internationalized practice of publishing such documents. A non-comprehensive online archive hosted by the US National Defense University lists Defence White Papers published in the public domain and English since 1999 from Albania, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Brazil, Brunei, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Canada, Chile, People's Republic of China, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Ethiopia, the European Union, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Macedonia, Mongolia, Montenegro, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, the Philippines, Romania, Russia, Serbia and Montenegro, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia,

¹⁷ Andrew Tan, *Intra-ASEAN Tensions*, Discussion Paper No. 84 (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2000).

¹⁸ CIA World Fact Book: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bx.html> [Last updated 16 Aug 2007]

¹⁹ This would fall under a definition related to ranks of countries in Raimo Värynen. 'On the Definition and Measurement of Small Power Status', *Cooperation and Conflict* V6 (1971), p.99. However, in his three other schema of 'definitions emphasizing the nature of behaviour of small powers', 'definitions based on the distinct interest of small powers contrasted with those of great powers' and 'definitions applying concepts of role theory', Brunei in its current form and recent history should still easily qualify as a small state.

²⁰ Brunei Ministry of Defence, *Shaping the Force Today: Defence White Paper Update 2007 (DWPU2007)*: http://www.mindef.gov.bn/new_home/whitepaper2007/english.pdf [Retrieved 6 June 2007]

Slovenia, South Africa, South Korea, Sweden, Republic of China (Taiwan), Turkey, Uganda, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America.²¹

However there is also considerable variation in the form and content of such White Papers. The DWPU2007 is more general than specific in its discussion of defence policy assumptions, threat assessments, force structure, equipment, training, defence industries, personnel. About half of its pages feature photographs with a human interest slant as well as plenty of colourful design elements which give it the feel of a coffee table book rather than a policy document upon which specific and discernable policy debates were trashed out and the details of policy implementation set forth. In these respects, DWPU2007 is not dissimilar from fellow ASEAN member Singapore's February 2000 document, *Defending Singapore in the 21st Century*²², which has been criticized by Tim Huxley as 'unimpressive and unrevealing by the standards of those produced by Western governments or Asian states such as India, Japan and South Korea.'²³

Despite such criticism, Huxley himself has demonstrated how, despite the absence of detailed defence and security information in a consolidated publication, it is entirely possible to accumulate a considerable number of pieces of the defence puzzle through official sources like White Papers, ministerial parliamentary statements, speeches by high ranking officials, magazines, journals or newsletters from MINDEF or armed forces HQ or sub-units. The DWPU2007 is one such piece of the picture for the defence policies of Brunei, of a small state, and of the use of open source, public domain defence publications. It is with these in

²¹ Military Education Research Library Network: <http://merln.ndu.edu/whitepapers.html> [Last updated 3 Aug 2007]

²² Singapore Ministry of Defence, *Defending Singapore in the 21st Century*: <http://www.mindef.gov.sg/imindef/resources/e-books/ebklist.-imindefPars-0008-DownloadFile.tmp/ds21.pdf> [22 Feb 2007]

²³ Tim Huxley, *Defending the Lion City: The Armed Forces of Singapore* (St Leonard's, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin, 2000), p.xxi.

mind that this paper will now proceed with a cursory content analysis of the DWPU2007, with particular attention to the issue of capacity building.

Writing about capacity building

The components of capacity building are painted in broad brush strokes in the DWPU2007. While lacking in specific details, it does demonstrate a holistic depiction of defence policy making and implementation by first setting out to contextualize the strategic environment, explicating refinements since the initial 2004 White Paper and summarizing progress in regional cooperation.

Based on these assumptions, it then proceeds to lay out what capacities should and are being built up to meet these requirements and challenges, with particular attention to Command and Control, Computers, Communication, Surveillance and Information (C4ISR) systems, land reconnaissance capability, improved mobility and logistical capabilities as well as shifting the direction of operations, doctrine and training away from the individual land, air and sea services to a Joint Operations Centre which appears to be the embryonic nucleus of a Joint Staff and Command organization.

In the DWPU2007's 53 pages, the word 'capacity' appears 21 times while 'capability' appears 26 times. There were two ways in which 'capacity' was evoked: defending sovereignty and contributing internationally. In the words of the Deputy Minister of Defence, Dato Seri Paduka Haji Mohammad Yasmin:

The Defence White Paper Update 2007: *Shaping the Force Today*, identifies specific planning in short to medium terms towards defending our interests as a sovereign nation as well as in promoting a more active regional outreach. The Paper puts more emphasis on strengthening interaction, developing response mechanisms to major security crises and enhancing the RBAF's participation

and capability towards regional and international peace support and humanitarian relief missions.²⁴

The first way points to that a state's determination to possess, at least, basic capacity for self-help in an anarchic international system. Now that sovereignty has been granted through a process of decolonization that lacks any formal check-list of pre-conditions²⁵, the relatively young state attempts to demonstrate that it is able to defend its sovereignty through the building up of military forces to defend its territorial integrity and political independence: 'Defence's primary focus must always be the protection of the nation against threats of force to its security.'²⁶ Over half of the mentions of 'capacity'²⁷ and almost all of those referring 'capability'²⁸ in the DWPU2007 were used in this context.

