There are few books on the theory of international relations or foreign policy analysis that try to establish general and specific differences of foreign policy between countries which differ in terms of their power, size or importance. The theory of foreign policy generally highlights those elements that are characteristic of foreign policies of States as such. Yet the foreign policy of a particular country is defined not only by such general and common features, but also by the country’s specific characteristics. These special characteristics of a country’s foreign policy reflect its power, geopolitical and historical position, and other features.

Theoretical reflection, and to an even greater extent practical experience, support the view that it is possible to identify and characterise some special determinants of the foreign policy of a particular type of country, which can be referred to as ‘small’ and ‘new’ countries. Likewise, it is possible to identify some specific determinants of the foreign policy of ‘leading countries’, ‘regional powers’, ‘middle countries’ and so on. For the purposes of this treatise, we are interested in the specific characteristics and determinants of the foreign policy of ‘small countries’ and ‘new countries’, i.e. countries such as Slovenia. The determinants which are specific to the foreign policy of small countries should be considered when planning and implementing the foreign policy of any small country. Particularly the foreign policy objectives should correspond to the available resources and opportunities, while the means and methods used to achieve these should be selected reasonably and rationally, in light of the scarcity of resources.

Before proceeding to an analysis of these phenomena in the foreign policy of ‘small countries’, we should define the term ‘foreign policy’ as well as the concept of ‘small countries’. The concept of foreign policy was defined as an activity of the State and its organs by which a country seeks, in its relations with other actors (mainly States), to realise its own values and specific goals in international environment by the means and methods at its disposal. The specificities of the foreign policy of a ‘small country’ thus result from the structure and functioning of its foreign policy organs while implementing its goals and values in the relations with other countries by the means and methods available to it.

The definition of ‘small countries’ is a simple matter at first sight. It is tempting to believe that this requires nothing more than the selection of certain quantitative criteria, such as the size of a territory, population, GDP, or the size of an army. Concrete examples however frequently belie the conclusions established on the basis of such objective criteria. Israel is in terms of its population, the size of its territory, and its economic power a small country, but it is certainly an important regional player, and especially a significant military power. Switzerland is also a small country by the size of its territory and population, but its economic strength and political influence reach well beyond the usual role of small countries in international relations. For the purposes of this discussion only, the following countries could be identified as fairly typical small countries in Europe, for example: the Baltic States, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Iceland, Luxembourg, Slovakia, Macedonia, Albania, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, Slovenia, Montenegro, and Kosovo; also Portugal, Bulgaria, Greece, the Czech Republic, Switzerland, Serbia, Hungary, Austria, Belgium, and the Netherlands, and even Sweden.

383 See Chapter 1.