Having performance legitimacy to buttress formal legitimacy, a new and small state consolidates its 'stateness' and is a signal to other states that it is, at the very least, able to incur some costs against any opportunism or adventurism of a potential aggressor. By building capacity that shows that it is neither a quasi-state nor a weak spot (and thus potential threat) to the international system, a state is effectively arguing that it deserves its sovereignty and, accordingly, the respect and recognition of others.

The second way points to Brunei's desire to be a useful state within the club of states by contributing to regional and international peace and stability via non-aggressive activities under the auspices of established regional and international institutions. Just under half of the

²⁴ Foreword by Deputy Minister of Defence Pehin Datu Singamanteri Colonel (Rtd) Dato Seri Paduka Hj Mohammad Yasmin Hj Umar, DWPU2007, p.13.

²⁵ United Nations General Assembly Resolution 1514 (XV) 12 Dec 1960, *Declaration on The Granting Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples* states that "inadequacy of political, economic, social or educational preparedness should never serve as a pretext for delaying independence." <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/15/ares15.htm>

²⁶ DWPU2007, pp.21-22.

²⁷ DWPU2007, pp.17, 26, 33, 40, 44, 47, 48, 50-51.

²⁸ DWPU2007, pp.13, 17, 19, 21, 33, 37, 39, 41, 42, 43, 45, 48, 53.

uses of the word ‘capacity’ related to doing good works outside one’s own borders²⁹; the DWPU2007 talks about the Royal Brunei Armed Forces’ (RBAF) ‘capacity to contribute’.³⁰

A local media report also seemed to appreciate the significance of enunciating the international dimension of capacity building. *The Brunei Times* reported that the DWPU2007:

This paper reflects the sultanate’s renewed commitment to prepare the armed forces for regional peace support, humanitarian assistance missions and disaster relief operations. It marks a clear turning point to the sultanate’s aspirations to participate and contribute in future global missions – a sign that the RBAF in its 46th year has taken on a *more mature and globally responsible role*.³¹

The RBAF’s capacities thus actualize Brunei’s aspirations to be seen as a more mature and globally responsible actor. The authors of the DWPU2007 seem to be satisfied that the RBAF has built up adequate capacity to address the state’s basic needs of physical and ontological security and that the increased emphasis on missions beyond the physical protection and deterrence of external aggression now seem to address the needs associated with sociation, self-esteem and perhaps even transcendence.³²

At the same time, the DWPU2007 is cautious not to undermine its own credibility via the inflation of expectations: ‘as a committed member of the international community, strengthening the nation’s ability to make a *modest* yet credible to wider United Nation’s [sic] peace support and humanitarian relief operations.’³³ This tension is also reflected in statements expressing Brunei’s ‘desire to play an enhanced role in ASEAN activities by

²⁹ DWPU2007, p.13, 26, 31, 33, 40, 43.

³⁰ DWPU2007, p.26.

³¹ ‘Resource efficiency focus of new White Paper’, *The Brunei Times* (1 June 2007), p.5.

³² Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp.131-132.

³³ *Ibid*, emphasis added.

contributing *niche* capabilities'³⁴ or to 'offer independent *niche* capabilities within a multinational force.'³⁵

The Deputy Minister of Defence was also quoted in the local press, warning that:

'Technology is not cheap. *As a small country with finite resources*, we do not have the capacity to exploit the full potential of technology to meet our defence and security needs... The costs to own and run high tech platforms such as fighter aircraft and warships are very prohibitive that it can easily consume a large portion of the national budget, which would result in an uneven budget appropriation. We all know that as a developing nation we have to balance our development priorities.'³⁶

While technology is often spoken of as a force multiplier that can work in favour of small state militaries by making up for lack of personnel³⁷, the increasing cost of advanced military hardware and systems that disadvantage small states with finite resources. Firstly, the initial capital to purchase them is considerable as pointed out above. Secondly, platforms and systems (as well as their logistical tails) require a minimum number that a small state may not be able to meet and maintain over the long term, much less to have economies of scale through acquiring large numbers of platforms or to be able to have slack to cut during times of fiscal pressure.³⁸

Nonetheless, despite the various limitations of size and the acknowledgement that the capacity and its subsequent impact are, like the state's physical and role characteristics, are and will continue to be small relative to the rest of the international system, the effective

³⁴ Foreword by Deputy Minister of Defence, DWPU2007, p.13, emphasis added.

³⁵ DWPU2007, p.13, emphasis added.

³⁶ 'Private sector seen to play key role in defence industries', *The Brunei Times* (1 June 2007), p.3. Emphasis added.

³⁷ DWPU2007, p.13, 33.

³⁸ I owe this second point to General Sverre Diesen, Norwegian Chief of Defence who spoke on 'Defence Planning in the Current Strategic Environment - a Small State Perspective' at the War Studies Seminar, King's College London on 22 February 2007.

exercise of such capacities for self-help and helping others are important affirmations of a state's statehood and agency.

Writing as a form of capacity

While the content of such White Papers may leave many strategic studies analysts dissatisfied, their publication by governmental agencies continues to proliferate around the world. Many of these documents, like the DWPU2007, are also published in English (over and above the one published in the official language of the publishing state) and freely available as an unclassified, open source public domain document, with its dissemination facilitated by the internet and Adobe's almost universal Portable Document Format.

This paper suggests that writing, publishing and disseminating such material should not be dismissed as a mere Public Relations or propaganda exercise. The language and medium of dissemination already suggests that such documents are meant primarily for an external audience rather than as materials to boost domestic legitimacy or image of the armed forces and its programs.

Given that most states are not exactly very transparent about the details of their military capabilities, doctrines and threat assessments, such publications provide a useful way to release official information that can both reassure friendly states and deter potential aggressors, particularly if the assumption holds that if a publishing agency is conversant and proficient in the language, terms, jargon and wider discourse of advanced militaries, this will add to the credibility of its build up plans and actual capacity.

Bridex 2007

Besides writing, there is also showing. The inaugural Brunei Darussalam International Defence Exhibition and Forum (Bridex) was held at the International Convention Centre,

Berakas, from 31 May to 2 June 2007. Its opening day coincided with the RBAF's 46th anniversary and the launch of the DWPU2007 and featured 108 commercial and state-linked exhibitors from countries such as France, Germany, Indonesia, Malaysia, Laos, Pakistan, the Philippines, Oman, Qatar, Singapore, Thailand and the United Kingdom.³⁹ Despite the respectable turnout, it seems that Bridex is not meant to be a major node on the international arms market, in the mould of Asian Aerospace, servicing the regional market but, at present, remains focused on meeting Brunei's national needs.⁴⁰

While the exhibition could be a useful barometer of the potential acquisitions (and thus future plans and doctrine development) of the RBAF, it appears that only one major deal was concluded and it was for the replacement of an unspecified quantity of light infantry weapons.⁴¹ Based on the official media⁴² coverage, there seemed to be only one major news item on a specific program for increased bilateral cooperation, i.e. with Indonesia over the use of the balanced score card system in human resource management.⁴³

Exhibiting Organizational Capacity

Such large scale events are taken as proxies for the ability to effectively organize other large scale operations was implied by comments recalling the organization of the 2006 Brunei International Tattoo which commemorated the diamond anniversary of the Sultan's birthday:

³⁹ 'Senior defence officials receive courtesy calls', *The Brunei Times* (2 June 2007) p.4.

⁴⁰ 'Bridex a focus show: JDW [Jane's Defence Weekly]', *The Brunei Times* (1 June 2007) p.1.

⁴¹ 'Brunei buys guns for army', *The Brunei Times* (2 May 2007) p.1: 'At the sidelines of the Brunei International Defence Exhibition and Forum (Bridex) yesterday at the International Convention Centre in Berakas, Bn signed a deal with Singapore Technologies Kinetic Limited for the purchase of Ultimax-100 Light Machine Guns, one of the world's lightest machines with low recoil and high accuracy rate... ..will replace the M-16 Heavy Barrel Automatic Rifle which the RBAF has been using for some 20 years.' There was also a report about the renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding with Singapore Technologies Education and Training. See 'RBTS [Royal Brunei Technical Services] plans to go local', *The Brunei Times* (31 May 2007) p.4

⁴² Brunei Times Special Supplementary Issue (31 May 2007), p.1 declared itself as such.

⁴³ 'More tie-ups for Indonesia, Brunei', *The Brunei Times* (1 June 2007), p.2: interview on sidelines of Bridex with Lieutenant General Sjafrie Sjamsoedin, Indonesian Secretary General of Defence.

capability of the armed forces to plan, prepare, arrange, organise as well as execute the enormous task with the minimum of fuss. This spoke volumes of the armed forces ability to achieve any task set upon it, with only excellence as its benchmark.⁴⁴

Recognition of this capacity was taken to be indicated by the presence and positive reactions of foreign attendees, partly because of the adage that self-praise is no praise and also that the RBAF would like to emulate selected aspects of more developed militaries of other states due to their demonstrated success in the past and/or the power of globalized forms of legitimacy within the military profession.⁴⁵ And this was noted as such in the local media:

We are also benefiting socially and politically because Brunei Darussalam, *a tiny country of less than 400,000 people*, is commanding an event whose subject, in the current global security context, is important for the interest of many countries. We are holding an event that will be graced by heavyweights such as China, France, India, Pakistan, USA and UK. Therefore, economic and technological benefits aside, the most important benefit coming from hosting the event is actually the intangible one the growth of confidence, the sense of *being on par with other nations* and the feeling of growing in stature.⁴⁶

To hear allow readers to hear directly from the attendees themselves, *The Brunei Times* also reported several quotes to that effect, which are reproduced below, the former two from nationals from the West while the latter two were from Muslim-majority states:

⁴⁴ Special Supplementary Issue, *Brunei Times* (31 May 2007), pp.8. Also see p.7 for details about the Tattoo. There was no Brunei Times staff writer credit or general Brunei Times credit for the text on p.8; the author assumes that the text was produced by either RBAF or MINDEF writers.

⁴⁵ Theo Farrell, 'World Culture and the Irish Army, 1922-1942' in Theo Farrell and Terry Terriff, *The Sources of Military Change: Culture, Politics, Technology* (London: Lynne Rienner, 2002), p.70; also see by the same author, 'Professionalization and Suicidal Defence Planning by the Irish Army, 1921-1941', *Journal of Strategic Studies* V21 N3 (September 1998), pp.67-85 and 'Transnational norms and Military Development: Constructing Ireland's Professional Army', *European Journal of International Relations* V7 N1 (2001), pp.63-102.

⁴⁶ Editorial: 'Bridex: One Shining Moment', *The Brunei Times* (31 May 2007), p.6.

Technical & Strategic Consultant Professor Hans George Wolf said that Brunei had done “a great job” and its administration had greatly assisted exhibitors, and that the Brunei’s defence exhibition has been organised professionally and similar to that of foreign defence exhibitions.⁴⁷

AGR Brunei Sdn Bhd, Technical Manager, Nick Pavicevic, 53, said... Bruneians are no different from other nationalities, they are capable, and it is through numerous training that locals can develop their technical abilities. “I am pleased with their achievements,” he said, speaking on the progress and development of Bruneians employed in the company and added that “nurturing this over the timespan of five to 10 years, only then can we have highly skilled professionals in the field. There is no reason why Brunei cannot be on par with other countries,” he said and added that, success does not take occur overnight, and it will take generations to develop, but Bridex is a positive catalyst for this development.⁴⁸

Tan Sri Dato Ahmad Johan, Executive Chairman, National Aerospace & Defence Industries Malaysia was another to shout about Bridex’s success in terms of organisation and logistics. The biggest exhibitor at Bridex this year had been impressed by the nation’s endeavours in regards to hosting for the first time an International Defence Exhibition of this magnitude. Brunei has given a good account of itself when compared to other countries [who?] which have held similar exhibitions.⁴⁹

Air Vice Marshal (Rtd) Raja Tariq Mahmood of NESCOM voiced out that the good participation from world renowned companies from Australia, America, Europe and participation from numerous countries affords great interaction on the latest innovations in Defence... The contingent from Pakistan have been hugely impressed, with Raja Tariq Mahmood saying that despite being the first time Brunei Darussalam has held a defence exhibition of its stature, the management of Bridex has been superb. He cited several aspects such as the management of security, excellent arrangement of exhibits using good aesthetic

⁴⁷ ‘Adcom [UAE] bridging the gulf through Bridex 2007’, *The Brunei Times* (1 June 2007), p.4.

⁴⁸ ‘Brunei can be on par with others’, *The Brunei Times* (2 June 2007) p.4

⁴⁹ ‘All praises for Brunei Darussalam’s first defence exhibition’, *The Brunei Times* (1 June 2007), p.4.

sense and the effective role played by the media in publicising of activities in print and media.⁵⁰

Recurrent themes in such quotes, and general press coverage, include the successful organization of Bridex despite it being the first time, the good international turnout where the global enhances and recognizes the progress of the globalizing local. If the media coverage was a reliable indicator, the intention was that Bridex was not just an exhibition of commercial defence vendors also an exhibition of the organizational capacity of the RBAF and the Bruneian state.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to show, via the empirical case of Brunei's recent White Paper and defence exhibition, that capacity building is not just an important part of a small state's international assertion of its statehood but that demonstrations of capacity can take on less direct forms which are based on internationally established practices such as defence publications and trade fairs.

Avenues for further revision and research include theoretical background on the politics of recognition, transnational/globalized forms of culture/professional norms as well as comparative case studies with other small states.

⁵⁰ 'Bridex requires time to develop', *The Brunei Times* (2 June 2007), p.4.